

Singapore Government Press Release
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SPEECH BY DR VIVIAN BALAKRISHNAN, MINISTER OF STATE FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT & TRADE AND INDUSTRY, AT THE HSBC/NYAA YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD 2003 AWARD PRESENTATION CEREMONY CUM LAUNCH OF THE KRANJI NATURE TRAIL ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2003, 10AM AT SUNGEI BULOH WETLAND RESERVE

Prof Leo Tan, Chairman, National Parks Board and NYAA Council
Mr Paul Lawrence, Chief Executive Officer, HSBC
Distinguished guests
Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to join you this morning in this very scenic environment at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve. We are gathered here today to honour and recognise our young people, who have excelled in the area of environmental protection and nature conservation.

Young people are our hope for a sustainable future. They are key to ensuring that the following generations will continue to enjoy fresh air, clean water and a pollution-free environment.

This is a heavy responsibility. Our youths will learn that this goal cannot be achieved alone because preserving our environment is, and must be, a collective effort and responsibility.

Years ago, the NYAA conducted a national survey of young people and the environment. More than 10,000 young people participated in the survey. While the survey showed that our young people were very knowledgeable in environmental issues, they were not very good at translating that knowledge into action.

This has driven the NYAA Council to work in close collaboration and partnership with various agencies such as HSBC and the National Parks Board. These partnerships were formed to promote awareness among our youths, and honour those who have taken leadership roles in environmental protection and nature conservation. They also encourage youths in Singapore to take action to protect and care for our natural environment. It is encouraging to note that this partnership has been fruitful so far.

I was told that since the inaugural HSBC/NYAA Youth Environmental Award in 1998, more than 25,000 young people have gone through various environmental programmes and projects. These were carried out at the local, regional and even international level. Many of the young people participating in these programmes have done so well that they have been honoured and recognised by the Ministry of the Environment and the National Environment Agency (NEA). These youths received the 'Green Leaf Award', given out during Clean and Green Week.

These programmes have served to groom many youths into leaders. Let me give you a recent example. Miss Vinothini Apok is an NYAA Gold Awardee, who made history by being the youngest in the world to be elected to the United Nations Environment Programme Youth Advisory Council in 1998. She also received the Green Leaf Award in 1998 and HSBC/NYAA Youth Environmental

Award in 1999. She was recently invited by the Ministry of the Environment and the NYAA Council to represent Singapore at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Colombia from 26 to 29 August 2003. She did Singapore proud with her environmental knowledge and enthusiasm. In fact, she was invited to a closed-door meeting with the Colombian Minister for the Environment, who personally invited her to be a member of the Ministerial Delegation to Holland later this year.

Vino is a shining example of how young people can excel when they are provided the platform and support. There are many more good examples in the NYAA and I am glad that financial institutions such as HSBC have agreed to be strong partners in helping us promote and recognise them.

People such as Vino are good role models for other youths to emulate. They have learnt, and acted on, a very important lesson. That lesson is - "You have not inherited the Earth from your ancestors. Rather, you are borrowing it from your children. Treat it with respect and dignity."

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the young people receiving the HSBC/NYAA Youth Environmental Award today. I hope many youths will follow your example and footsteps.

Along with this award ceremony, we are launching the Kranji Nature Trail that links the two wetlands, Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve and Kranji Reservoir Park. This is a fine example of community at work. Staff and volunteers from the Raffles Museum for Biodiversity Research and students from various schools have been involved in cleaning up the coast and re-establishing mangroves since 1998. The schools include Tao Nan Primary, Hillgrove Secondary, Commonwealth Secondary, Christchurch Secondary, Beatty Secondary, St Andrew's Junior College, Hwa Chong Junior College, Victoria Junior College, Singapore American School and the National University of Singapore. HSBC has also sponsored \$30,000 worth of educational materials such as signage and brochures to guide visitors along the trail. This tripartite cooperation has contributed significantly to the establishment and improvement of the Kranji Nature Trail.

I would also like to commend HSBC, the National Youth Achievement Award Council and the National Parks Board for their strong partnership in providing the young people of Singapore with the opportunity and platform to develop themselves through various environmental activities and projects.

I hope this exemplary alliance in promoting a common cause will be emulated by other corporations in the near future.

Thank you
