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Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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**OPENING ADDRESS BY MR PETER CHEN SENIOR MINISTER OF
STATE FOR EDUCATION AT THE YOUNG DESIGNERS AWARD
1999 PRIZE PRESENTATION CEREMONY ON THURSDAY, 24 FEB
2000, 10.30 AM AT
RAFFLES CITY SHOPPING CENTRE, GARDEN COURT**

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen

A very good morning to all of you.

1. I am pleased to be here today to officiate at this prize presentation and to open the **Young Designers Award '99** Exhibition, a showcase of creative design ideas from young Singaporeans.

2. Over the last 12 years, the **Young Designers Award** has helped to raise the level of awareness of good design in Singapore. It has also served as a useful platform for our young to express their creativity and to learn how to use design to improve our daily lives. Indeed, I am greatly encouraged that

response from the schools for the YDA has remained strong all these years.

3. It is commendable that Designers' Association Singapore and the Singapore Trade Development Board are jointly organising this event to acknowledge the talents in creative design. In our modern society, good design plays a key role in enhancing our quality of life. A well-designed product should not only be functional and aesthetically appealing, but also safe and user-friendly. If we look around us, we will notice many products which embody the thoughtfulness and care of the designer: children's toys and accessories; ergonomically-designed eating utensils for the elderly; and navigational aids for the handicapped (like walking, hearing and visual aids); are some examples of products which encompass thoughtful functionality and stringent safety standards.

Scaling New Heights in Design

4. We live today in a world characterised by constant change. As traditional lines and boundaries shift, this has significant impact on the way we live and the way we conduct our businesses. Already the global lifestyle is fast becoming an online one. The focus is now on speed and connectivity rather than on time and distance.

5. As we embark on a new world economy, Design will have a very important role to play in this new landscape. Both from the point of view of shaping new norms and in terms of creating new products and services in line with the net economy. Let's take the simple telephone. Once confined to one spot, it is now highly mobile and for some, increasingly a fashion accessory. In terms of function, the phone has also evolved to provide a plethora of services ranging from sophisticated banking to even activating your alarm and house lights.

6. Businesses will therefore find it necessary to offer more innovative products and services to meet the demands of today's discerning consumers. This is all the more pressing with e-commerce gaining greater acceptance worldwide and especially when most products have become largely indistinguishable from one another. It is against this backdrop that creative design services can play an even more important role in our economy. A good design may indeed make the crucial difference of success or failure for a product. Already many of the world's leading companies such as Apple, 3M, are recognising that through effective design, they can add value to their

products and services and differentiate themselves from the rest of the competition.

7. Design can also help to level the playing field. Smaller players such as Singapore can leverage on design to propel us into the ranks of the global MNCs. The i-Mac computer is one good example of how bold and innovative design can help a company like Apple regain lost ground in the PC world.

Nurturing a creative and innovative youth culture

8. As innovation and good designs become critical success factors can our schools play a more proactive role in nurturing a new generation of young creative design talents to meet the demands of the new century? I believe they can as we push forward with our “Thinking Schools” and promote the appreciation of the arts.

9. A nation’s prosperity depends ultimately on its people – their education and training – as they each contribute towards building a strong economic workforce for the country. In the new economy where knowledge and creativity have become the new “currency”, the deciding factor in wealth creation will be the human resource. Nurturing a creative and innovative youth culture will therefore be critical in maintaining the success of Singapore’s economic growth in the future. In order that we can develop an innovative workforce, we will need to start early in our schools, by training our students to be enterprising and creative thinkers.

10. The Ministry of Education has already begun this process by building conducive school environments that focus on the holistic development of our students. The curriculum is also tailored to teach our young to think creatively and to apply knowledge innovatively. From here, we hope to nurture future generations of independent and creative individuals.

Boosting the design network

11. I am pleased to know that some of the tertiary institutions have started to actively promote design development as part of their overall objective to cultivate a creative culture in Singapore. Presently, NUS, NTU, three polytechnics and two arts institutions offer design studies, with each institution retaining its own distinct curriculum specialisation. These institutions have also cultivated active dialogues and engaged in numerous joint design projects with

private sector companies and MNCs in Singapore. Our students have benefited from these joint projects, which not only give them invaluable hands-on experience but also widen their perspective and deepen their understanding of global market trends and conditions.

12. The exhibition today is a showcase of the creative talents of students from LaSalle-SIA and Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, as well as our students from the secondary, pre-university and university levels. Their effort and dedication in this field of study is highly commendable.

13. Allow me to congratulate the organisers of YDA for another successful event. I would also like to thank everyone from the private and public sectors, whose support and contributions have been instrumental in ensuring the past and present successes of YDA. My heartiest congratulations to the winners of the Young Designers Award '99 and best wishes to all the participants of this year's competition.

14. It is now my pleasure to launch the YOUNG DESIGNERS AWARD 2000. This event will culminate with an exhibition of winning entries at the INTERNATIONAL DESIGN FORUM 2000 in October this year.

15. Thank you and have an enjoyable day.

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