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SPEECH BY DR TONY TAN KENG YAM, CHAIRMAN, SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS AT THE SPH AND SPH FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDS 2009 HELD ON THURSDAY, 30 JULY 2009 AT 3.00 PM AT THE SPH NEWS CENTRE AUDITORIUM

Ladies and Gentlemen

A good afternoon to all. I am pleased to be here for our annual SPH and SPH Foundation Scholarship Awards Ceremony.

First, I would like to congratulate this year's scholarship recipients and their proud parents and relatives present at this memorable occasion.

Investing in continual success

American playwright Arthur Miller said in 1961 that "A good newspaper is a nation talking to itself". This simple statement underlines the importance of having newspapers that are relevant and more important, respected by readers. It is quality journalism that helps to sustain and reinforce this conversation between the newspaper and its readers.

Today, we are facing dramatic changes in the media industry worldwide. Changing media consumption habits and technological advances have posed considerable threats to media companies everywhere.

Singapore Press Holdings newspapers, however, are still very much a daily staple for many. We believe that as we invest more and more in quality and credible content, we will not only survive but continue to succeed. As we continue to invest in new media platforms to keep up with the times, we will also continually be on the look out for top media talent to ensure good content is created daily.

With a strong editorial team, fast and insightful coverage of global and local issues; thought provoking commentaries and creative graphics, we live up to our tagline - to engage minds and enrich lives in our nation.

Past scholars have become good journalists

Good journalism is more than just good writing. A good journalist has to be resourceful and search for ways to tell a compelling story that resonates with readers' emotions.

Let me share with you the experiences of two of our past scholars who have become outstanding journalists today.

They have shown abundant energy and an entrepreneurial spirit in bringing memorable stories to our readers.

Ms Sim Chi Yin is currently the Senior China Correspondent with The Straits Times China bureau. In 2008, her story of Indonesian women who left their homes to work as maids overseas received an award for “Excellence in Special Issue or Special Section Reporting” at the 2008 Society of Publishers in Asia (SOPA) Awards. For 2 years, she travelled to Indonesia during her vacations to do research on her subject, interview the women and shoot the pictures.

Her recent editorial feature centred on the Khmer Rouge and the Killing Fields Trial where she came up close and personal with surviving victims, former prison staff and former cadres. She also took photographs of the notorious S21 Prison, mass burial sites and memorials that honour the dead and missing.

Mr Chua Chin Hon is presently the US Bureau Chief for The Straits Times after spending 3 years as the newspaper’s China Bureau Chief. During 2003 to 2008, he made 5 trips to document the development of the The Three Gorges Project and its impact on the lives of people living nearby.

This culminated in his 40-photos essay submission, titled “Time And Tide: Five Years Behind The Three Gorges Dam”, which received a special mention at this year’s US-based Pictures of the Year International contest.

Both Chi Yin and Chin Hon took a personal interest in their subjects, got out of their comfort zones, and brought the stories right to our doorsteps.

Recognising our human capital

We in SPH place strong emphasis on developing our human capital. This year, we will be awarding 8 SPH Scholarships to young men and women who will grow with us as they embark on their journalism careers after graduation.

In addition to welcoming a new batch of journalists, SPH is taking the opportunity to recognise the contributions from our staff and news vendors. A total of 15 scholarships will be presented to their children to pursue further studies at our local junior colleges, polytechnics and universities.

We will also be giving out the annual SPH Foundation Lim Kim San Memorial Scholarships to language students this afternoon. I am pleased to announce that this year, because of the economic crisis and the larger pool of deserving candidates, we will be presenting the scholarships to 6 deserving recipients, instead of the usual 4.

These recipients have demonstrated that their less fortunate backgrounds have not deterred them from excelling academically and being active in social and community service. I believe that they will give back generously to the society, just as they have unconditionally received.

Conclusion

I would like to end with words of encouragement for all our scholars. Today is a special day for all of you as you embark on a new and exciting journey in self-discovery.

Through your studies, activities and many encounters, you will gain new experiences and perspectives and enjoy opportunities that will help realise your potential.

It is through such interactions that you will generate ideas and develop a keen sense of curiosity that will serve you well, be it as a journalist or in your other career options. I wish you all the very best.

Thank you.