

**SPEECH BY MS LOW YEN LING, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY,  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY,  
AT THE IE SINGAPORE GLOBAL SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS CEREMONY  
ON TUESDAY, 23 AUGUST 2016, 4:00PM, AT IE SINGAPORE**

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Parents and Scholars,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

1. Indeed we are very saddened by the news of our former President Mr S R Nathan's passing last night. He has given much of his life to Singapore and to fellow Singaporeans. As Singapore's longest serving president, he has led a legacy of lasting contributions to us. I met Mr S R Nathan on many occasions and he never failed to remember my name, or the names of other parliamentarians and those in the private sector. I met him again at a book launch two months ago and although he was quite ill, he made the effort to attend and say a few words. He is very unassuming, humble, and truly a man who cherishes the essence of Singapore's multi-racial and multi-cultural element.

2. The best way for us to honour him is to remember to live by the values cherished by him. The first is to uphold racial and religious harmony especially in today's day and age. Second, to live by important values like resilience and integrity. If you watched some coverage over the last few hours, you would have heard Mr Lee Kuan Yew saying that whenever there is a difficult assignment, Mr S R Nathan's name would come about. Indeed, he undertook very challenging international assignments. In the US, he was our ambassador during a very difficult time and he did us proud by flying Singapore's flag.

3. This is why MTI and IE Singapore place a lot of emphasis on today's scholarship presentation ceremony. To each and every one of our 13 recipients, we know you will fly Singapore's flag and do us proud by living by values like resilience when you go overseas. It will not be an easy environment but we know you can do it. Secondly, we are counting on each and every one of you to be a man or woman of integrity. Each and every one of us must do our best to uphold all these important values.

4. Once again, a very good afternoon to the proud parents I see here today. Thank you very much to the employers who have given their utmost support to this scholarship and congratulations to our 13 award recipients. I am pleased to join you at the International Enterprise (IE) Singapore Global Scholarship Awards 2016.

5. This occasion marks your first step towards a career in the global arena. Whether you will be working for IE Singapore or with one of the sponsor companies, we look forward to your contribution to growing Singapore's external wing which is becoming more crucial and critical now.

## **Global-Ready Talent Key to Companies' Internationalisation Plans**

6. Given the small size of Singapore's domestic market and the increasingly competitive economic landscape, internationalisation is a necessary step for Singapore companies to achieve sustained growth.

7. Even amidst the current challenging economic conditions, there are significant external opportunities for our companies, especially in the region. A growing middle class in ASEAN, rapid urbanisation, and digitisation are some key regional demand drivers. Many Singapore companies have the technical expertise and innovative solutions to leverage these demand drivers, as they tap into sectors spanning from urban solutions to consumerism and digital services.

8. But to succeed in their overseas expansion plans, companies also need to have the right talent – people who have global mindsets, exposure to international business environments, in-depth understanding of industries, and the ability to navigate markets.

9. Demand for such talent, like our 13 recipients, will continue to rise. As a country, we must continue to invest in relevant skillsets and develop a deep pool of talent that can meet companies' growing internationalisation needs.

## **Building a Pipeline of Global-Ready Singaporeans**

10. Through various initiatives, IE Singapore is building a pipeline of global-ready and future-ready Singaporeans set for international roles. Talent development efforts must start early which is why we are going upstream such as polytechnics and ITEs. We want to build up a healthy pipeline of individuals with international exposure in the early part of their careers and even while they are at school.

11. The Young Talent Programme (YTP) Scholarship is one of such initiatives. It gives aspirant individuals early exposure to international roles in a wide variety of sectors, such as digital services, engineering services and logistics.

12. Let me share one example – Mr Huo Jiongrui, a past recipient of the YTP Scholarship who joined Keppel Logistics in June this year. Jiongrui was given a head-start to a global career, through an eight-month internship with the Keppel Logistics' Indonesia facility. On account of his prior experience, Jiongrui will be posted to Indonesia later this year, where he will be placed in the Operations Excellence team and be mentored by the General Manager. Jiongrui has said, "I believe that our performance today is always a culmination of all prior experiences. My time as an intern in Indonesia has given me deep insights into the nuts and bolts of developing a business, locally or abroad. As a Logistics Executive in the Operations department, I got the chance to build up my knowledge. My resilience was strengthened when our team overcame many challenges. I am glad to learn from the internship and look forward to yet another adventure when I return to Indonesia with the confidence that my experiences will guide me well."

13. The IE Singapore Undergraduate Scholarship is another important initiative. It allows us to groom public sector talents who can help Singapore companies venture overseas.

14. A beneficiary of the scholarship is Ms Faridah Saad. She started her career in IE Singapore in 2011 with the International Organisation Group and subsequently the Project Development Group. Through these stints, she gained deep exposure to internationalisation-related work. This included engagements with international financial institutions at such a young age. Faridah got to work with the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, and was involved in the facilitation of overseas infrastructure projects. Faridah later took up a managerial role in IE Singapore's Middle East and Africa Group, and gained deep knowledge of the African market. Now she is the Centre Director in Johannesburg, South Africa, where she helps companies looking to expand into the market. Faridah has said, "I applied for IE's undergraduate scholarship because I want to serve in the public service and assist local entrepreneurs to grow abroad. In the course of my work, I have received tremendous support, guidance and advice from mentors who helped me develop a dynamic career in the organisation."

15. We must spend time to develop our people, no matter where they start from, or which stage of career they are in. The SkillsFuture Study Awards for Internationalisation, for instance, is one of the latest additions to IE Singapore's slew of talent development initiatives.

16. Introduced in October 2015, it provides opportunities for mid-career professionals to deepen and up-skill their international management competencies through international leadership programmes. To-date, 73 Singaporeans have benefitted from the Study Award.

17. Mr Ho Chee Haw from the Sheng Siong Group is one of the beneficiaries of the Study Award.

18. Mr Ho joined Sheng Siong in 1999 and rose through the ranks to become the Director of Operations overseeing Sheng Siong's local supermarket operations. When Mr Ho was tasked to formulate and implement the strategy for Sheng Siong's expansion into the Chinese market, he applied for the SkillsFuture Study Awards for Internationalisation to deepen his knowledge of the Chinese market.

19. The award enabled Mr Ho to participate in the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy's Senior Management Programme on Internationalisation. This equipped him with foundational knowledge and skillsets to navigate the complexities of the Chinese market. Together with the strong support from his company for skills development, he is now progressing well in his global career.

20. Like what Mr Ho did, I urge mid-career professionals to take charge of your career development as you embark on your international journey. Companies, we seek your commitment and partnership in developing critical skillsets for internationalisation. It will pay off because the pool of talent you develop will be an important asset that will help you in your internationalisation journey.

## **Closing**

21. Developing one's skills and gaining new global experiences are an important part of the journey towards a successful global career, especially for a little red dot like Singapore. We encourage students and working professionals to continually up-skill to be well placed for future global opportunities.

22. Go with an open mind, continue to learn, re-learn and remember to live by the important values that were very close to Mr S R Nathan's heart. Congratulations once again to the scholarship recipients and companies as you embark on your international journey together.

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