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Subject: (EMBARGOED) Speech by BG George Yeo, 13 Jan 99, 1.45 pm

Singapore Government

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SPEECH BY GEORGE YEO, MINISTER FOR INFORMATION

& THE ARTS AND SECOND MINISTER FOR TRADE &

INDUSTRY, AT THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL DAB

SYMPOSIUM ON 13 JAN 99 AT 1.45 PM

Mr Michael McEwen, President of World DAB Forum

Mr Ni am Chi ang Meng, Chai rman SBA

Ladi es and Gentl emen

I ntroducti on

1 Let me first welcome all participants to the Fourth International DAB Symposium. And to our friends from overseas, a warm welcome to Singapore.

2 We in Singapore are delighted that the World DAB Forum and the Singapore Broadcasting Authority (SBA) have jointly organised this Fourth International DAB Symposium here, the first DAB Symposium to be held in Asia. As an international, non-governmental organisation with members from over 25 countries, the World DAB Forum plays an important role in promoting, harmonising and co-ordinating the implementation of the Eureka 147 DAB services worldwide. Singapore is proud to be a partner in this exciting venture.

3 In addition to interference-free reception and CD-quality sound, digital radio sets will offer much wider choices and enable their owners to receive text and other useful data. As the market for DAB develops, all kinds of new products and services will be introduced.

Si ngapore as a Broadcast and Mul ti medi a Hub

4 Singapore is fast becoming a hub for broadcast and multimedia. Our advantages are a good strategic location, political stability, a pro-business environment, excellent infrastructure, a quality-workforce and our willingness to try new technologies.

5 The Singapore government is fully committed to the development of the Singapore-ONE project. This is possibly the world's first nationwide broadband network for the delivery of interactive multimedia content. By the end of this year, every home, school and office should be wired up. We are already more than 90% completed. Users enjoy easy access to a whole range of services including video and news on demand, distance learning, video conferencing, on-line government services and fast Internet. Electronic commerce will grow rapidly on Singapore-ONE. We will exploit Singapore's historical position as the regional command and control centre for banks and MNCs to make Singapore a trusted hub for electronic commerce.

Di gi tal Radi o

6 Radio has come a long way since its invention at the end of the last century. Despite TV and the Internet, radio has remained remarkably resilient as a provider of information, education and entertainment. Radio is local and friendly. Whether one is jogging, cycling or driving, radio is wonderfully personal.

7 However, with digitization, both broadcast technology and the broadcast environment are changing rapidly. Following the trend in the West, there is growing interest in digital broadcasting in Asia. This first Symposium in Asia is therefore very timely. Like most of you, we in Singapore believe that the Eureka 147 DAB system offers the best technology for digital radio broadcasting.

8 Radio has now to compete with digital technologies like the Internet, digital TV, CD and DVD. The challenge is to find a comfortable niche for digital radio in a complex multimedia environment. For a technology that has not really changed very much since Marconi's early experiments in 1894, DAB represents a necessary revolution[1].

9 Singapore is the first country in Asia to introduce DAB services. As a compact city-state, Singapore is a good test bed for new technologies and services. Because Singapore is a microcosm of Asia, products and services that succeed here are likely to sell in other Asian markets as well. Of course, some adaptation will have to be made. Although the present economic crisis has slowed down the introduction of digital technologies to the Asian market, this is temporary. East and Southeast Asia alone have a combined population of 2 billion people. In a few years' time, many countries in East Asia will grow rapidly again.

10 The Singapore Broadcasting Authority, which is the statutory board regulating and promoting broadcast development in Singapore, has identified DAB as a key technology to push. SBA, together with other public agencies like the Economic Development Board and the National Science and Technology Board, have been meeting industry players, including broadcasters, multiplex operators, content and data service providers, research institutes, equipment manufacturers and distributors, to discuss how best to facilitate the development of DAB in Singapore and the region.

Launch of DAB Services in Singapore

11 I am happy to announce that, after more than a year of preparatory work, Singapore will introduce commercial DAB services this year. The national radio broadcaster, Radio Corporation of Singapore (RCS), has been awarded the first DAB Multiplex Operator Licence. This evening, RCS will unveil its trade launch of DAB services. Commercial launch will follow in six months' time.

12 Listeners can look forward to receiving four of the existing twelve RCS stations in crystal-clear CD-quality sound. The four stations are Class 95 (an English music station), YES 93.3 (the most popular Chinese station), News Radio 93.8 (a new English news and current affairs station) and Symphony 92.4 (a classical music station). In addition, RCS will introduce a Showcase Channel for the digital broadcast of programmes selected from the other RCS stations. Progressively, these stations will also transmit data including traffic reports, weather forecasts, news headlines and financial news.

13 To support the trade launch of DAB, the Singapore Broadcasting Authority has been encouraging radio receiver companies to market DAB receivers early. At least four major industry players, namely Blaupunkt, Claron, Kenwood and Pioneer, will soon be offering DAB car radio receivers for sale.

14 We are heartened by the response of content and hardware companies. For DAB to take off quickly, we need a critical mass of products and services. In Singapore, we will exploit the robustness of DAB signals to provide, in real time, traffic information to individuals on the move, whether in private cars, taxis, buses or trains. DAB will improve the island-wide system which the Land Transport Authority has put in place to collect and provide information on traffic movements.

15 DAB also opens up new opportunities for radio receiver manufacturers. Singapore is already the regional base for the research and development of high-end audio and video products. We promote the development of DAB receivers which meet specific regional needs, for example, receivers with multi-language displays. The Centre for Wireless Communications at the University of Singapore is actively involved in such efforts. Over the years, conventional radio receivers have become small, portable, inexpensive and ubiquitous. While DAB receivers are still expensive and not quite portable, the development of a mass consumption market will quickly bring down the size and cost.

National DAB Committee

16 To promote DAB in a comprehensive way, we will soon form a National DAB Committee to spearhead and co-ordinate the use of DAB in Singapore. The Committee will include representatives from different segments of the industry. It will be chaired by Mr Anthony Chia, the CEO of Radio Corporation of Singapore.

17 We are fortunate that, despite the economic crisis, we are able to press on with the development of Singapore-ONE and all our other efforts in IT and multimedia. In fact, this crisis provides us with an opportunity to move ahead relative to other markets and jurisdictions in the region. We embrace fully the theme of this Symposium "Digital Radio Now. Seizing the Opportunity in the Multimedia World".

18 I wish everyone here a successful Symposium.

[1] Guglielmo Marconi, an Italian inventor, is credited with the invention of radio although he was inspired by Heinrich Hertz, who first demonstrated the reality of radio waves in 1886. Sir Oliver Joseph Lodge transmitted the first radio signals in August 1894 at the same time.