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Subject: (EMBARGOED) Speech by RAdm Teo Chee Hean, 18 Jan 2000, 10.05am

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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ADDRESS BY RADM TEO CHEE HEAN, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND SECOND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE, AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY OF PHASE 3, TEMASEK POLYTECHNIC ON 18 JANUARY 2000 @ 10.05 AM AT THE TEMASEK CONVENTION CENTRE, TEMASEK POLYTECHNIC

Chairman and Members of the Board of Governors of Temasek Polytechnic,
Principal and Staff,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

National Archives of Singapore
"FRIENDS FOR LIFE" - CONTINUING EDUCATION

Introduction

1 Almost two years ago, on 14 February 1998, I was here for the topping-up ceremony for this Phase 3 project of Temasek Polytechnic. Today, we are assembled to commemorate the successful completion of the project. This morning's ceremony is made even more significant by the fact that Temasek Polytechnic celebrates its tenth anniversary this year, just as we enter the new millennium.

2 Temasek Polytechnic has made great progress from its launch in 1990 with a small student population housed in temporary campuses at Grange Road and

Stirling Road, to this latest building that increases the enrolment capacity from 11,400 to 12,000 full-time students.

Collaboration with Industry

3 The Phase 3 extension is not just about physical expansion to accommodate an increase in student intake. It is also about qualitative improvements. The new building is equipped with facilities that make use of state-of-the-art technology and will attract industry participation. One such facility is the Intelligent Building test-bed or IBT, which allows the testing and development of IBT technologies and a Class 100 Cleanroom.

4 With support from industry, TP students will have the opportunity to apply their knowledge and test out their ideas using the latest technology. Such collaboration between our technical institutions and industry is important. Students benefit from hands-on, practical learning experience on the latest equipment, and are better prepared for their subsequent careers. Industry benefits from a steady supply of well trained future employees. The students as well as the Polytechnic's industrial partners are also able to test out their ideas and concepts and transform them into actual products and services. I commend TP's industry partners for your contributions to the education of our young.

Keeping Abreast Of Technology

5 In this new millennium, technological change will increase in magnitude and pace. Technology will remain the key driver of our industries and our economy will be one that is knowledge-based. Our education system must keep abreast of these new developments and anticipate challenges so as to create opportunities for the economy to grow.

6 I am therefore glad to learn that TP will introduce a new diploma programme in Infocomm. The introduction of this course is timely, as a polytechnic education must remain relevant to the needs of the economy and of its graduates. The move into Infocomm illustrates how polytechnic education has to move with the times. This convergence is evidenced by the wave of mergers between companies in the fields of communications, computers and media. Having a new course called Infocomm will not be sufficient. TP will constantly have to review the course structure and content, so that students will always be at the cutting edge of knowledge and skills.

Continuing Education and Training

7 But despite the best efforts of the polytechnic, it will not be possible to launch your graduates into the world of work with all that they will ever need to know. With change being so prevalent, much of the knowledge and skills which our students pick up in our educational institutions school will have a limited and decreasing shelf life. Even completing tertiary education cannot be seen as having achieved the ultimate in learning. A good example is Infocomm, where the technology is moving so fast. While the concepts that a student learns will have a longer shelf life, the specific skills that a student learns in the first year may have become dated or even obsolete by the time he is in his final year.

8 One important objective of our education system is therefore to motivate pupils and inculcate in our future workforce the concept of lifelong learning. The aim is to ensure that our workers are equipped with the relevant skills and knowledge so as to remain employable in the workplace, able to take on more complicated tasks and perform higher value adding jobs.

9 Examples of jobs being transformed into knowledge jobs are all around us. Retail assistants equipped with a sophisticated point-of-sale computer do not merely operate cash registers, but can manage computerised inventory and sales systems and may even engage in eCommerce.

8. 10 In the years ahead, TP will have to continue to provide upgrading training to workers who had left school with relatively low educational qualifications. A new area of growth will come from young graduates, from TP or elsewhere, who are looking for upgrading and refresher courses. They may return to the polytechnic to do an Advanced Diploma programme, or short courses to update certain aspects of their skills set.

11 This development will open up many opportunities for TP to renew and strengthen its ties with alumni. Instead of an intense 3-year relationship, the polytechnic and its students can become friends for life. But only if the polytechnic continues to court its graduates and provide an educational experience which its graduates want to have more of. TP can then look forward to welcoming its graduates back once every so often, to provide them with new ideas and new tools.

12 Through interaction with graduates, staff and current students of TP will get a different kind of stimulus. The prospect for cross-fertilising ideas and spawning

a start-up or two become that much closer to reality.

13 I encourage TP to gear up for this exciting future, where your students of today will return to become both students and teachers of tomorrow.

Concluding Remarks

14 Finally, let me conclude by congratulating TP on the completion of its Phase 3 extension. I am sure that your staff and students are looking forward to the use of this brand new building and its impressive facilities. I wish the polytechnic continued success in all its future endeavours.

15 It now gives me great pleasure to officially declare the Phase 3 extension of the Temasek Polytechnic Campus open.

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