

# *Singapore Government*

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### **SPEECH BY PRESIDENT S R NATHAN AT THE PRESENTATION CEREMONY OF THE 2000 PRESIDENT'S SCHOLARSHIP AWARD ON FRIDAY 4 AUG 2000, 7.30 PM AT THE ISTANA**

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

“The World is Ten Years Old” is what Thomas Friedman had chosen as the title for the opening chapter of his definitive book, “The Lexus and the Olive Tree”. He did so to drive home the point that the world that most of us have grown up in, which was shaped by the ideological forces of the Cold War, is now defined by a brand new international system: Globalisation. In this, the world will be tied together, to an unprecedented degree and intensity, into a single globalised village. Ideas, information, capital and talent flows will take place in this global marketplace, driven by rapid technological advances. The forces of globalisation will, in turn, drive the acceleration in technological change.

2 As we stand at the threshold of a new millennium, and at the dawn of what many have predicted will be profound changes brought about by the dual revolution of information technology and life sciences, we find ourselves peering into an uncertain and changing future. But there is one imperative that we do know: we must position Singapore competitively in this fast-changing environment.

3 This uncertainty about Globalisation and Technology – the fact that we still

do not fully understand the implications, and how they will frame our nation's future - is both a threat and an opportunity. A threat because we may be overtaken and even made irrelevant by others who may be more adept in the new environment, in the intense competition of the future.

4 Yet, Globalisation and Technology also open up a world of opportunities for a country like ours. Singapore benefits from being politically stable and well-governed, with policies that are forward-looking and anticipatory in nature. Being a small city-state allows us to be more nimble and well-poised in an international system that rewards speed, agility and willingness to change and adapt. In addition, the globalised marketplace and the knowledge-intensive economy that will define the nature of competition between nations in the future will benefit us. Singapore will be in a better position to overcome our traditional physical limitations of boundaries, size and resources. This is provided we can seize the new opportunities of the future by creating and harnessing knowledge, and develop and nurture our talent pool.

5 Therefore, we need to groom a generation of people who are prepared to take on these challenges and lead Singapore to continued prosperity. Increasingly, the generation we are looking for must be plugged-in members of the international community, who possess a passion for Singapore, and the desire to strive always for the well-being of our people. They will need to develop strong wings to soar and grasp the immense opportunities beyond our shores, while at the same time striking deep roots of identity with our homeland.

6 Amidst the lively debate over scholarships and bond-breaking, it is also timely that we stop and reflect deeply on what is expected by ordinary Singaporeans of our scholars. Our society has always held scholars in high regard because they exemplify the qualities of the best in our society, who can be expected to be our future leaders. Singaporeans therefore expect our scholars to be more than just bright and successful individuals. They would rightly be deeply disappointed with scholars who lacked integrity, no matter how smart and brilliant they may be. And it is evident that they want to be led, not only by the best and the brightest, but equally by those with the depth of character and a high sense of duty – to serve the greater good. That is what past President's Scholars have demonstrated. In a globalised world, more of these qualities would be demanded of all of us, if Singapore is to continue to succeed and flourish.

7 This year, the most prestigious scholarship award in the nation have been conferred upon a young lady and two young men. They are Miss Denise Wong

Huiwen, Mr Aaron Beng Yao Cheng, and Mr He Ruimin. Miss Wong, who has also been awarded the Overseas Merit Scholarship, will be reading Law in the University of Cambridge. Mr Beng and Mr He, both also Singapore Armed Forces Scholarship holders, are going to the United States for their studies: Mr Beng to read Engineering and Economics at Yale University, and Mr He to read Electrical and Electronics Engineering at MIT.

8 Reflecting the global world we live in today, all three of them have demonstrated their capacity to think, learn and operate as global citizens. And going to the best universities abroad will certainly enhance their ability to be globally plugged in. But reflecting history and tradition, they now join the ranks of the 215 President's Scholars who have come before them, who represent the fundamental values of loyalty, integrity, and dedication to our country. These values are unchanging. They must be cherished and affirmed, especially as the global environment around us changes rapidly. This is the hope that we have pinned on past President's Scholars. And this is the hope that we pin upon our three President's Scholars for this year.

9 I wish to congratulate Miss Wong, Mr Beng and Mr He, and their families, principals, teachers and friends, who have given them that support and encouragement that has brought them to where they are today. It remains for me to wish each of you every success in your studies overseas, and in your public service career in the future.

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