

**SPEECH BY MR TEO CHEE HEAN, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER,
COORDINATING MINISTER FOR NATIONAL SECURITY, AT
THE OPENING CEREMONY OF WORLDSKILLS SINGAPORE
ON THURSDAY, 7 JULY 2016, AT 11 AM, AT AUDITORIUM, TAY
ENG SOON CONVENTION CENTRE, ITE**

Mr Bob Tan

Chairman, ITE Board of Governors

Mr Bruce Poh

Chairman/WorldSkills Singapore Council and CEO, ITE

Members of the ITE and Polytechnic Boards of Governors

Polytechnic Principals

WorldSkills Officials, Judges and Competitors

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Introduction

1 I am very happy to join all of you here this morning at the
Opening of WorldSkills Singapore 2016.

2 Over the years, WorldSkills Singapore has provided an important platform for our ITE and polytechnic students to hone their skills, benchmark themselves against their peers, and broaden their horizons.

With their skills, they have received recognition not only from the competition judges, but also from their families, friends and potential employers.

This year, we have 150 finalists in 17 skill areas, compared to just 54 finalists in eight areas when the competition was first held in 1994.

My Skills, My Future

3 I find the theme for this year's competition, '***My Skills, My Future***', particularly meaningful.

It recognises that each of us has the potential to develop our skills, and create a good future for ourselves and our families.

It reminds us that we hold the future in our own hands, and we can shape that future through the skills that we acquire not just in school, but throughout life.

A future built on deep mastery of skills, through perseverance and resilience, anchored by passion for and commitment to one's chosen vocation.

'The Future is in Your Hands'

4 Allow me to share with you the story of a young person who has done just this.

5 Muhammad Sufyan Bin Zainalabidin graduated with a Diploma in Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering and an Advanced Diploma in CNC Applications from Singapore Polytechnic in 2007.

That year, he also won the Gold Medal for the Mechanical Engineering Drawing & Design CADD category at the 39th WorldSkills Competition held in Shizuoka, Japan.

6 After working for some time, Sufyan pursued a Degree in Mechanical Engineering and graduated in 2013.

He last worked as a Research Engineer at the NTU Energy Research Institute, working on electromobility-related projects.

He will be taking up an overseas job opportunity training students in engineering design.

7 Sufyan's experience shows us that by knowing one's interest, and seizing opportunities to maximise one's potential, and persevering in it, you can create a great future for yourself.

I hope his story and experiences will encourage us all to work hard to pursue our own dreams.

SkillsFuture and the Future of Us

8 From the early days of our economic development, we have invested heavily in education and training.

Helping Singaporeans to develop and deepen their skills will continue to be a major thrust of our economic and social strategy – because this is the best way to ensure that Singaporeans stay on the right side of the growing skills and income gap in an increasingly competitive world.

9 Many Singaporeans have benefitted from a skills-based education at ITE and our Polytechnics.

Extending beyond the school-going years, SkillsFuture aims to help Singaporeans develop to their full potential through continual learning, to ensure that they remain competitive in their chosen careers, throughout their working life.

10 We have already announced several SkillsFuture initiatives, including structured education and career guidance in the schooling years and enhanced internships for ITE and polytechnic students.

We are also progressively introducing Earn and Learn Programmes across a range of sectors, such as food manufacturing, logistics and info-comm technology.

There are also Mid-career Enhanced Subsidies, Study Awards, and Fellowships, to help Singaporeans achieve mastery in their respective fields.

11 Beyond these skill development initiatives, we will also need to change mindsets to emphasise mastery of skills, rather than focus only on paper qualifications.

This requires a whole-of-society effort, and Government will work with educators, industry partners, as well as working adults, parents and students.

12 To our industry partners represented here today, we hope that you will continue to work with our educational institutions to help Singaporeans develop and deepen their skills, and recognise their skills both in terms of pay and career development.

WorldSkills National Experts Scheme

13 The WorldSkills Singapore Council is also launching a new WorldSkills National Experts Scheme.

These WorldSkills National Experts will serve as Judges for the WSS and complement the existing pool of Trade Experts to help prepare our Team Singapore Competitors for the international WorldSkills Competitions.

Conclusion

14 Let me congratulate all our Competitors for reaching the finals of this year's WorldSkills Singapore competition.

Winning a medal is a bonus, but every one of you is already a winner.

Because you have gained new skills and knowledge, and learned about new technologies and work processes.

Because you have made new friends, and been coached by experts in your chosen field.

Because you are now part of a global learning community that focuses on skills mastery.

15 I am confident that the skills, character, and gumption that have gotten you this far will take you forward to an even better future.

May you continue to live out the theme of this year's Competition:

'My Skills, My Future'.

16 I wish all of you the very best.

Thank you.