Mr Manohar Khiatani, CEO, JTC Corporation

Mr David Tan and Mr Seah Kee Pok, Assistant CEOs of JTC Corporation

Guests, colleagues and friends,

A very good morning to everyone, and on behalf of the NUS, I would like to bid all guests and friends a warm welcome to our campus.

The NUS is a large and comprehensive university; on top of delivering high quality education, our University’s other key mission is to pursue excellence in research. The university performs cutting-edge research over a range of disciplines and cross-disciplinary areas. We currently have 3 Research Centres of Excellence and 21 university-level research institutes. Our goal in research is to conduct high-impact research that advances the boundaries of knowledge and contributes to the betterment of society.

As an academic institution, we must continue to pursue high quality basic research across the spectrum, spanning science, technology, humanities and the social sciences. Fundamental research is crucial, because it identifies the broad areas of inquiry which have the potential to yield the critical breakthroughs in practical application. However, as an institution, we must in tandem, be alert to potentially useful applications of such research, so that our research is translated to practical and concrete outputs that make a tangible difference to society.

As such, the NUS is delighted to have this opportunity to ink a collaboration agreement with an industry partner – the JTC Corporation. An industry-academia partnership is a mutually beneficial one. Research is no longer confined to books and laboratories, but its value is further augmented with a practical application. At the same time, the industry partner can tap on the academic expertise of talents from the NUS and our collaborating institutions, to access research and knowledge that are beyond the existing market know-how, products or practices. NUS researchers have developed expertise in built environment, environmental engineering, construction technology and in real estate amongst others. Industry players can scan and survey the latest research landscape and the findings generated in academia, to pick up on feasible ideas and then to further work on and develop solutions that meet their needs.

The NUS is privileged to partner with JTC Corporation, Singapore’s largest industrial developer, to set up the NUS-JTC Industrial Infrastructure Innovation Centre, or I³ Centre for short. JTC is the chief architect and master-planner of Singapore’s industrial landscape. It has overseen many defining projects, such as Jurong Island, Tuas Biomedical Park, the One-North development and many others. Planning for industrial spaces in an urban city is especially challenging, and land is so scarce in Singapore. Industry development is complex, as each industry cluster operates differently, and has its own unique and specialized requirements. Yet, JTC has always and ably innovated to provide the space and infrastructure that investors require; from reclamation to underground rock caverns and so
With JTC’s foresight, planning and innovation, Singapore, though a tiny island, now has a remarkably wide range of industries and industrial activities coexisting on our shores. From aerospace to marine, clean technology, biomedical, chemicals and petrochemicals, to electronics, infocomm, media and logistics; these industries provide valuable jobs and contribute to a vibrant economy.

I sincerely hope that JTC will likewise find a worthy partner in the NUS. The NUS has been advancing rapidly and is today, a leading academic institution in Asia; we are also consistently ranked within the top 50 universities in the world. The NUS is home to many talented academics and researchers from around the world, and our infrastructure and facilities are world-class.

The partnership between JTC and the NUS, through the I³ Centre, will pave the way for our organisations to leverage on each party’s strengths and capabilities. As the old adage goes, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. By joining efforts, talents and resources, it is envisioned that the collaboration will accelerate innovations in sustainable industrial infrastructure and in industrial real estate solutions. Researchers and planners can explore and investigate the issues at hand, and then work in cross functional and multidisciplinary teams to propose and develop solutions. Technological designs and ideas can then be developed and then trialled. And these may eventually be brought to the market.

I am very pleased to note that there are already a number of existing research collaborations between the two organisations. The NUS-JTC I³ Centre will consolidate these research projects under one roof, to reap greater synergies and for more defining impact. The initial list of research areas have also been identified – the I³ Centre will work on projects relating to industrial real estate price index, land intensification, industrial infrastructure planning and design, systems integration and optimization, and industrial construction technology.

I believe that the integrative and multi-disciplinary approach that the I³ Centre is adopting, is a most appropriate and conducive one. The concerns with environmental sustainability and energy efficiency add to the complexity of industrial planning. Industrial planning has become multi-faceted and multi-dimensional, and to address issues adequately and holistically, we will need research that is integrative and multidisciplinary. I am happy to see that for a start, experts from two schools, namely the Faculty of Engineering and the School of Design and Environment will be involved in the I³ Centre. In time to come, I am sure that as the research work expands, researchers in other fields will be drawn in to contribute their expertise too.

On this note, I would like to thank our partners from JTC, for supporting the I³ Centre generously. I must also thank the faculty members and staff from the Faculty of Engineering and the School of Design and Environment for their hard work and coordination, and for putting together today’s event. I sincerely hope that with this collaboration, there will be many discoveries to unfold, many fruitful projects to come, and that both organisations can look to jointly put Singapore on the world map, as an innovative leader in industrial infrastructure. I wish the NUS-JTC Industrial Infrastructure Innovation Centre every success.

Thank you.