Creativity meet throws up interesting ideas

By GEOFFREY LEE

Can you remember the nine planets in correct order, starting with the planet closest to the sun?

This challenge was issued by Tony Buzan, creator of Mindmapping, at yesterday's opening of the inaugural International Creativity Conference, which is being held in Singapore until Feb 29.

The sprightly 66-year-old, who was presented with a Lifetime Creativity Award, delivered a keynote address on Creativity & Memory—a little-explored area in which the latest research is providing new insights into the nature of creativity.

Mr Buzan said humans, having progressed from the agrarian to the industrial age, and then to the information and technology age, now find themselves not in the knowledge age, as most people would assume, but in the age of intelligence.

People are starting to find out that the management of knowledge is not working, he said. And this is because the "manager" of knowledge is not working. "The manager of knowledge is the human brain," Mr Buzan said. "We have to manage the brain before we can manage and create more knowledge."

Creativity is humanity's birthright, according to him. And when it does not flourish it is not because the brain is not geared for it but because the brain has not been nurtured properly.

"The prime language of humans is not English or Chinese or Japanese or any other spoken language, but image," he said. Memory is creative because it is the recreation of our personal history through the use of images.

Sharing his formula for creativity—energy plus and into memory equals infinite creativity—Mr Buzan ended with a reminder that humanity's capacity for creativity is the only way people can work out solutions to problems and make progress.

Commenting afterwards on creativity in Singapore, he said Singapore is one of the world's most creative countries, having become a leading nation in almost everything from business to education.

Organised by the American Creativity Association (ACA), the conference—Creativity Across Cultures—is the first held outside of the US.

Singapore's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Zainul Abidin Rasheed was guest of honour among a list of speakers including World Bank gender specialist Amanda Elis, 1985 chemistry Nobel Prize winner Herbert Hauptman and Lego chief executive Jorgen Vig Knudstorp.

The creativity conference is taking place at the Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel. Interested parties are welcome to attend—and the registration fee will be pro-rated. They can also e-mail register@globeanddavis.com. The five-day event is hosted by local university SMU.

And just in case you are still wondering, the answer to the question about the planets is: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto.