

OPENING REMARKS BY DR TONY TAN KENG YAM, CHAIRMAN OF NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION, AT THE CQT MEDIA VISIT HELD ON FRIDAY, 22 MAY 2009 AT 3PM

Distinguished Guests

Friends from the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

1 A very good afternoon to all of you and thank you for coming to this press conference.

2 Let me first start by introducing my panel members.

To my right is Mr Teo Ming Kian, Permanent Secretary of National R&D.

To my left is Professor Artur Ekert, Director of the Centre of Quantum Technologies.

3 I hope you are as thrilled as me when you went through the visit of the Centre for Quantum Technologies (CQT) and introduced to the Bose-Einstein condensate. "Bose-Einstein condensates" were produced for the first time in 1995 and are now a tool to investigate the quantum properties of matter. The remarkable achievement by the two CQT researchers, Dr Murray Barrett and Mr Kyle Arnold, makes Singapore one of a small number of countries in the world to achieve this complex atomic physics experiment. CQT will now provide local researchers with the sophisticated tools to investigate the quantum properties of matter.

4 I commend the CQT for achieving such a difficult undertaking in a relatively short time. CQT was set up only one and a half years ago. This achievement in CQT shows that Singapore is able to attract the brightest and most committed research talent to do breakthrough science in our country.

- 5 Talented and committed researchers are key to building a strong base of use-inspired basic research capability which can form the launch pad for innovative technology development. NRF's task is to build up Singapore's capability for cutting-edge research, and establish Singapore as a vibrant centre for R&D. This will enable Singapore to stay relevant and competitive in a more knowledge-based, innovation-driven global economy.

Research-intensive Universities

- 6 Universities are a country's best resource to create new knowledge which can give rise to new products and industries. Around the world, universities are no longer seen as just educational institutions, receiving knowledge that has been discovered and teaching the knowledge to students. Universities are increasingly seen as places that generate new knowledge through research. Their students are constantly being exposed to new discoveries. Many faculty and students have extended the role even further to bring such knowledge to the marketplace.
- 7 As part of Singapore's long-term economic development strategy, we have made a major commitment to invest in higher education and research. In the last decade, Singapore has invested significantly in research programmes, research institutes and more recently, Research Centres of Excellence (RCEs) in NUS and NTU.

Research Centres of Excellence

- 8 The intent of establishing the RCEs is to help our universities become research-intensive universities. They will then serve as magnets to attract and retain talent that is critical for the next phase of our national development. Establishing RCEs is a critical part of this strategy.

- 9 The Ministry of Education (MOE) and NRF have set aside \$250m and \$500m respectively to co-fund the establishment of five (5) Research Centres of Excellence (RCEs). The RCEs will establish peaks of research excellence at our universities through world-class investigator-led research with a global impact. Led by world-renowned scientists, the RCEs aim to have a global reputation within a decade of their establishment.
- 10 The RCEs serve three main objectives:
- i. Attract, retain and support world-class academic investigators to perform high quality and high impact research in Singapore;
 - ii. Enhance graduate education (and potentially undergraduate education) in the universities and train quality research manpower for Singapore; and
 - iii. Create new knowledge in selected areas of focus which are of strategic relevance to Singapore.
- 11 The RCEs are long term investments. Located within the local universities' campuses and as autonomous centres with close affiliation with the host universities, the RCEs will catalyse the development of research-intensive universities with distinct scientific niches of excellence. They will also enhance the quality of education delivered by the universities through attracting top faculty and bright graduate students, and facilitating the potential commercial spin-offs through cutting-edge research.
- 12 I look forward to seeing more research breakthroughs as well as innovative technologies that will make Singapore a hotbed for innovation and enterprise. I now invite questions from the press.
