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MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AT  
TAS' INFOCOM INDUSTRY FORUM,  
1 APR 99, 10.30AM, HYATT HOTEL  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1 Good morning. I am pleased to join all of you today at TAS' inaugural Info-communications Industry Forum. I am also happy to note that today marks TAS' 7th anniversary as the reconstituted authority responsible for regulation and development of the telecommunications and postal industries in Singapore.

2 The importance of info-communications cannot be underestimated. Being a country with scarce resources, we have to capitalise on our most valuable asset – our people, and maximise our intellectual capital in order to maintain a competitive edge. To survive in a knowledge-based economy, access and management of information is the key to the development of intellectual capital. It is thus critical that we have a well developed infocomms infrastructure and a multitude of communications services which can cater to the knowledge needs of our people.

3 The infocomms infrastructure in Singapore has witnessed a paradigm shift from the provision of telephone service to the provision of a whole host of value-added services, now supported by Singapore ONE, the world's first nation-wide, broadband network.

4 But just having state-of-the-art infocomms facilities would not be sufficient to guarantee our competitiveness. We must make a transition from being technology adopters to technology innovators. Singapore must strive to be at the forefront of technological revolution and keep abreast with the frontiers of new technologies.

5 The need to have a technopreneurial mindset is even more urgent now if we are to survive as a nation in these competitive times. Fortunately, no company is too small to compete in the infocomms arena where agility and responsiveness are key success factors. Technology need not be owned only by the major multinational corporations – any individual or SME can own the proprietary rights for their innovations.

6 One area that we should focus on is the development of Internet commerce. E-commerce, simply put, is the buying, selling and delivery of services over the Internet. It allows for more direct interaction between buyer and seller and drastically reduces costs and increases productivity. In addition, through the adoption of e-commerce, geographical boundaries no longer limit the market of the vendor. Increasingly, we are moving towards a global market where a vendor in Singapore could sell his goods and services to a person in Canada or South Africa, with the same ease and efficiency as he could market the same goods and services to a local individual or entity.

7 Singapore has made much progress in the realm of Internet commerce. Concrete steps have already been put in place for the infrastructure to support Internet commerce, as well as the legal framework, to ensure that Singapore provides a secure and conducive environment for Internet commerce to flourish. The Government is also committed to promote widespread use and adoption of e-commerce by both consumers and businesses. Hence businesses should take advantage of this supportive environment here to develop competencies in Internet commerce technologies.

8 Besides regulating, TAS has also been actively promoting our infocomms industry. It arranges trade missions for companies to reach out to potential foreign investors and partners and facilitates their participation in strategic infocomms trade exhibitions around the world. Such exhibitions give invaluable opportunities for companies to reach out and showcase products overseas and to forge strategic partnerships. One such example is the Singapore Pavilion at CeBIT CeBIT is a German exhibition which showcases IT software and hardware. '99, which took place recently in Hanover, Germany. In the upcoming CommuniAsia '99 in Singapore, TAS will again be grouping our local companies with telecommunication interest under a Singapore pavilion.

9 To encourage the growth of a vibrant R&D culture for innovation in infocomms technology, TAS has also set up an Industry Development Grant Scheme (DGS). The scheme is primarily aimed at encouraging the Industry to develop new products and services through R&D and local research institutes to conduct research in strategic areas of infocomms technologies. I am pleased to note that TAS has funded a total of 11 projects amounting to \$36 million since the start of the scheme in 1997. The projects include Singapore Post's Virtual Post initiative, which aims to create a national electronic mail infrastructure to allow users to choose to receive mails either in electronic or physical form. Another project involves the development of a high quality but low cost video conferencing platform for SingaporeONE users to facilitate tele-learning, tele-commuting and virtual meetings etc.

#### Concl usi on

10 Today's forum series is an excellent initiative to bring the industry closer to exchange information and network. I hope that participants will take this opportunity to examine ways of cooperation too. On this note, I wish everyone a very fruitful discussion.

11 Thank you.