

**SPEECH BY DR NG ENG HEN, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND SECOND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE, AT THE UNVEILING OF DESIGN AND GROUND BREAKING CEREMONY OF THE INSTITUTE OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION'S NEW HEADQUARTERS AND COLLEGE CENTRAL ON WEDNESDAY, 1 DECEMBER 2010, AT 11.00 AM AT ANG MO KIO AVENUE 5**

Mr Bob Tan, Chairman, ITE Board of Governors

Mr Bruce Poh, CEO of ITE

Mr Tan Seng Hua, Principal of ITE College Central

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning.

**Introduction**

1 It is my pleasure to be here this morning at the ground-breaking ceremony for the new ITE Headquarters and ITE College Central at Ang Mo Kio.

2 Today's event is particularly significant. In 2003, I had officiated at the groundbreaking for ITE's first Regional Campus—ITE College East in Simei. Today's groundbreaking ceremony marks the final phase of ITE's redevelopment from 10 satellite campuses into three regional campuses.

3 This ceremony is also a manifestation of MOE's strong commitment in developing a best-in-its-class vocational and technical education sector.

**Key Elements**

4 Creating a world-class vocational and technical education sector depends on several key elements. I will highlight three of them. First, attracting a strong and steady enrolment of students willing to work hard. Second, committed teachers who are able to motivate students who are perceived not to be academically gifted. Third, providing state of the art training facilities.

5 Over the years, ITE has changed the perceptions of students, parents and the general public. As a result, more students are enrolling because they know that there is real value in an ITE education. In 2000, about 19% of the graduating secondary school cohort entered ITE. This has steadily risen to 22% in 2009. ITE's current enrolment stands at over 25,000, with over 8,000 students per college. More

importantly, this has been achieved without compromising on the quality of ITE education. Employment outcomes of ITE's graduates remain very positive. Despite a weaker economy in the first half of 2009, ITE graduates who entered the job market last year remained highly marketable, enjoying an overall employment rate of more than 80%.

6 We will build on this success and continue to improve both the quality and value of an ITE education. Recently, PM Lee at the National Day Rally announced the enhancement of ITE's Direct Entry Scheme (DES) in August this year. It builds on ITE's existing DES scheme, which allows students who perform well at their 'N' Level examinations to pursue Higher Nitec courses at ITE rather than proceed with their 'O' Level exams. In the enhanced scheme, students who opt for the DES effectively sign on for a through-train pathway to the polytechnics provided they continue to do well at ITE. Students will be assured of a place at the polytechnics so long as they achieve the qualifying GPA score in their Higher Nitec courses. This scheme will give a boost to ITE to attract bright and hard-working students.

### **Committed and Dedicated Teachers**

7 While the changing structures, policies and programmes that we put in place can provide the framework for a sound, forward-looking vocational education system, good teachers make for the quality, and give students who are deemed to be academically less-inclined, the confidence that they too can achieve and contribute to society. ITE has transformed many young lives through its unique brand of a "Hands-on, Minds-on, Hearts-on" education philosophy. Many graduates have attributed their successes to their ITE teachers. Their care and concern, their abiding sense of responsibility, and their passion for their students are what make the difference. I track staff attrition rates of institutions very carefully. ITE has one of the lowest attrition rates amongst the higher institutions of learning.

### **State of the Art Training Facilities**

8 At ITE, we provide state of the art training and educational facilities. ITE's physical rejuvenation began with the consolidation of its satellite campuses into three world-class comprehensive colleges under the "One ITE System, Three Colleges" Model. ITE opened its first comprehensive college, ITE College East in 2005, and its second comprehensive college, ITE College West, earlier this year.

9 Since its opening in 2005, ITE College East has earned numerous accolades from both local and foreign visitors. Its facilities have enabled ITE to provide a high quality of training to students, equipping them with the relevant skills in authentic work environments. This ensures that they are work-ready once they graduate.

10 As a further testament to the quality of training provided by ITE, I am glad to note that 7 ITE students had won medals at the recent 8th ASEAN Skills Competition in Thailand (2 Gold, 1 Silver and 4 Bronze).

## **New Third ITE College**

11 ITE Central will open the doors of opportunities for many Singaporeans. Positioned as a College of Creativity and Innovation, ITE College Central will be home to more than 10,000 students. Aligned with its niche focus on programmes for the creative and design industry, ITE College Central will also offer new courses in the performing arts. This will allow ITE to support Singapore's growing arts and entertainment industry.

12 This campus will also offer courses in niche areas such as Design and Media, Early Childhood Education as well as Aerospace Engineering.

13 To support the Aerospace Engineering course, College Central will house a dedicated aircraft hanger with actual aircraft parts instead of models in line with our philosophy to engage students by helping them learn in an authentic environment.

14 To ensure that students and staff receive industry-relevant training, the College has formed partnerships with leading industry players to establish Centres of Technology in niche areas of excellence, namely, the ITE-Toon Boom Centre of Excellence in New Media and ITE-Keppel Offshore and Marine Technology Centre. These centres will facilitate technology transfers from global industry players, offer joint-certification programmes and provide students and staff opportunities for industry attachment and projects.

15 To bring the "work environment" into the College, it has also established specialised centres on campus with leading industry partners, such as the ITE-Fluke Metrology Training Centre, and ITE-IBM Software Quality Assurance Centre. These collaborations will provide ITE student and staff with additional opportunities for industry exposure and cross-collaboration.

## **Conclusion**

16 We have developed a first-class vocational and technical education sector. MOE will continue to invest in this sector and in the students to ensure its continued success. I would like to acknowledge the effort of ITE's partners, staff and students and look forward to the continued partnership between ITE, the community and the industry.

17 In closing, let me congratulate ITE as it begins this last step in the remarkable journey of physical transformation. I wish ITE every success.

18 Thank you.