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Subject: (EMBARGOED) Speech by RAdm Teo Chee Hean, 29 June 2000, 2.30 pm (Final copy)

# *Singapore Government*

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**(FINAL REVISED SPEECH)**

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**SPEECH BY RADM (NS) TEO CHEE HEAN, MINISTER FOR  
EDUCATION AND SECOND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE AT THE NIE  
TEACHERS INVESTITURE CEREMONY ON THURSDAY, 29 JUNE 2000  
AT 2.30 P.M. AT THE SINGAPORE INDOOR STADIUM**

Good afternoon Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

### Introduction

1. It gives me great pleasure to be here this afternoon. I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to all of you for successfully completing your teacher training programme at the National Institute of Education (NIE). The Teacher Investiture Ceremony today marks more than your success on this course. More importantly it marks your formal entry into the

ranks of the teaching profession. As teachers, you are entrusted with the heavy responsibility of nurturing young minds and equipping them with the values and skills to meet the challenges of the future.

2. Over the last 12 months, a total of 1543 trained teachers have graduated from NIE. This is a welcome addition to the teaching force, and brings fresh new energy and ideas to our schools. In this afternoon's ceremony, 965 of you are graduating with the Postgraduate Diploma in Education.

### Qualities sought when Recruiting Teachers

3 You have come from various academic backgrounds, ranging from disciplines in traditional teaching subjects like English Language, Mathematics and Science, to those from non-teaching subjects, like Business Administration. This demonstrates the Ministry's belief that subject knowledge, whilst important, should not be the sole criterion in deciding whether a person should be recruited as a teacher. There are other qualities we look for in a candidate. Most importantly, the candidate must have the aptitude and attitude to teach. He must demonstrate that he has the interest and passion to want to teach. The rest is then equipping the individual with the skills and knowledge to teach.

4 All of you here have been motivated by a sense of calling to become a teacher, to make a difference. For some of you, the teaching profession may be your lifelong calling. I applaud you for that. Your desire to dedicate yourself to educating the children of our nation provides the self motivation for you to pursue your passion. The training you have gone through has enhanced your capacity to take on and assimilate more knowledge and skills in future. The practicum you underwent as part of your training has helped prepare you to take on the real challenges of teaching independently in the classroom.

5 Beginning teachers like yourselves may sometimes feel overwhelmed by the many things you have to do in your early months, settling into school and trying to do the best for your students. Work with your mentoring teachers and do not be afraid to ask them for guidance.

Teachers benefit tremendously from one another by sharing ideas, materials, techniques, lesson plans, and organisational skills, and then improving them. Throughout your teaching career, there will be many opportunities for professional and personal development. Make use of these opportunities to excel in your job.

### Stakeholders in Education

6 Earlier this year, COMPASS, or Community and Parents in Support of Schools launched a document entitled “Stakeholders in Education”. This document sets out the various roles that the stakeholders in education play in helping each child to learn better and to reach his full potential. The stakeholders are the child himself, his parents and family, his teachers, his Principal, MOE HQ, the Community, Business and Industry, the Alumni Association, as well as the School Advisory/Management Committee.

7 Students are at the core of whatever we do. When our schools and teachers work with the various stakeholders, in particular the parents and the surrounding community, we believe this will facilitate the holistic development of a child -- in his character, motivation and ability.

8 As teachers, you are in a unique position to greatly influence the children under your care. What you say to them, how you interact with each of them – simple words and actions will shape their self-esteem and view of the world.

9 A teacher asked her class what each wanted to become when they grew up. Every child responded with the usual responses you would expect from such a question. "A football player," "An astronaut," "The president," "A teacher," "A race car driver." Except one. He was sitting down quietly and did not answer. So the teacher asked the boy, "And what do you want to be when you grow up?" "Possible" he replied. "Possible?" asked the teacher. "Yes," he said. "My mom is always telling me I'm impossible. So when I get to be big, I want to be possible."

10 Good teachers have the ability to make every child feel he is a winner. They have faith in their students' abilities and affirms to each child that he can be the best he can be.

11 While teachers seek to teach students to learn how to learn, students on their part should demonstrate a desire to learn, a willingness to get the most out of the experiences that school can offer. Encourage your students to be active learners in the classroom and outside and to have a sound sense of civic pride. Help them not just to be strong academically, but to demonstrate a spirit of caring and sharing towards others.

12 What teachers do has to be complemented by what parents do. The Stakeholders document asks that parents support our schools in their efforts to educate their children and show care and concern by being interested in what their children do. When the relationship between teachers, the school and parents is strong, the mutual reinforcement will ensure that the child receives the same messages at home and in school. This will go a long way in instilling in our children a strong sense of character and responsibility.

### Rewarding Good Teachers

13 Teachers have a special part to play in society. We need good teachers and a strong education system to help educate our next generation of Singaporeans. To ensure that the Education Service remains attractive to people seeking a fulfilling career, the Ministry is constantly reviewing the terms and conditions of the Service. The most recent improvements to the Education Scheme of Service was in January this year, when intermediate grades of GEO1A1 and GEO2A1 were introduced between the recruitment grades of GEO1 and GEO2, and the career grades of GEO1A2 and GEO2A2. This has resulted in faster first promotions for teachers. More than 4000 were promoted this year, the largest number on record.

14 This afternoon, in Parliament, the Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong is announcing a general salary revision for civil servants. Salaries of Education Officers will similarly be revised upwards. **The total annual remuneration package of Education Officers will be increased by an average of 13% including increases in monthly salary, Annual Variable Component (AVC) and performance bonus. Performance bonuses will be introduced for officers in the General Education**

**Officer grades. This means that all teachers will now be eligible for consideration for performance bonuses.** Details will be provided in due course. The Education Service will strive to ensure that its pay structure meets the needs of the teaching profession and teachers themselves and continue to be attractive and competitive for new recruits as well as experienced teachers.

### Conclusion

15 Let me congratulate you once again on your entry into a noble profession. The 21st Century poses tremendous challenges. Education must not only respond to change, it must also be at the forefront of change. Antoine de Saint Exupery, an adventurer, aviator and writer of charming children's stories exhorted us, "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea..." Antoine de Saint Exupery was a dreamer; we do need to teach our children the "how to"s. But we must fire their passions and teach them to dream too.

16 I am leaving with you the privilege and responsibility of moulding our future to meet the challenges ahead. I urge you to do your utmost to bring out the best in our children. You have in your hands the power to create a brighter future. So teach them, and teach them also to "...yearn for the vast and endless sea..." Teachers, I wish you a fulfilling career.

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