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**SPEECH BY DR NG ENG HEN, MINISTER FOR
EDUCATION AND SECOND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE,
AT THE ITE GRADUATION CEREMONY 2010 ON
WEDNESDAY 21 JULY 2010, AT 1430 HOURS,
UNIVERSITY CULTURAL CENTRE**

Mr Bob Tan, Chairman, ITE Board of Governors

Mr Bruce Poh, Director & CEO of ITE

Distinguished Guests

ITE Graduands and Parents

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good afternoon.

Introduction

- 1 It is my pleasure to be with all of you at the Institute of Technical Education's 2010 Graduation Ceremony. Let me first extend my warmest congratulations to

the graduands who are about to join the ranks of ITE's 300,000-strong alumni body. I am sure that your parents, family members, teachers from school and ITE lecturers, who have supported you and have been instrumental in your journey, share the pride and joy of your success today. Your graduation from ITE prepares you well to enter the workforce as well as to continuously upgrade your skills.

Technical Education, the Bedrock of Singapore's Economy

2 Technical education has supported Singapore's growth and progress over the years. Soon after our independence in the '60s, technical and vocational education enabled us to build up an industrial sector from scratch. As our industries re-structured to use more advanced technology and automation, higher skills were required. To respond to this challenge, ITE was established in 1992, as a post-secondary educational institution.

ITE's Outcomes

- 3 Since its inception, ITE has accomplished much. First, it has consistently provided industries with technically-skilled labour for Singapore's growing economy. By the end of 2009, ITE and its predecessors would have contributed close to 300,000 graduates to our skilled labour workforce. This year, some 12,400 students will graduate and add to this growing number.
- 4 The strong demand for ITE graduates reflects the high quality of your education. I am heartened to note that despite a weaker economy in the first half of 2009, ITE graduates who entered the job market last year remained highly employable, with more than 80% having found a job within six months after graduation.
- 5 Second, ITE has transformed itself from an institution that provided basic vocational training, to one that now works with industry leaders and internationally-renowned global institutions to provide quality market-relevant education.
- 6 For example, ITE has built on its long-standing relationship with its German partners to offer its second Technical Engineer Diploma in Automotive Engineering, which will be launched in three months'

time. ITE has also established over 20 joint certifications with leading industry players to equip its students with skills beyond what is taught in the classroom. These include certifications in programming with Sun Java, mobile application development with J2ME and healthcare simulation training with Medical Education Technologies.

- 7 Third, ITE has established new global standards in both technical and vocational education. An article in the US-based *Education Week* in July last year shared that while international educators have been fascinated by Singapore students' "*exceptional Math and Science skills... outside observers have become intrigued with another, less discussed feature of Singapore's education system: its career and technical education programmes*". Indeed, in recent years, ITE has continued to play host to more international visitors, sharing its systems, processes and successes with advanced economies – like Australia, France, Sweden, and the USA. These countries see Singapore's vocational and technical education system as highly successful and a benchmark worthy of emulation.

- 8 ITE's success is reflected not only in the positive feedback from international government bodies, but also in international accolades garnered by its students and graduates. At the recent World Skills Competition, dubbed the "Olympics of Skills," held in Canada last year, ITE graduates and students distinguished themselves from among a pool of 900 talented youths from over 50 countries in a variety of skills areas, including Restaurant Service, Beauty Therapy and Nursing.
- 9 Fourth, in line with its primary mission, ITE has been instrumental in providing life-long learning opportunities for everyone. Through its various programmes, ITE has provided late developers the opportunity to achieve higher levels of qualification at their own pace. ITE has also trained some 691,000 adult learners to date.
- 10 ITE has transformed many young lives through its unique brand of a "Hands-on, Minds-on, Hearts-on" education philosophy. The introduction of a flexible curriculum framework to cater to students with different abilities, as well as holistic support for students through student motivation programmes, counselling services and financial help have been

effective in retaining students who would have otherwise fallen out of our social system.

