

# Crusader for better loos honoured

Jack Sim wins first Social Entrepreneur of the Year award

BY MARIA ALMENOAR & LYNN KAN

YOU could say he "flushed" out the competi-

tion. Singapore's crusader for clean toilets, Mr Jack Sim, 49, was honoured as Singapore's first Social Entrepreneur of the Year last night.

He beat three other finalists to win a trip to the World Economic Forum and the Annual Global Summit for Social Entrepreneurs to be held in Switzerland next year.

As owner of a building materials company, Mr Sim was concerned about how little thought was put

into the design and proper usage of toilets.

In 2001, he founded the World Toilet Organisation, which now has 50 member organisations worldwide and holds forums twice a year.

Locally, as president of the Restroom Association of Singapore, Mr Sim has promoted clean toilets and better toilet designs with star ratings for tip-top toilets.

Recently, he helped ease queues in women's loos by pushing for a revised code of practice for environmental health, requiring all new buildings to have as many loos for women as for men, if not more.

Said Mr Sim: "The cause has been recognised and legitimised and that's more important than me winning."

The award, honouring those with sharp business skills and a kind heart, was

launched by the Switzerland-based Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship together with The Straits Times.

Straits Times editor Han Fook Kwang said the newspaper was very happy to support the awards because the participants had wonderful, inspirational stories to tell.

He said The Straits Times wanted to use its reach and influence to do its bit for the community.

Schwab Foundation managing director Pamela Hartigan, who was one of the judges, found Mr Sim's story particularly inspiring.

"He had enormous impact with his idea — billions of people are affected. And he did everything on a shoestring budget," she said.

"He's a real innovation model for Singapore."

The award ceremony, held at the Raffles City Convention Centre, was attended by 110 guests.

The guest of honour, Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports Vivian Balakrishnan, said the ComCare Enterprise Fund, which provides seed funding for viable businesses with a social objective, has to date approved \$4.8 million for 48 proposals.

He urged the business community to look for opportunities with voluntary welfare organisations and charities as these organisations seek opportunities in the business arena.

"There can be much to be gained from synergy," said Dr Balakrishnan.

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## VICTORY IN STAMP OF LEGITIMACY

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## A REAL INNOVATOR

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DR PAMELA HARTIGAN, Schwab Foundation managing director and one of the judges

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THIS IDEA HAD IMPACT: Mr Sim (right) receiving the award from Dr Balakrishnan and MP Penny Low of Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC. PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

## One-stop portal for social enterprises

A NON-PROFIT organisation has been started to marshal resources, contacts and entrepreneurs — both established and aspiring — to launch social innovation or social enterprises in Singapore.

Social enterprises are organisations that operate businesses whose profits fund a social need.

Member of Parliament Penny Low launched the Social Innovators Park (SIP), her brainchild, at the Social Innovators Forum yesterday.

Ms Low started SIP as a one-stop portal after she noted the numerous individual efforts by Singaporean social entrepreneurs to help the needy.

"SIP's intention is to help these entrepreneurs start an

enterprise with half the effort and with double the impact," said the MP for Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC.

She has roped in successful businesswomen like Ms Jocelyn Chng, managing director of Sim Hwa Dee Foodstuff Industries, and Ms Elm Chew, founder and managing director of 77th Street, to act as consultants for fledgling start-ups.

"We're attracting strategic partners who are not in the business of social enterprise, to provide the expertise and the network so that we can kick-start this movement here," said Ms Low.

Her plans include a discussion panel between future social entrepreneurs and other partners to see how best to use their know-how to grow a pool of social entrepreneurs here.