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SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH, DR TOH CHIN CHYE,
AT THE OPENING OF THE SINGAPORE SCIENCE CENTRE
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The layman has a stereotype image of science, a subject that is studied only by people who wear glasses and taught by people who habitually forget where they left their spectacles. Science of course is not a single subject but covers many fields. The challenge for the Science Centre is to show how scientific principles or laws play in our daily lives. So we decided to make energy and life as the central themes around which the exhibits will be constructed. The themes are appropriate as we enter an era of energy and population crises. And as everybody knows, the extravagant and reckless use of energy has been blamed for pollution of the environment, pushed up the price of oil which in turn has created a world-wide economic recession and generated political crises in many countries since 1973.

Ever since it was discovered that steam could be used as a driving force to operate an engine, technology has proceeded in the direction of inventing better and better machines for industry, transportation and the generation of electricity for power and telecommunications. Excepting for radioactive minerals, the sources of energy are fossil fuels made by photosynthesis over a period of several million years. Photosynthesis also provides for our food on land and in the ocean, so the sun occupies a central position in the lobby of the Science Centre.

There are now assembled 322 exhibits, of which 196 were built by the Science Centre, 25 by overseas contractors and 101 donated. Fabricating models requires research, a knowledge of the use of materials, and painstaking craftsmanship. It is an art as well as a skill. Because materials are not readily available in Singapore and the staff of the Centre are new, credit goes to them for the effort they have put in. I hope that as they acquire more

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experience, the Centre will develop expertise in craftsmanship and the art of putting an idea across. It will then be able to refine some of the exhibits or build new models for the Centre itself or for others in future. We are indebted to the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, Fujitsu, Seiko and Daimler-Benz for their contributions of exhibits to the Centre.

The Centre cannot remain static. It must develop new ideas for exhibits in pace with advancements in science and progress in technology. This means a continuing support from the public. At this point, I would like to express my appreciation of the efforts of the Science Centre Fund Raising Committee headed by Mr K C Tan.

The Science Council, the Science Teachers Association and the Singapore National Academy of Science have been provided with office space and facilities in the Centre. I hope this will bring about interaction with the Science Centre Board in disseminating knowledge to the lay public and promoting the teaching of science, particularly to students in the schools.

The Centre is not confined to those with a background training in science. The young and the old can enjoy themselves by browsing around and satisfy their curiosity on how things work and why human beings are what we are. It is all very exciting. I am sure that all those who have taken part in one way or another in the creation of the Science Centre will share with me a sense of relief that at long last the Centre is now open for public viewing.

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