

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TONY TAN KENG YAM AT THE PRESIDENT'S
CHALLENGE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE CORPORATE NETWORKING DINNER ON
TUESDAY 25 OCTOBER 2016 AT THE STAR LOFT - THE STAR PERFORMING ARTS
CENTRE

Mr Tan Chuan-Jin
Minister for Social and Family Development

Mr Gautam Banerjee
Chairman of raiSE

Board members of raiSE

Corporate Partners of the President's Challenge

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening. I am pleased to join you at this evening's President's Challenge Social Enterprise Corporate Networking Dinner. Tonight's dinner celebrates the progress of the Social Enterprise sector in Singapore, as well as invites us to channel our passion and commitment to social causes.

Diversity and Vibrancy over the years

Since its inception in 2012, the President's Challenge Social Enterprise Award has received nominations of more than 100 Social Enterprises, including technology-based enterprises and other new and innovative models. Compared to 4 years ago when Singapore only had a small number of social enterprises including Eighteen Chefs and A-Changin, there is now greater diversity and vibrancy in the sector. I am glad that the Award has encouraged the establishment of new social enterprises and groomed existing ones.

Social Enterprises play an important role in the broader social service ecosystem to empower the disadvantaged, and help them better integrate with the community. These enterprises aim to achieve sustainable social impact by engaging multiple stakeholders to provide those in need of help with opportunities to acquire skills and remain employable. Social entrepreneurs are agents of social change. Their mindset is

about motivating those at-risk to help themselves. They constantly challenge themselves and the society to be more inclusive. At the same time, they have to be agile and adaptable in their business models so that they can balance profitability with social impact.

Sustainable Living Lab, recipient of Youth SE Award last year, is a good example of a Social Enterprise model that embodies the spirit of social innovation. SL2 provides a community lab and prototyping facility for budding innovators to experiment with different technologies and design programs and products that address community needs. They also run programmes that seek to reduce wastage and impart life skills to the community, such as the “Repair Kopitiam!” project which provides hands-on advice and tips for repairs of household electrical, furniture and fabric items.

Another example is Project Dignity, winner of the Social Enterprise of the Year in 2015. Project Dignity operates the world’s first social enterprise food court working with the disadvantaged and the disabled. It customises training methods and work environment to the needs and skillsets of its employees, such as converting a standard point-of-sale machine into Braille for their trainee cashiers who are visually impaired, creating a pictorial ordering system for the hearing impaired, and customising a noodle cooking machine for individuals with physical difficulties. These efforts create new and meaningful employment opportunities for the disadvantaged, and equip them with valuable skills to gain independence and self-sufficiency.

The role of corporations

Setting up a business is not easy, and even more so for one with a social mission. Corporations therefore have important roles to play in the Social Enterprise ecosystem. I am happy to see the growing interest of more organisations coming on board to explore meaningful collaborations with Social Enterprises. Many corporations have been supporting Social Enterprises through sharing business expertise. Some have also aligned their corporate goals with social objectives and involved their employees in Social Enterprise activities. Indeed, some of these collaborations have seen the Social Enterprises substantially expand the reach and impact of their social causes.

This evening, we are happy to have some of these Corporate Partners of the President’s Challenge Social Enterprise Award with us. Let me take this opportunity to thank them, namely Bain & Company, DBS Foundation, Dentsu Aegis Network, Law Society of Singapore, Olswang Asia, Philosophy Brand Consultants and Rice Communication for their forthcoming contribution of time and resources to our past

award winners. I would also like to thank raISE, the Singapore Centre for Social Enterprise, for organising this evening's event.

Conclusion

The President's Challenge Social Enterprise Award was launched in 2012 to recognise outstanding Social Enterprises that have made impactful contributions to the local community. I am glad that over the past four years, the Award has also enhanced public awareness of Social Enterprises and inspired others to support and join the sector. I am even more heartened that this Award has now become a platform for corporates and Social Enterprises to come together to make a difference to our community.

The Social Enterprise sector in Singapore is still in its nascent stage, but I am confident that today's networking event will enable all of us to benefit from the sharing of best practices and ideas, as well as forge new partnerships so that we can all strive to make a greater social impact together.

I wish all of you an enjoyable evening in celebrating the spirit of social entrepreneurship. Thank you.

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