Press Release on the Launching of Book
‘Examinations in Singapore: Change and Continuity’

1. The Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board (SEAB) launched a book titled “Examinations in Singapore: Change and Continuity” on 1 April 2008, the fourth anniversary of the establishment of SEAB as a statutory board. The book is published by World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte Ltd.

2. A summary of the book is as follows:

   The first book to explore the development of Singapore’s much-talked-about education and examination system, this volume juxtaposes examinations with its immediate context of education and wider context of politics, economy and society. The study covers three broad historical periods: Examinations in Singapore from 1891 to 1945; The Post-War Years from 1946 to the 1970s; and Charting Our Destiny from the 1980s to 2007. In the British period up to 1941, the local examinations were conducted by the vernacular schools, and external examinations by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate. There was a lack of systematic effort to establish a uniform system of education and examinations. During the Japanese Occupation, examinations were conducted by the Japanese authorities and, unexpectedly, the Cambridge examinations continued in the Sime Road Camp. In the post-war period and particularly after Singapore was granted self-government, the establishment of a national education system was followed by the emergence of national examinations: the Primary School Leaving Examinations and the Singapore-Cambridge GCE N/O/A Levels for every school-going child in Singapore. Thereafter, the nature of national examinations evolved with the changing needs of education and the nation. At the turn of the century, with the Ministry of Education’s decision to take greater control of examinations, the Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board was established, to oversee new developments in examinations.

   Unlike most literature on education where examinations are often mentioned as an outcome of educational goals and objectives, this book focuses on examinations per se. Examinations have gained a momentum of their own, and it is interesting to note the development of examinations against the backdrop of the broader history of Singapore and of education in Singapore.
3. The contents of the book are as follows:

**Examinations in Singapore (1891–1945):**

- Trace the development of examinations in Singapore during the British colonial period up to 1945.
- Assess the impact of the Japanese Occupation on examinations in Singapore.
- What was the significance of the School Certificate Examination held in the Sime Road Camp during the Japanese Occupation?

**The Post-War Years (1946–1970s):**

- Assess the development of education and examinations from the end of the Japanese Occupation to the attainment of self-government in Singapore.
- Why and how effective were the measures undertaken by the Singapore government to establish central control over education and examinations in Singapore in the 1960s–1970s?
- The 1961 examination boycott illustrates the challenges in forging a national system of examinations. Do you agree?

**Charting Our Own Destiny (1980s–2007):**

- How effective had the Goh Keng Swee’s reforms in education and examination been in improving Singapore’s education system?
- Examine the key policy changes in Singapore's education and examinations in response to the challenges of a rapidly changing and globalising world.
- 'Change is more important than continuity in education and examinations.' Discuss.