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Singapore Government

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SPEECH BY DR JOHN CHEN, MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE OPENING OF THE 1999
SINGAPORE-SWITZERLAND YOUTH FORUM ON SATURDAY, 3 JULY 1999 AT 9.00 AM AT ORCHARD
HOTEL, ORCHARD BALLROOM 2, LEVEL 3

Mr Hawazi Dai pi

Member of Parliament for Sembawang GRC &

Deputy Chairman, NYAA Council

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His Excellency, Mr Raymond Loretan
Swiss Ambassador to Singapore

Mr James Soh
NYAA Executive Director

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

I am indeed happy to be here this morning to join you at the opening of the 1999 Singapore-Switzerland Youth Forum.

May I also take this opportunity to welcome the Swiss Youth Delegation to Singapore and I hope you will have a fruitful and pleasant stay with us.

I understand the relationship between Swiss Business Association and the NYAA Council goes back to 1994. Since then, a healthy relationship has developed and they have forged a strong partnership with the support of the Embassy of Switzerland to develop the youth of both countries through an annual youth exchange programme.

The youth of today will be the leaders of tomorrow. We cannot overemphasize the importance of preparing our youth for the future world that they will face. I am therefore encouraged that the Swiss business community with the support of NYAA Council and the Embassy of Switzerland are playing an active role in this area.

One of the best nurturing we can provide to our youth is to increase their exposure to the world and broaden their perspectives regarding global development in politics, businesses, technologies and social environment. This is because the capability of our brain, like any network, will increase exponentially with each addition of useful experience and knowledge. Take the Internet for instance, the global networking of ideas and businesses has opened up tremendous opportunities for development of services and their efficient delivery. As a result, we are seeing a transformation from the Industrial Economy of the 20th century to the Network Economy in the 21st century. Our lives will correspondingly be transformed.

I am therefore glad that you have started this exchange programme 5 years ago. It will certainly contribute to broadening the horizons of our youth. I have seen the report of last year's exchanges and I am impressed with the programmes planned for the youth of both countries.

With the rapid advancement of technology and globalisation, businesses today face very different challenges compared to the past. The world has become a global village. Market conditions can change as swiftly as the weather. It is therefore important for both our countries to nurture a new generation of visionary, dynamic and technology savvy entrepreneurs.

The 1999 Singapore-Switzerland Youth Forum organised by the NYAA Council provides an excellent opportunity for youth leaders of Switzerland and Singapore to discuss topics such as "Globalisation, New Markets and Technology" which have become household words in the business world.

Topics like "How can youth today prepare for the new markets and new technologies of tomorrow?" and "How will the markets and technologies of the coming millennium impact on the way youth think and work?" are extremely relevant and should be discussed.

The launching of this year's Singapore-Switzerland Youth Exchange Programmes Website in conjunction with this forum is timely and worthy of support. It is another good example of the efforts made by the NYAA Council to reach out to more young people in ways which are relevant to today's circumstances.

As an increasing number of schools, homes and organisations are linked to the Internet, more and more young people are surfing the "Net" for information. I am therefore glad that you are making use of Internet to publicize your event. This is a very effective way of creating greater awareness among our youth on the bilateral youth exchanges.

In conclusion, I would like to commend the National Youth Achievement Award Council, Swiss Business Association and Embassy of Switzerland for their partnership in creating an excellent opportunity for the young people of Singapore and Switzerland to participate in this very meaningful programme.

The co-operation between the SBA and NYAA will also, in the process of helping to enhance youth networking and development, strengthen the bilateral relationship between Singapore and Switzerland.

It is now my pleasure to declare the 1999 Singapore-Switzerland Youth Forum open.

Thank you.
