

PRESS RELEASE

Information Division, Ministry of Communications & Information, City Hall, Singapore 0617 · Tel. 3307269 / 3307270 / 3307271

86 WIS - 17

Release No.: 30/NOV
01-1/86/11/15

SPEECH BY PRESIDENT WEE KIM WEE ON THE OCCASION OF
THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL INSTITUTE
(NTI) NEW COMPLEX ON SATURDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 1986 AT 6.00PM

Of all the assets that a nation has, the most valuable is a trained, hardworking, cohesive, striving population. History shows that the destiny of a nation is determined not so much by the wealth that has been accumulated or the natural resources with which the nation is blessed but by the quality, education and ability of its people to adjust to changing circumstances and to surmount problems when these occur.

Singaporeans have an abiding faith in education as the key to progress and a better life. Notwithstanding the handicaps that confront a small nation with no natural resources we believe that through education, training and the development of skills we shall overcome our handicaps and build a prosperous and secure Singapore. The official opening of the new Complex of the Nanyang Technological Institute (NTI) is a concrete manifestation of confidence in the future of our nation.

Situated on the grounds of the former Nanyang University, NTI can trace its roots to the establishment of Nantah in 1953. At that time the call to establish a Chinese institution of higher learning found a response from Singaporeans from all walks of life: millionaires and rickshaw pullers, young and old, educated and uneducated. Donations flowed in generously from individuals and organisations to support the project. The Hokkien Huay Kuan contributed some 200 hectares of land to house the new university.

It was these private and voluntary donations of land and money that made Nanyang University possible. And Nantah's campus made possible the rapid development of NTI.

Using the former Nantah buildings as temporary quarters, NTI did not have to wait for the new Complex to be completed before enrolling and instructing students. It would have been a laborious task to start a new campus from scratch. As it was, NTI took in its first batch of students one year after the formal establishment of the Institute in 1981. It is fitting and appropriate that we record the history of this campus by incorporating "Nanyang" into the name of the Institute. It is a reminder how NTI came to be sited in Jurong.

NTI has made significant progress since its inception five years ago. With the completion of the new Complex designed by the distinguished architect, Kenzo Tange, NTI now has modern and well-equipped laboratories and facilities for teaching and research.

Two batches of engineering graduates totalling about 1,200 students have already completed their engineering programme at NTI and are now working in industries. The feedback is positive and encouraging. It confirms that the NTI engineering programme is on the right track towards nurturing professionals who are capable of adapting to new situations and meeting the growing needs of industries.

Externally, the Institute's degree courses have been favourably evaluated and commended by accreditation teams from the professional engineering institutions in the United Kingdom.

NTI's engineering programmes have also been strongly endorsed by the Commonwealth Engineers' Council. At its Conference in 1985, the Council held out the Institute as a model worthy of detailed study and emulation throughout the Commonwealth. For a new Institute of Technology this endorsement is particularly noteworthy.

With the engineering courses well on track, NTI can now widen the range of its academic offerings by introducing other technology-related professional courses. Accountancy, scheduled to commence in 1987, will be the first non-engineering professional course to be conducted at NTI. Other courses will be added in line with the expansion of the Institute and the growing needs of Singapore.

The challenge that faces NTI is simple to state but difficult to achieve. It is to build a technological university of excellence which will contribute significantly to the development of Singapore.

To achieve this aim, good facilities and well-equipped laboratories will not by themselves be enough. What gives life and vitality to a university are inspiring and dedicated faculty members who are able to provide a meaningful and exciting educational challenge to the bright young minds who will occupy the lecture theatres and use the laboratories.

NTI will need to seek out and recruit capable, experienced and qualified academic staff who have a genuine interest in teaching and research. This will not be an easy task, particularly in the professional disciplines which NTI is emphasising. Competent academic staff with experience not only in teaching and research but also actual practice have a ready world market for their talents.

To grow as an academic institution, NTI must foster and sustain a lively and fulfilling academic environment. Only then will able professionals want to join its staff. The Institute must ensure that its terms and conditions of service are internationally competitive at all times so that it will be able to recruit and retain competent, experienced and well qualified staff from Singapore and overseas.

NTI can be assured of the Government's fullest support in its effort to develop into a technological university that our nation can be proud of. The task that lies ahead for the Institute's staff and students is to aim high and work hard to achieve Excellence for Singapore.

@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@

B16/P2/Pgs.1-4