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SPEECH BY MR. S ISWARAN, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, AT THE BUDDING WRITERS AWARDS CEREMONY ON FRIDAY, 4 DECEMBER 2009, 7PM AT CHAMBER, THE ARTS HOUSE

Mr Shane Armstrong, Head of Publishing Group, Marshall Cavendish,

Principals, teachers and students,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening.

1 It is my pleasure to join you today at the awards ceremony for Budding Writers Project 2009.

2 At the outset, I would like to congratulate all participants of the Budding Writers Project 2009 on an outstanding effort. I am particularly happy to note that the number of entries this year has doubled, and that the more than 1000 participants have significantly raised the bar for creative writing.

National Archives of Singapore
CURRENT LANDSCAPE FOR WRITERS

3 It is heartening to see our youth actively embrace their love for the written word, especially when they have a rich and varied menu of activities to choose from. Today, we celebrate our young writers' efforts and achievements, and hope to encourage them in the pursuit of their dream of becoming published authors. Competitions like the Budding Writers Project give young talent the opportunity to demonstrate their writing flair and deepen their appreciation of the

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English language. It provides them with a platform to articulate their ideas and express their feelings.

4 As global interconnectivity increases, it is essential that our students, and indeed all Singaporeans, become effective communicators who are not only fluent and proficient in English, but also keen connoisseurs of the language and its literature. English is the *lingua franca* of the global exchange – be it for goods, services or knowledge. Consequently, mastery of the English language is pivotal to an individual’s success and, indeed, to maintaining Singapore’s nodal position within the global economy.

5 The theme for this year’s Speak Good English Movement is “Impress. Inspire. Intoxicate.” It is a succinct exposition of a simple truth - good communication must go beyond tenses and sentence structures, and focus on our ability to convey ideas and messages with clarity and persuasion, so as to inspire and influence others. In that regard, the Budding Writers Project has allowed our young aspiring writers to hone their craft and polish their style while giving form to their imagination and creativity.

BUDDING WRITERS’ LEARNING PROCESS

6 The Budding Writers Project started ten years ago, and over the years, it has helped to discover several excellent writers. Some of them, such as Amanda Chong and Tan Xue Yang, have gone on to receive other national and international awards, including the Prime Minister’s Book Prize, the Commonwealth Essay Competition, the Foyle Young Poets Competition, and the Angus Ross Prize. I have no doubt that their achievements will inspire the crop of aspiring writers present here.

7 I understand that this year’s participants of the Budding Writers Project have created unique, inspiring and credible stories. The students’ stories reflect

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their keen awareness of current affairs and social issues. They wrote about overcoming peer pressure, the need for teamwork, and the importance of perseverance in pursuing goals. There were also themes that emphasised strong morals and values that other children would find familiar and relevant. The gritty and realistic perspectives in the stories demonstrate a maturity and depth in thinking that is well beyond their age. These young authors have a bright future ahead of them.

8 The winners of the Budding Writers Project will experience the gamut of activities in taking a book from idea to outcome - from writing and editing, to designing, printing, marketing and selling of the books. They will learn to cast their books in a digital format for the Internet, and even record a voice-over for it. This is apposite given the transformations brought about by shifts in digital and media technologies. Those of us who have used a Kindle or similar device, or purchased the electronic version of a book, can certainly attest to the quantum changes in the reading experience that have taken us beyond the traditional printed form.

9 This unique learning experience will take our young writers beyond the school to gain a real insight into the life of an author. It will also give them their first taste of entrepreneurship as they collect royalties from book sales. Quite fittingly, part of the proceeds will also go to organisations that champion the causes the writers support and wrote about in their stories.

CONCLUSION

10 I am delighted to be a part of this celebration and hope that Marshall Cavendish and the Budding Writers Project will continue to serve as a catalyst that sparks the creative endeavours of writing and illustration. I congratulate the participants on a job well done, and wish you all the very best. Thank you.