ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT THE OPENING OF PHILIPS GOVERNMENT TRAINING CENTRE, JURONG, ON SATURDAY, 2 OCTOBER 1976

To improve our standard of living, we must continually improve the skills of our young. When they are able to perform most demanding jobs to the highest standards, then we can be a centre for precision engineering.

We are now engaged in manufacturing a range of products from colour television and watches, machine tools and ball bearings, to meters and instruments.

Basic education, combined with discipline and hard work, has enabled Singaporeans to cope with new technical work rapidly. But Singaporeans must remain keen and eager, make more progress, to master new techniques and strive perpetually to do the work better and faster.

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From two institutes in 1968, the Industrial Training Board now has twelve centres. These vocational institutes equip our Primary Six to Secondary Four students with basic trade skills, preparing them for practical industrial work.

ITB vocational training must necessarily be general. Each industry must adapt the vocational institutes' graduates to their own specific needs. Companies must organise their own training programmes, especially for trades which require a long learning period.

Philips Singapore, with the Economic Development Board, has established this training centre, which will increase the number of industrially trained workers. The Philips group manufactures consumer electronics, domestic appliances, telecommunications equipment, production machines and tools employing 3,300 workers.

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This joint training centre is the third established to train precision engineering craftsmen. Its success depends on the hard work and enthusiasm of the instructors, from Singapore and Holland, as well as on the sustained application of the apprentices.

Apprentices take six to seven years of training and practice before they can call themselves craftsmen. After two years in this Centre, they will require constant practice, repeating their skills again and in approximating perfection. Sad to say, I have had reports of some young apprentices who after their basic training claim to know everything, when in fact have just qualified for further practice and training.

To make Singapore a centre for manufacturing high quality machinery and equipment, our young trainees must apply themselves diligently and patiently, always striving for the highest standards until they equal the best of those reached by industrial workers of Europe, Japan or America.

I now have the pleasure to declare this Centre open and wish all who teach and train in it success.

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