

## Speech by Professor Louis Chen, IMS Director

Professor Tan Chorh Chuan

Professor Roger Howe

Professor Chong Chi Tat

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

A warm welcome to the 10th anniversary celebration of the Institute for Mathematical Sciences and many thanks to Professor Tan Chorh Chuan for gracing this occasion as our Guest of Honor.

Ten years have passed like a blink of an eye. The establishment of the IMS seems to have taken place only yesterday. But much has happened in the past ten years. And many events are still vivid in the mind.

The establishment of the Institute is a collective effort of the Department of Mathematics in pursuit of a common dream. It was approved in 2000 after three attempts made over a span of ten years. The Institute received start-up funding from MOE and NUS for its first five years of operation and is now primarily funded by NUS.

Modeled after successful mathematical institutes in the west, the IMS provides a platform for research interaction without hiring in-house researchers. Given Singapore's geographical isolation and its small scientific community, the Institute faced many odds in achieving its mission. Fortunately, the IMS has been able to overcome most of the odds through the support of the Management Board, the advice of the Scientific Advisory Board and the active participation of the local and international scientific community.

The Management Board provides a framework for the Institute's operations. In particular, the Chair of the Board, Professor Chong Chi Tat who was also the Provost during the Institute's first five years, had provided it with the kind of flexibility that it needed during its initial years of development.

The Scientific Advisory Board, which helps in reviewing proposals for programs and workshops, also shares its wisdom with the Institute, and has guided and nurtured the Institute to what it is today. The local scientific community has taken an active interest in working with the Institute in fostering mathematical research in Singapore by organizing many programs and workshops and actively participating in many of them. Mathematics is the underlying thread weaving through many disciplines in science and technology. It plays an important role in the formulation and analysis of today's complex and multi-disciplinary scientific problems. By providing a platform connecting the mathematical sciences with the other disciplines the IMS has been able to contribute in a significant way to research vibrancy in the mathematical sciences in Singapore. It has also brought about greater interaction and research collaboration between mathematicians and scientists of different disciplines and between the local and the international scientific communities.

Over the years the IMS has benefited from the help and friendly cooperation of World Scientific which publishes its Lectures Notes Series and prints its newsletter Imprints. In commemoration of the Institute's 10th anniversary, World Scientific has helped in designing and printing a booklet with the theme of this celebration as title, "Celebrating 10 Years of Mathematical Synergy". It has also published a book entitled "Creative Minds, Charmed Lives", which is a collection of interviews with 38 mathematicians and scientists who have visited IMS in the past 10 years. These interviews were conducted by my colleague Professor Leong Yu Kiang who has also provided invaluable contributions to the conceptualization of the newsletter as its founding editor.

On funding, the IMS has recently received a gift of about 1 million US Dollars from the John Templeton Foundation to establish the Asian Initiative for Infinity (or, in short, All) at the Institute. The All, which will focus on activities related to

mathematical logic, was conceived by Professor Hugh Woodin and Professor Ted Slaman of UC Berkeley and Professor Chong Chi Tat of NUS, who also wrote a proposal for the Templeton Foundation grant. This gift is eligible for a dollar-for-dollar matching fund from the Singapore Government.

Since the inception of the IMS, I have had a total of five Deputy Directors. This is probably a record among all mathematical sciences institutes in the world. My Deputy Directors in chronological order of service are Chen Kan, Yeneng, Denny, Ka Hin and Ser Peow. With their different working styles and different strengths, they have all helped me significantly, particularly in those areas where I needed help the most.

Until recently I have had a fairly frequent turn over of support staff. But I have kept in touch with some of those who have left the Institute and I am happy to know that some of them are here today. The support staff is undoubtedly important for the smooth running of the day-to-day operations. They have done remarkably well under my demanding and fastidious style.

In closing, I would like to thank everyone who has, in one way or another, helped the IMS in its development or contributed to its success. In particular, I would like to thank those members of the Management Board who have served on the Board continuously in the past ten years: Professor Chong Chi Tat, Chair, Mr Ng Kok Lip and Dr K K Phua. I would also like to thank the founding members of the Scientific Advisory Board: Professor Jacques-Louis Lions, who passed away in 2001 and is sadly missed by all of us; Professor Hans Föllmer, Professor Avner Friedman and Professor Keith Moffatt, whose term ended two years ago; and Professor Roger Howe, Chair, Professor Lui Pao Chuen and Professor David Siegmund, whose term will end in a few days.

I must thank our musical colleagues who will be adding a touch of culture to make this celebration a memorable one: Professor Bernard Tan who composed a piece, entitled "Remembrance", for the occasion, and Ms Kelly Loh and Ms Mifiona Quah who will enchant us with the flute and the harp. Thanks also go to the Center for Instructional Technology for their professionalism and friendly cooperation in producing the video presentation for us and in video shooting this celebration.

I should also thank three scientific colleagues for the highlights that await us after the reception. They are Professor Tony Chan who has kindly taken time off from the busy schedule of being the President of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology to share with us his rich US experience in research organization; Professor Hugh Woodin who has travelled half the world to bring to earth a mathematical universe only the initiated few have seen; and our former deputy director Professor Sun Yeneng who will cast some light on some basic questions about the nature of economics.

Last but not least, I would like to thank all of you for coming to IMS to join us in this celebration of our 10th anniversary. Thank you.

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