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Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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**SPEECH BY MR PETER CHEN, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR
EDUCATION, AT THE 2000 TAN KAH KEE YOUNG INVENTORS'
AWARD PRESENTATION CEREMONY AND OPENING OF
INNOVATION FESTIVAL, ON SATURDAY 11 MARCH 2000, 9.30 AM
AT THE SINGAPORE SCIENCE CENTRE AUDITORIUM**

Dr Chew Tuan Chiong,
Director and Chief Executive, Singapore Science Centre

Dr Phua Kok Khoo, Chairman,
Tan Kah Kee Young Inventors' Award Committee,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is my pleasure this morning to be here at the opening of the 2000 Innovation Festival and the Tan Kah Kee Young Inventors' Award Presentation ceremony.

The Tan Kah Kee Young Inventor's Award

2. The annual Tan Kah Kee Young Inventors' Award jointly sponsored by NSTB and the Tan Kah Kee Foundation, is an excellent initiative to stimulate creativity and innovation among young Singaporeans and to promote scientific and technological research in Singapore. It gives due recognition to efforts in developing unique and practical inventions that have good commercial potential. The award seeks to inspire our youths to think of new and creative ways of solving problems and inculcate in them a spirit of daring innovation and enterprise.

3. I am heartened to see more dynamic young Singaporeans taking part in the challenge this year. In particular, the number of participants in the students' category has increased steadily since the awards' inception in 1986. The number of entries in the Student category increased from 319 last year to 403 this year. The Open category increased from 51 to 69 entries this year.

4. It is encouraging also to note that participating projects are increasingly diverse and interesting. Most of the winning entries are practical solutions to day-to-day problems, including an adaptable clean drill and a user-friendly paint holder. The participants have demonstrated dedication, creativity and enterprise in their entries. I am happy that the Tan Kah Kee Young Inventors' Award has helped in nurturing young talents to become independent and innovative inventors.

Cultivate Entrepreneurial Spirit Through Education

5. Globalisation and rapid technological changes have transformed the world into a global village where physical barriers become increasingly irrelevant. Singapore has to keep pace and pre-empt these changes in order to seize the opportunities they present in the new global economy. New opportunities also mean new challenges to our capacity to innovate and invent new products and services with the help of technology.

6. Science and technology will be the fuel that will drive Singapore's economic engine in the 21st century. Technopreneurship, or the enterprising use of technology, will be crucial for Singapore's development.

7. Competition will be global and to succeed in the new world, Singaporeans have to be more entrepreneurial and less averse to taking risks.

8. Education will play a key role in nurturing the entrepreneurial and innovative spirit of young Singaporeans. Our schools aim to equip our students with the necessary foundation of knowledge and creative thinking skills. We will provide the necessary equipment in schools and encourage the culture for students to become more IT savvy and enterprising.

9. By June this year, 10 schools in Singapore will have access to 'One Apple' – which is a software programme that enables on-line, interactive learning and teaching for Science. With 'One Apple', students will have easy access to learning materials on Science, teachers will be able to tailor their lessons to suit students' abilities, while parents can become more involved in their children's learning by logging on to a website for updates on their progress.

10. Some schools have introduced schemes to encourage technopreneurship among students. The 'Talent Development Programme' in Chinese High is a noteworthy endeavour. This is a 4-year programme targeted at students who have shown keen interest and aptitude in IT. To make the grade in the programme, students are required to use their IT skills to earn money, which will be put into a fund to sponsor overseas trips to IT centres around the world. This programme adds a new dimension to our education system – it injects a sense of realism by urging students to use their knowledge to solve real problems that happened at the workplace.

11. A successful technopreneur is a hybrid of an inventor and a businessman. He needs to possess the curiosity, creativity and perseverance of an inventor – to develop unconventional ways to solve problems. At the same time, he needs to maintain the necessary business acumen to commercialise his inventions. And winners of the Tan Kah Kee Young Inventors' Award exhibit these important qualities.

12. Some of the past winners of the award have moved on to commercialise their innovations. Mr Chan Nai Tiong, the Silver Award Winner in last year's competition, is now the Chief Executive Officer of Sentry Technologies Pte Ltd, a start-up company which produces and markets his winning entry "Sentry", a computer data security device. Endorsed by a panel of distinguished judges, the Competition has given Mr Chan the exposure and credibility he needs for his new invention.

13. Funded by his previous employer, Mr Chan re-packaged his winning entry and has started selling his new product through various channels since December this year. His willingness to risk his comfortable career as an engineer to realise his high tech dreams is an encouragement to our young Singaporeans to commercialise their innovations in the spirit of technopreneurship

Conclusion

14. I would like to congratulate the winners of this year's Tan Kah Kee Young Inventors' Award for their creative inventions as well as those who participated in the competition for their efforts. All of you will inspire other young Singaporeans to take up the challenge of transforming ideas into practical inventions.

15. Thank you.

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