

Speech by Professor Louis Chen, IMS Director

RAdm Teo Chee Hean, Minister for Education and Second Minister for Defence;

Prof Shih Choon Fong, Vice-Chancellor, National University of Singapore;

Prof Roger Howe, Chairman, IMS Scientific Advisory Board;

Prof Chong Chi Tat, Chairman, IMS Management Board;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and gentlemen:

Welcome to the Official Opening of the Institute for Mathematical Sciences. The Institute for Mathematical Sciences was conceived more than 10 years ago. It materialized last year after three submissions of proposal.

The first proposal was submitted to the University by the Department of Mathematics in 1991. And in 1996, at the request of the Dean of Science, the Department submitted a much-revised proposal. In 1998, the succeeding Dean of Science asked the Department to resubmit its proposal. A new proposal was redrafted and submitted to the Ministry of Education through the University. In January 2000, the Ministry gave its approval for the setting up of the Institute.

I believe that the success of the third attempt is linked to three important factors: the developments of the Department of Mathematics and two closely related departments, the new mission of the University, and the national emphasis on a knowledge-based economy.

Since 1991, the Department of Mathematics has grown from strength to strength both in terms of the number of faculty and the quality of research. With the setting up of the Department of Computational Science in 1996 and the Department of Statistics and Applied Probability in 1998, the total number of faculty in these three departments today is about 130. A sizable number of their faculty members are internationally known for their research work. Some of this outstanding research work is home grown.

In the same period of time, the University has embarked on a mission to transform itself from a teaching university to a research university and then to a world-class university. Dramatic changes and restructuring of the University have taken place, particularly in the last 3 years.

Singapore is now moving towards a first world status. It needs to create niches in Science and Technology in order to compete with the developed countries. In its transition to a knowledge-based economy, it has shifted its focus from the training of a competent and professional workforce to the nurturing of knowledge workers and knowledge creators.

Against the backdrop of all these developments, the setting up of the Institute is timely. The Institute will build on the strengths of the three departments. Through synergy with these departments it aims to promote multidisciplinary research, help build strengths in niche areas in Science and Technology, and create knowledge in a knowledge-based economy. Allow me now to give a short presentation on the Institute.

As you can see, the Institute is situated in a picturesque part of the campus and next to a forest. It has a peaceful environment free from distractions. It is an ideal place for research. For this, I would like to thank the Vice-Chancellor for kindly permitting me to pick the two bungalows, the Office of Estate and Development for their professional support and assistance throughout the renovation process, and the PWD Consultants for skilfully translating our ideas into beautiful design and finally into this resort-like haven for research. I would also like to thank the Institute of Molecular Agrobiolology for allowing us to use this auditorium for the official opening. It now remains for me to invite all of you to visit our website at <http://www.ims.nus.edu.sg>. Thank you.

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