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Subject: (EMBARGOED) Speech by RADM Teo Chee Hean, 22 Apr 00, 9am

Singapore Government

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**SPEECH BY RADM TEO CHEE HEAN, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
AND SECOND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE, AT THE OPENING OF THE
EXPLORATORY LABORATORIES AND THE LAUNCH OF THE
PHOTONICS AND LIFE SCIENCES RESEARCH PROGRAMMES AT
RAFFLES INSTITUTION ON SATURDAY 22 APRIL 2000 AT 9 AM**

National Archives of Singapore
Professor Tan Ser Kiat, Chairman, RI Board of Governors,

Distinguished guests, parents, teachers and students

1 It is my pleasure to be here this morning to officiate at the Opening of the Exploratory Laboratories, or X-Labs at Raffles Institution and the Launch of the Photonics and Life Sciences Research Programmes.

2 We have always placed a high emphasis on education in science and technology. One of the goals of Science Education in Singapore is to inculcate scientific literacy in our young so that they are able to approach new challenges in the workplace in a systematic, logical, yet creative way. Another objective is to

produce competent professionals in the various scientific disciplines who can carry out high-level research and development work. Both goals are equally important. How Singapore will fare in the knowledge economy of tomorrow will depend on whether these goals are achieved.

3 The acquisition of scientific skills essentially involves seeking answers to problems. The knowledge obtained from this process is then organised into facts and general principles from which useful predictions can be made. To enable students to arrive at this set of facts and general principles, they must experience at first hand the process of seeking answers to problems. This requires that students physically explore and discover knowledge.

4 The opening of the X-Labs therefore represents an innovative move in this direction. In establishing the X-Labs and strengthening the mentorship programmes related to the X-Labs, RI is going beyond merely equipping its students with a solid foundation in science. With the emphasis on authentic laboratory work, experimentation and research in nascent technologies, the X-Labs serve as an incubator for nurturing promising young research scientists of the future.

5 The establishment of the X-Labs has facilitated the introduction of two key programmes – the Photonics and Life Sciences research programmes. Photonics and Life Sciences exemplify the characteristics of the knowledge-based economy. They are multi-disciplinary in nature and demand a high level of skill and creativity, intensive research and experimentation. These two programmes therefore ensure that students in RI will be equipped with knowledge that has wide-ranging applications and commercial potential in the 21st century.

6 Photonics, which is the technology of generating and harnessing light, has found diverse applications in telecommunications, IT, medicine, electronics and the military, just to name a few.

7 The Life Sciences offer the potential to develop and produce drugs, medical and food products.

8 There is tremendous growth potential for Singapore in these industries. For this reason, the NSTB has supported the development of both home-grown as well as foreign technology-based companies and start-ups to establish their bases in Singapore. An injection of funds is however not the only factor. Education is a key determinant as it is our students who will eventually form the talent pool that

will bring these new economic thrusts into fruition.

9 There is great scope for our schools, tertiary educational institutions and industry to collaborate to develop the interest and potential of our students in these areas. I am therefore glad to see that RI will be tapping on the expertise of working scientists and specialists from NTU, NIE, NUS and Ngee Ann Polytechnic. This is a healthy sign and I would like to encourage our faculty members in the tertiary institutions to continue to help these budding scientists.

10 RI has also enlisted the support and corporate funding from Merck, Sharp & Dohme and Agilent Technologies. I commend these two industry players for their active corporate citizenship. Their participation in education will help ensure that our school curriculum and programmes remain relevant and forward-looking in this era of accelerated technological changes. I hope that more corporations will come forward to participate in the moulding of the generation that will determine our future.

11 Finally, I would like to commend RI for its efforts in broadening its curriculum to stretch its students beyond the syllabuses in an innovative way. The X-Labs and research programmes will enhance the learning experience of your students. More importantly, it is another step that will help Singapore to develop the technopreneurial talent needed to become a world player in the Life Sciences and Photonics.

12 It is now my pleasure to declare open the Exploratory Laboratories in Raffles Institution and to launch the Photonics and Life Sciences Research Programmes. Thank you.

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