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SPEECH BY MR MOHAMAD MAIDIN PACKER MOHD, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AT
THE OPENING CEREMONY OF INFOCOMMUNICATION CAREER SEMINAR 1999 AT THE

SINGAPORE EXPO CONFERENCE ROOM ON 24 JUNE 99 AT 1.30 PM

Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to address you at this first ever Infocommunication Career Seminar. I would like to congratulate the Organizing Committee for holding a career seminar for students in conjunction with a premier industry event like CommuniAsia 99. Such trade events have always been exclusive to industry visitors. However, I am pleased that for this year, educational tours of the CommuniAsia 99 Exhibition have been included in the programme to provide students with first-hand experience of the latest developments in the info-communications industry. This Seminar is also an excellent example of the collaboration and partnership that can ensue between schools and the industrial and business sectors. The Committee's initiative demonstrates its foresight in preparing for the industry's future as students from our junior colleges, centralized institutes, polytechnics and universities will have an integral part to play in shaping the nature of info-communications in tomorrow's world.

2. We are a small nation with no natural resources, except our human capital. Our situation is analogous to that of a small boat rocking in the open seas of the world economy. The regional economic crisis has given us a clear lesson of our vulnerability to the waves of global economic forces that have rocked our boat over the past two years. However, we have also learnt that if the boat is well-designed, well-built, and well-maintained, and is managed with skill and foresight, it will stay afloat, ride out the storm and stay on course. How can we continue to keep our

boat seaworthy and even upgrade our ship of state? The answer lies in optimizing our human talent and capital, the members of our crew. We need to develop capabilities of knowledge, skills and creativity in our people. This will help to develop a nation of enterprising and innovative citizens with the capacity to anticipate and overcome the challenges that a knowledge-based economy will bring.

3. The development of the info-communications industry is critical to the building of this knowledge-based economy. Already, the exponential growths of the Internet and its technologies have changed the way we live, work and play. At today's Career Seminar, you will get to hear more about the importance of IT in the new global economic order. You will also be treated to a variety of exciting and challenging career opportunities that await you when you are ready to enter the job market.

4. We all aspire to careers that will allow us to express our talents, fire our interests, and at the same time fulfill the needs of the nation. Changes in society, technology and the wider world mean that career opportunities are evolving all the time. You therefore need to keep abreast of what is available and what will be in demand when you enter the job market.

5. But there is a time lag between now and your entry into the working world. During this time, you will need to increasingly prepare yourself for the world of work. What subjects and courses you decide to take will depend very much on which the careers you would ultimately like to pursue. The greater the specialization of a course of study, the more difficult and expensive it is to make changes midway. The non-monetary costs, in terms of time and motivation, will be felt not just by you and your family, but by the nation as well.

6. So you will need to choose carefully. Schools have instituted career guidance programmes to assist you in making wise choices from a base of accurate and relevant knowledge. This Career Seminar is yet another avenue for you to acquire knowledge about one of the most dynamic and developing industries in Singapore. I am heartened by your presence here today even though it is the school holidays.

7. I trust that most of you have learnt much from your tour of the Exhibition. This afternoon, the Organising Committee has brought together some experts in the diverse field of info-communications to share their knowledge and experiences with you. I am confident that you will find the rest of the Seminar informative and beneficial.

8. In conclusion, I would like to express my appreciation to the Organising Committee, comprising representatives from the Ministry of Education, Telecommunications Authority of Singapore, Singapore Exhibition Services and the various polytechnics and universities, for their efforts in putting together this event. It now gives me great pleasure to declare the Info-communications Career Seminar '99 open.