- 11 I congratulate ITE's management and staff who have worked hard to achieve these successes. As a result, thousands of lives have been enriched. I know that many of your students have expressed openly their appreciation for how ITE faculty members have changed their lives, because you believed in them and help them maximize their potential.

Celebrating the Best of ITE

- 12 Over the years, ITE graduates themselves have achieved much and brought honour to their institution, and now serve as role models for all ITE students. Let me highlight two recent ITE graduates who have made their mark in their own ways.
- 13 ITE graduate Daniel Poh is now a Biomedical Science student at Singapore Polytechnic. Daniel was recently selected to participate in a semester-long internship at Harvard University's Medical School. For Daniel, who graduated from ITE last year as its top Biochemical Technology course student, it was a dream-come-true to be participating

in stem cell technology research at a top-ranked University.

- 14 The second example is Aloysius Teo. Soon after receiving his 'O' level results, Aloysius was offered a secretarial course at ITE. However, discouraged by the negative image that some had of ITE, Aloysius decided to work in a restaurant before serving National Service. After a spate of negative personal encounters, Aloysius realised the importance of a good education and decided to enrol in the *Nitec* in Service Skills (Retail) at ITE College East. Aloysius felt strongly enough about his ITE education that he wrote to the Straits Times Forum in January this year, stressing its merits.
- 15 During his stint at ITE, Aloysius received the Young Retailers Scholarship Award, sponsored by the Workforce Development Agency in conjunction with Tangs, and later, the Outstanding Graduate Award. After fulfilling his scholarship obligations with Tangs last year, he returned to ITE and enrolled in the Higher *Nitec* in Business Studies (Administration) programme - at age 24. Aloysius credits ITE for teaching him the importance of constantly upgrading

his knowledge and skills in order to stay competitive in the industry.

- 16 Like Aloysius, many ITE graduates have a strong desire to continue upgrading their qualifications. Many of you present today must have already set your sights on such goals. In fact, more ITE graduates are progressing to our local Polytechnics. The proportion of ITE students pursuing full-time polytechnic diploma programmes upon graduation has been increasing steadily over the years, from 14% just five years ago, to about 20% currently.

Moving Forward

- 17 ITE has grown from strength to strength over the years, and I am happy to hear that it does not intend to rest on its laurels. Instead, ITE faculty and staff are continuously looking for ways to improve the educational experience for its students, and to enhance their employability in the workforce.
- 18 Today, I am happy to announce that ITE's second comprehensive college, ITE College West at Choa Chu Kang Grove, has opened its doors to students on 5 July 2010. This is yet another significant

milestone in the development and history of technical education in Singapore.

- 19 Positioned as a *College of Service and Innovation*, the new ITE College West will be home to more than 7,200 full-time students. Students will be able to learn, explore and experiment in an authentic learning environment that leverages on the latest technology and education pedagogy.
- 20 With the College's enhanced focus on the service industry, I am delighted to announce the establishment of a new **School of Hospitality** in ITE. This new school will support the growing demand for skilled and professional manpower within the hospitality industry. The school will have a 22-room training hotel, a coffee barista centre, as well as training kitchens, four training restaurants and a wine cellar.
- 21 The School of Hospitality has partnered renowned international partners like Institut Paul Bocuse in France, and the International Hotel Management Institute in Switzerland. It has also forged alliances with industry leaders, such as Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts Asia Pacific and Marina Bay Sands. I am confident that the new School will not only set new

benchmarks and standards for the hospitality industry, but also serve as a leading training provider for the industry. The Government will continue to support ITE in its efforts to provide best-in-class technical education for our students.

Conclusion

- 22 In closing, let me congratulate all ITE graduands on your achievements. I am confident that your ITE training will provide you with the firm foundation needed to build your career in the years ahead. Put to full use the education and skills you received at ITE and proceed with full confidence in your careers. Succeed for yourselves and your family but also give back to ITE and the larger Singapore community.
- 23 I wish you success in your future endeavours. Thank you.