

Two creative Singaporeans score a first

TWO Singaporeans have become the first from outside of the United States to be given the Champions of Creativity Award.

Weekend TODAY has learnt that Mr Bernard Harrison and Dr N Varaprasad are being recognised for being champions of creative ideas as well as for being creative people. They beat some 12 others in the final rounds of selection for this prestigious award.

The award for Mr Harrison is for revolutionising the way people think of zoos and for his contributions to the creation of the Singapore Night Safari.

Dr Varaprasad is being recognised for his role in shaping a new landscape for polytechnic education in Singapore. As the founding chief executive officer of Temasek Polytechnic, he gave poly education a new significance by enlarging its frames of reference, thus moving way ahead in what was traditionally expected of poly graduates. Dr Varaprasad is the current CEO of the National Library Board.

The two Singaporeans will be honoured at the annual international creativity conference of the American Creativity Association to be held here from Feb 25 to Feb 29. The Singapore Management University (SMU) is hosting the event and its creativity don, Professor Kirpal Singh, is

chair of the steering committee of the event. This is the first time this annual conference has moved out of the United States.

The week-long event will draw some 220 people from more than 32 countries. Some of the big names include Professor Bernhardt Trout from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was recently awarded a multi-million dollar grant by Novartis to lead a research team into drug-manufacturing; and Amber Edwards who is an Emmy Award winner for making documentary films.

Prof Kirpal Singh described the event as an "important milestone".

"For many years now, we have been trying to enhance our status and role as a "creative hub" and the fact that this prestigious international conference has now come to Singapore is a signal that we matter as a creative people and as a creative nation."

SMU president Professor Howard Hunter added: "We are one of the few universities in the world where fundamental emphasis is placed on creative thinking as a key component in our students' curricula ... In hosting the conference here, we also hope to foster an exchange of ideas that will fuel and drive the creative spirit in the way we live, work and play in Singapore."