



Ministry of Education
SINGAPORE

Speeches

Speech by Mr S Iswaran, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Trade and Industry and Ministry of Education, at the Closing Ceremony for the FIRST LEGO League Singapore 2009 on Saturday, 9 January 2010, at 6.00pm at the School of Science and Technology

Mr Raymond Huang, Founder, Heartware Network

Ms Lim Cheng Pier, Head, LEGO Education (Asia Pacific)

Mr Chua Chor Huat, Principal, School of Science and Technology

Distinguished guests

Teachers, parents and students

Good evening.

1 I am delighted to be here at the Award Presentation Ceremony of the FIRST LEGO League Singapore 2009.

2 Each year, the FIRST LEGO League (FLL) competition focuses on a different real-world topic related to the sciences. In 2009, the topic was “Smart Move”. The key to the challenge is accessing people, places, goods and services in the safest, most efficient way possible. The global transportation network sustains our economy, and drives international commerce. Transportation systems are also close to the hearts of the billions of commuters who travel to work, school and home everyday. I am, therefore, pleased to see so many of you taking part in this competition, engaging in authentic scientific research and hands-on robotic design to solve real world challenges in transportation. I am particularly pleased that today’s ceremony is being held at our newly-opened School of Science and Technology which aims to provide rich opportunities, like FLL, in applied learning and an immersive experience aimed at nurturing inventive and innovative individuals.

3 The popularity of FLL around the world is testimony to the desire of students to extend learning beyond the classroom. Since project work was introduced into the school curriculum, students have begun to discover the joy of learning and problem-solving beyond textbooks. Science and technology clubs are gaining popularity across our schools and many of these are related to robotics. FLL requires participants to apply knowledge in a practical and tangible way. Mathematical and physical theories are tested in a fun-filled and challenging setting. Science and technology are cast in a different light, not as subjects found in textbooks but as disciplines that are important in our everyday lives.

4 The robots we have seen today exemplify the quantum leaps enabled by technology. Technology has transformed our learning environment. It has allowed us to multiply our efforts and achieve previously unthinkable learning outcomes. The teams of young innovators must surely have felt a strong sense of satisfaction and pride when they showcased their robots. What we need in the knowledge-based economy are enterprising and enquiring young minds like yours—people who are able to think out of the box, constantly seeking better solutions and constantly innovating. They will become the vanguard that will propel new technological innovations and help Singapore compete with global leaders.

5 Beyond robotics and the development of innovative technological solutions, I am heartened to know that the FLL competition also focuses on the all-round development of young men and women—imparting values such as professionalism and team work, and emphasising kindness and respect in our interactions with people from different walks of life. Participants learn that competition and collaboration are not mutually exclusive, and that helping one another, sometimes even fellow competitors, is the foundation of teamwork. In that regard, I hope that while you have worked hard for this competition in these past few weeks, you have also been able to find time to share experiences, learn new skills and forge new friendships. The knowledge and network you have gained will be invaluable as you continue your pursuit of scientific exploration in the years to come.

6 I would like to congratulate all the teams and the ten participants who will ultimately represent Team Singapore at the World Festival in Atlanta, Georgia in April 2010. Enjoy this learning journey and see it as an opportunity to expand your horizons, learn from your international counterparts, and return with new ideas and a renewed passion to tackle the world's challenges with the aid of technology.

7 I applaud Heartware Network for organising this event and for your work in developing youths from various backgrounds into young community champions—youth who are equipped with the skills and social “heartware” to take on active roles to lead others in addressing community needs. I would also like to acknowledge the community spirit and volunteer support of the over 150 judges, coaches and youths, who have contributed to the success of this project.

8 I am impressed by what I have seen today; your projects could perhaps become the basis for viable and sustainable solutions for our transportation systems. Your robotic creations are an affirmation that each of you here dares to dream, and is prepared to work to make that dream a reality. Congratulations on a great effort, and I wish you an exciting future of exploration and creativity in science and technology.

9 Thank you.

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