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SPEECH BY DR AHMAD MATTAR, MINISTER-IN-CHARGE AND CHAIRMAN,  
INDUSTRIAL TRAINING BOARD, AT THE OPENING OF LEBLOND ASIA PTE LTD  
AND PACIFIC PRECISION CASTING PTE LTD ON FRIDAY, 3 NOV. 1978  
AT 4.30 P.M. AT 2, GUL AVENUE, SINGAPORE 22.

I am very happy to be here today to witness this auspicious combined opening of LeBlond Asia and its sister company, Pacific Precision Casting. My congratulations to both firms!

LeBlond Asia has proven itself to be a firm which believes strongly in the transfer of its technological know-how to the host country. Since its establishment in Singapore in 1973, it has demonstrated a keen concern for the skill development of its staff through apprenticeship.

I understand that during the last four years, LeBlond Asia has been training more than 150 vocational institute graduates in 13 batches in its apprenticeship programme for skilled technicians, which was organised jointly with the ITB. Several of these apprentices have been further trained in the parent company in the USA, and have risen to responsible supervisory positions such as foremen or lead technicians.

Of the 13 batches, the first nine batches of apprentices have completed their training. I note the company's fine record in labour turnover - out of 85 apprentices recruited in these first nine batches, 82 are still with the company. This favourable labour turnover situation speaks very well for the company. It may also reflect upon the training provided by the ITB at the vocational institutes which have always attached great importance to the inculcation of good work attitudes.

The ITB is aware that the vocational training it provides must necessarily adjust and adapt to the changing social and economic objectives of the country. As the industrialisation, strategies moved from import substitution to export promotion, so

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have the aims of vocational training been progressing from providing basic training in as many trades as possible to support the industrialisation programme to quality training in areas of more advanced technology and sophistication.

In line with this strategy, industrial machinery manufacture had been identified by the Government as one of the key sectors for priority development. In fact, the metal engineering and machinery manufacture industries grew rapidly from a gross annual sales value of \$111.9 million with a value added per worker of \$6,740 in 1965 to \$387.6 million and \$16,730 in 1976 respectively. As at 30 September 1978, 1,349 out of a total of 3,493 apprentices registered with the ITB belonged to companies in the Metal Machining and Precision Machining industries. This accounts for 39% of all the registered apprentices.

This significant development could be attributed to the Government's efforts in successfully encouraging the setting up of tooling facilities, foundries for high quality steel castings and modern facilities for machinery, heat-treatment and electroplating, to promote machinery manufacture ventures. It has and still is consciously developing, through the ITB and EDB, a skilled workforce to complement this promotion.

It has been forecast that the industry would continue to grow and be actively promoted in Singapore. This is especially so as ASEAN accelerates its industrialisation programmes which would create a strong demand for industrial machinery, particularly machine tools, construction equipment, food processing machinery, agricultural and process engineering equipment.

In anticipation of such demand patterns, Singapore has again made preparations. Additional training facilities have been planned or constructed to provide higher skill training to complement the expected expansion in the industry. These include a new tool and die workshop located at the Pasir Panjang Vocational Institute. The construction of the workshop has been completed recently and purchase of equipment is in process. Besides this, there are plans to establish a training centre for the precision machinery trades. The ITB also plans to move into the new field of pattern-making training if the results of the survey now underway should establish that there would be a sustained demand for woodbased pattern-makers. If

the pattern-making training centre materialises, it will be located at the Jurong Vocational Institute, where two workshops would be converted for this purpose.

LeBlond Asia and Pacific Precision Casting, an integrated foundry-cum-machine tool manufacturing facility producing Regal centre lathes for the export market, come within the category of industries that are not only contributing to our economy but more importantly, have brought with them to Singapore a sophisticated technology to further enhance the technological development of the Republic. Its increased confidence in Singapore, as manifested in today's occasion, further gives Singapore a satisfying reassurance of her attractiveness to foreign investors.

May I wish LeBlond Asia and Pacific Precision Casting every success in their future undertakings. I now have great pleasure in officially declaring these premises open.

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