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# **Singapore Government**

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**SPEECH BY MR PETER CHEN, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR  
EDUCATION, AT THE 4TH ITE INSTITUTE DAY STUDENT AWARDS  
PRESENTATION CEREMONY, HELD AT THE ITE AUDITORIUM ON  
TUE 25 APR 2000 AT 0930 HOURS**

### **Introduction**

I am pleased to be here this morning to officiate at the Fourth ITE Institute Day Student Awards Presentation Ceremony. This is a day specially set aside to recognise the contributions and achievements in sports, games and other Extra-Curricular Activities (ECAs) by ITE students.

When I spoke at the First ITE Institute Day Function in Apr 97, I emphasized the importance of an all-rounded education for ITE students and spoke about ITE's "Total Training" philosophy and the many initiatives undertaken to cultivate a vibrant campus environment in which students would live, learn and work as a community.

### **Progress Made By ITE**

That was 3 years ago. ITE has made significant progress during the intervening period, and much has been achieved under the ITE 2000 Plan. Many initiatives in course restructuring, physical upgrading, staff development and image building have been successfully implemented.

ITE has managed to restructure and transform itself into a dynamic and progressive post-secondary technical institution. It is viewed by many, both locally and internationally, as an institution of international standard and "best in class" in vocational technical training. The ITE system is comprehensive, relevant and responsive to the needs of school leavers, working adults and economy. Every school leaver or working adult who has the aptitude and interest in technical training is assured of a training opportunity in ITE.

Today, over 90% of ITE's student intake has either a secondary GCE 'O' or 'N' level qualification. ITE has met its overall target of attracting 25% of every school cohort. There are currently 18,000 full-time students and apprentices in ITE.

The most visible change in recent years has been the emergence of a number of modern and well-designed ITE campuses. I am greatly impressed by the comprehensive range of training facilities offered by these institutes. The image of ITE has improved tremendously and technical training has gained recognition from the community at large. Parents now realise the value of ITE education and are much keener to send their children for ITE training.

Besides enhancing physical facilities, a great deal of effort has been expended to create the kind of campus environment necessary to provide a holistic education. Various enrichment programmes have been put in place to enable ITE students to maximise their talent and develop leadership skills, while undergoing technical training. These platforms include Student Councils, ECA Clubs and Sports. Further exposure is provided through the running of co-operative shops, participation in ITE Student Seminars and National Skills Competitions. ITE students also display their

talents in arts and music through public performances. The various opportunities and encouragement given to ITE students aim to develop them as active citizens, contributing towards nation building.

### **Success Stories**

ITE's annual publication, 'I Did It My Way', has featured a number of successful ITE graduates. They include those who have made a significant mark in their chosen careers, entrepreneurs who have succeeded in business and those who have pursued and attained higher educational qualifications. The majority of them have attributed their success to the excellent foundational training and strong learning support received at ITE. Many have spoken favourably of the developmental opportunities provided through ECAs and projects, which have enabled them to take on leadership positions and helped to increase their confidence and self-esteem.

I would like to share with you the success story of Mr Roger Lee, the President of ITE Alumni Association. During his early days in Whitley Secondary School, Mr Lee was very active in ECA. He was a Sergeant in the Red Cross Society, a Prefect as well as Class Monitor. He took part in many National Day Parades. When he enrolled in ITE, he was again appointed as Monitor of his class. Mr Lee chose to participate in community service work in ITE. He was able to apply his knowledge of electrical installation in the process. One of the projects he and his classmates undertook was the installation of electrical wiring for a Home for the Aged which was located in the neighbourhood of the institute.

Mr Lee is now the Managing Director of two companies. Despite his busy working schedule, he has not forgotten about his alma mater. In 1997, Mr Lee led a team of enthusiastic ITE graduates to set up the ITE Alumni Association. He and his team have been working tirelessly over the past 3 years to promote the importance of technical skills and ITE. Their hard work has come to fruition and ITE Alumni now has 4, 000 members. Mr Lee exemplifies the type of students ITE wants to produce. Both the ITE management

and myself will be very pleased to see many more students coming forward to follow Mr Lee's good example.

### **New Awards**

During your time in ITE, you have been taught how to live, learn and work with other schoolmates. When you enter the working world, you will realise that the ability to relate to others and work as a team will be treated as an asset in the workplace. Employers value staff who are willing to take the initiative and have good interpersonal skills; staff who can learn independently as well as work well in teams. Emphasis is also placed on "soft skills" such as communication, problem-solving, planning and organisational skills. This is particularly so as we move towards a knowledge-based economy that focuses on continual learning. Such soft skills need to be cultivated from young and one of the ways to achieve this is through active participation in ECA.

In this regard, I am pleased to note that ITE has introduced new awards this year to further motivate ITE students to excel in ECA and to maximise their talents and potential.

For the first time, 28 ITE students will receive the prestigious Lee Kuan Yew Awards today. The Lee Kuan Yew Awards were established in 1999 through the donation of more than \$½ million from the sale proceeds of Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew's special edition of his memoirs 'The Singapore Story'. The Awards are to recognise achievements and excellence of ITE students in various areas including academic excellence, student projects, exemplary conduct and attitude and outstanding ECA achievements. The first Lee Kuan Yew Gold Medal for students who excel in technical training was presented at ITE Graduation Ceremony in Sep 99. Three other categories of Lee Kuan Yew Awards will be presented today. They are:

- The Lee Kuan Yew Technology Award;
  - The Lee Kuan Yew Model Student/Apprentice Award;
- and
- The Lee Kuan Yew ECA Award.

The Lee Kuan Yew Technology Award is to promote technology, innovation and applications of skills and knowledge through student projects. It will motivate students to develop a zeal for challenges, creativity and competition which are much needed for our workforce in the new economy.

The Lee Kuan Yew Model Student/Apprentice Award is to recognise students and apprentices who display outstanding conduct and attitude worthy of emulation by others. It serves to inspire ITE students and apprentices to develop high moral values and show care and concern for others.

The Lee Kuan Yew ECA Award is to promote all-rounded development of ITE students. It is presented to students who have shown outstanding achievements in the areas of arts and culture, sports or community service.

In addition to the Lee Kuan Yew Awards, I also note that for the first time, the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) is presenting the MINDEF Physical Fitness Performance Award to 4 technical institutes for their achievements in students' physical fitness. These awards are presented with the objective of motivating ITE to develop and maintain a high level of physical fitness for its students. Maintaining good health and a healthy lifestyle is an integral part of a person's overall development, hence this award is in line with ITE's total training philosophy.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I would like to commend ITE for the efforts put in to instil a "Total Training" philosophy amongst its students. The soft skills imparted through active participation in ECAs complement the specific technical expertise which ITE graduates possess, thus ensuring that they receive a holistic training and are in a good position to add value to the economy.

May I offer my congratulations to all the award recipients and wish everyone present a successful ITE

Institute Day. Thank you.

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