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SPEECH BY DR. TONY TAN, CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION, AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE NUS-GE SINGAPORE WATER TECHNOLOGY CENTRE ON MONDAY, 22 JUNE 2009 AT 3.30 PM AT NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE T-LABORATORY LEVEL 10

Professor Tan Chorh Chuan
President of the National University of Singapore

Mr Heiner Markhoff
President and CEO of GE Water & Process Technologies

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good afternoon

I am pleased to join you here at the official launch of the NUS-GE Singapore Water Technology Centre.

Water-supply management and technologies are areas of strategic importance to Singapore.

These were critical issues in 1959 when Singapore became a self-governing nation, and remain as key issues for us 50-years later in 2009.

A safe and sustainable water supply is a global challenge.

Countries and cities are looking for solutions to produce clean water and to ensure that used water does not pollute the environment.

Water supply management and its technologies therefore present a fast growing global market.

Fast growing global water market

The growth of the water industry in both developed and developing countries is driven by the 4 trends :

- a. heavy environmental impact arising from industrialization and urbanization;**
- b. water shortages, anticipated and some already occurring in a number of regions, leading to investments in efficiency improvements and new water infrastructure;**
- c. new technology developments for water treatment, including advanced membrane systems and nanotechnology materials, to address requirements for improved process efficiencies and emerging contaminants; and**
- d. changes in environmental legislation, standards and enforcement in line with rising expectations and environmental awareness.**

Stringent water-quality standards for industries like pharmaceuticals and electronics drive markets for water treatment services tailored to the needs of these customers.

Singapore's investment in water management & technologies

Singapore has invested heavily in technology since the 1970s to clean up our rivers and to ensure a sustainable and diversified water supply.

Today, Singapore is known internationally for its strong capabilities in water management and is recognized as a leading adopter of new water technologies, especially in the area of membrane applications.

Indeed, Singapore is the world's largest user of membranes per capita, and a pioneer and leader in large-scale water reclamation.

The EWT Strategic Research Programme

Building on Singapore's strong foundation in water technologies and management, the Research, Innovation and Enterprise Council (RIEC), chaired by the Prime Minister, announced the Strategic Research Programme on Environmental and Water Technologies (EWT) in Jul 2006.

This Programme seeks to develop a new water industry supported by strong R&D capabilities and capacity.

Initiatives were launched to develop and accelerate the introduction of new innovative water and clean energy technologies and solutions to the market.

A number of EWT Centres of Excellence have been established.

These include the Singapore Delft Water Alliance (SDWA) on hydrodynamics and water quality modeling and the DHI-NTU Water and Environmental Research Centre & Education Hub.

Growing the Water Industry Sector has paid off

Today Singapore has a thriving water industry cluster comprising more than 50 international and local companies such as Hyflux, Keppel, Sembcorp, Marmon Water, Siemens Water, Nitto Denko and Black & Veatch.

Singapore companies have also expanded into some overseas markets.

The China-Singapore Eco-City initiative in Tianjin is an excellent example.

Leaving behind our water rationing days in the 1960s, Singapore has demonstrated her ability to transform an inherent national water resource constraint into a new economic growth engine.

This did not happen by chance but is the result of a combination of prudent policy planning and bold adoption of new technologies.

Industry-University Alliances

Industry-University collaborations help drive use-inspired research. They provide access to a variety of skills, knowledge and facilities that a company or a university alone could never accumulate or afford.

The universities' researchers see across multiple sectors and can bring together existing technologies in unexplored combinations.

On the other hand, the industrial partners know the customers, large and small.

They understand the need to be cost-effective, innovative, reliable and entrepreneurial when delivering products and services to the marketplace.

They provide the challenge and satisfaction of contributing to the development of real products and services.

General Electric Company is known throughout the world for combining innovation with great execution.

The renowned inventor, Thomas Edison, said that “Innovation without Execution is Hallucination”, highlighting the importance not only to work at cutting-edge research and generate knowledge, but also to deliver the research into the marketplace to address critical needs and challenges.

Launch of the NUS-GE Singapore Water Technology Centre

Ladies and gentlemen, in this note I am pleased to launch the NUS-GE Singapore Water Technology Centre.

The Centre is a natural fit with GE & NUS’ fundamental research interest. By drawing upon NUS’ strengths from across various faculties and across the company, the Centre provides a hotbed for stimulating innovation and technology transfer.

Valuable student learning opportunities will also help to develop our long-term capability.

The NUS-GE Singapore Water Technology Centre, comprising some 70 researchers, with a combined investment of S\$150m by GE and NUS, reflects the commitment of both parties to collaborate closely in research,

to bring about potentially commercialisable products and innovations in the marketplace.

Such collaborative research and innovation is an important ingredient in developing Singapore into a global hydrohub.

Conclusion

I wish the leadership and members of the NUS-GE Singapore Water Technology Centre every success in the years to come.

Thank you.
