Effective management of our environmental and water resources has become increasingly important. There is growing global awareness arising from concerns over climate change and long-term sustainability of the environment.

**Singapore as a global hydrohub**

2. Recognising the economic opportunities that such issues present, Singapore has earmarked the Environmental & Water Technologies sector as one of the areas for strategic R&D. This was endorsed by the Research, Innovation and Enterprise Council (RIEC) chaired by our Prime Minister in 2006, and the National Research Foundation (NRF) chaired by Dr Tony Tan has provided some $330 million to promote research in this field. In the same year, my Ministry also set up the Environment and Water Industry Development Council (EWI) to spearhead efforts to grow the water industry through R&D and to position Singapore as a Global Hydrohub.

**Research and Technology as The Way Forward**

3. Singapore is ready to take on a leading role in the environmental and water technology sector. Our investments in research and technology over the past few decades have given rise to significant local capabilities in this field. In the last 2 years, we have also seen the industry and R&D eco-system continue to evolve and grow. Global players such as CDM and CH2MHill have established their bases in Singapore to serve the Asia-Pacific market. Companies are also locating or expanding their water
R&D centres in Singapore. These include multi-nationals like GE and Siemens, as well as our home-grown players like Keppel.

4. Apart from the corporate R&D centres, our universities and research institutions play a big role in the development of a vibrant R&D eco-system. The universities, in particular, are a wellspring of ideas for research into the fundamental sciences as well as for applied engineering applications.

The Nanyang Environment & Water Research Institute (NEWRI)

5. I am therefore happy to note that the Nanyang Technological University is setting up the Nanyang Environment & Water Research Institute or NEWRI in short. NTU has long established its strengths in environmental and water technology research. An example is in membrane technology. Over the years, NTU has also been a major participant in Singapore’s R&D efforts, working in close collaboration with agencies like PUB and NEA.

6. NEWRI will elevate NTU’s involvement in the environmental and water technologies R&D landscape to a new level. Its eco-system of centres and institutes will offer further opportunities for collaboration with both research and industry partners, in areas ranging from research to development and application activities, as well as in education.

7. Specifically in the area of R&D, I am pleased to note that NEWRI is setting up the Singapore Membrane Technology and the DHI-NTU Centres, both of which will focus on areas of research that are not just important for Singapore, but of interest in the global arena as well. These Centres, funded by EWI, will enhance local research and help turn more ideas into commercial applications. They will also provide manpower training opportunities in their respective niches.

NRF (EWI) scholarships

8. In the area of education and talent, I understand that NTU will also be enhancing its suite of postgraduate programmes to groom environmental scientists and engineers through NEWRI. EWI has worked with NTU on this, and has to date awarded three scholarships to students from the university¹, including a joint award with Black & Veatch.

¹ Two scholarships for PhD study and one for Masters study
I understand that these students are here with us today, and I wish you the very best in your studies.

9. The scholarships are an integral part of our manpower development plans for the environmental and water technology sector. With the continued growth of the industry and with NEWRI and other R&D centres coming on-stream, we are in for an exciting time as there will be greater opportunities for researchers and professionals. I therefore encourage more young Singaporeans and global talents to take up a career in this sector. Through the scholarship programmes, we are confident that a new generation of leaders and technology experts will emerge and propel Singapore to greater heights.

Conclusion

10. The establishment of the NEWRI eco-system is certainly a positive development for the environmental and water technologies scene and I commend NTU for stepping forward in our endeavour to grow Singapore as a Global Hydro-hub. It gives me great pleasure now to launch the Nanyang Environment & Water Research Institute.