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SPEECH BY DR. YFON CHIN SEAG, THE ACTING PRESIDENT,
AT THE SECOND SCIENCE CONGRESS BANQUET ON FRIDAY,
26TH NOVEMBER, 1971 AT 8.00 P.M. AT THE GOLDEN LOUIS,
HOTEL MALAYSIA.

I am very happy indeed to be able to join you at this evening's function, which marks the culmination of your second Science Congress.

At the first Science Congress held in August, 1968, the theme chosen was "Advancing Frontiers of Science". At that Congress, a comprehensive range of papers was discussed, covering biological, chemical, physical, medical and pharmaceutical sciences; the earth sciences; the social sciences; education, architecture; as well as the industrial and engineering sciences. The first Congress rightly accorded prominence to the applications of science and technology in the economic and social development of Singapore, with particular reference to industrialisation.

In contrast with the essentially "exploratory" scope of the first Congress, the theme selected for your second Science Congress is "Science and the Urban Environment in the Tropics", which reflects the maturity of outlook and a focussing of the realities of our society. Singapore, in many ways represents par excellence the "urban environment in the tropics". The theme embraces all the realities she has to face in her evolution towards a modern industrialised city state and technological society. In a wider perspective, Singapore is also the most highly developed urbanised geographic unit in the "Equatorial Zone" of the world. In contributing to the progress of Singapore, the Academy is conscious of the possible far-reaching value of its efforts. In keeping with our aspirations to become a major centre of "brains resources", we in Singapore should lead the research in and solve tropical development problems through new applications of science and technology. It is my hope that the Singapore National Academy of Science will become synonymous with international leadership in the Tropical Sciences and Technology. To this end, future Congresses must assume international dimensions, with the participation of fellow scientists and technologists from other Tropical areas.

This evening, I want to leave some thoughts with you as to the future role of the Academy. Academies such as this serve a useful future, by drawing specialists in kindred fields to exchange and share ideas in symposia, forums and publications. Academies have a duty to publicise scientific aptitudes and achievements, and to enrich the content of science education. To my mind, the Singapore Academy of Science should do more than that. As the national body, it is the proper role of the Academy to investigate the experiences and findings of more advanced countries, to identify pitfalls, reveal excesses, and where development stagnates to point the way. While the Government, industrial and commercial sectors are concerned with targets, means and performance, the Academy can provide the necessary guidance. The Academy's focus should always be on the man, whom all the development is intended to benefit. There is a great need to safeguard the integrity of the human being in the environment that is created around him. The work of the Academy lies as much in sociology and education as in scientific and technological development. Let no man say of Singapore that "It is a civilisation committed to the quest for continually improving means to carelessly examined ends".

The second suggestion that I wish to make is the need to emphasize the inter-disciplinary approach. I am glad to note that a major part of the second Congress is devoted to "inter-disciplinary seminars". Just as in the economic field the multi-resource consortium and the multi-national corporation have become the indispensable forms of organisation for certain enterprises, so in the scientific and technical fields, all major technical achievements are today the result of a "task force" approach - as exemplified by the conquest of the moon. We may not be interested in the Arctic and Antarctic expeditions, but we are certainly interested in the exploration of the oceans and the development and application of physical science and electronic engineering in the fields of computer science, medicine, commerce and industry. Therefore, another vital role of the Academy is to organise conferences or seminars among educators, scientists and technologists to stimulate greater interest and action in developing inter-disciplinary programmes in education at secondary and tertiary levels.

With these remarks, I have great pleasure in wishing the Singapore National Academy of Science greater success in its future activities.

Date: 24.11.71.