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Subject: (EMBARGOED) Speech by BG George Yeo, 17 Nov 99, 10.30 am

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

Media Division, Ministry of Information and the Arts, #36-00 PSA Building, 460  
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SPEECH BY GEORGE YEO, MINISTER FOR TRADE AND

INDUSTRY, AT THE LAUNCH OF ACER'S 1TO80.COM

WEBSITE ON 17 NOV 99 AT 10.30 AM

National Archives of Singapore

1 I am delighted to be here this morning to join all of you for the launch of Acer's 1to80.com education website. 1to80.com provides a comprehensive range of education and training courses catering to individuals from different age groups in the Asia-Pacific. The content will be in both English and Chinese.

2 The idea behind Acer's education portal is completely in line with Singapore's push towards life-long learning. As we develop into a knowledge-based economy, lifelong learning is not an option or a hobby but an absolute necessity for everyone. The world is changing so fast, those of us who are not able to learn new things will be left behind. The competition is global. Directly or indirectly,

workers in Singapore are in competition with workers elsewhere who may be living far away in Europe or South America. Acer's 1to80.com website will help us in our effort to keep on learning new things.

3 Unfortunately, learning new things is easier said than done. As we grow older, it becomes more difficult to develop new skills. We know the saying that you cannot teach old dogs new tricks. Luckily, we are not dogs but human beings. To make life-long learning work, there must be a strong felt need and learning should be made more interesting.

4 The felt need may come sooner than we think. The global market does not respect age. It rewards those who add value. We will find that, in industry after industry, beyond a point those who are older may earn less, unlike in the old days when seniority carried weight. In the recent economic recession, older workers were retrenched first and, in the recovery, they were hired last. This problem can only get worse in the future. We must be prepared for it and the earlier the better.

5 To ease the process of learning, we must make it fun and interesting. Teaching is a high skill. The teacher must not only know the subject he is teaching, he must also know how to teach in a way which makes learning easier. In Singapore today, we are investing heavily in education. An important part of this investment is in the recruitment and training of good teachers. Information technology can help make teaching and learning easier and more interesting.

6 Take the recent Pokemon craze in Singapore among pre-teenage kids. In fact it is a craze all over the world. Nintendo's revenues from Pokemon count in the billions of dollars. On their own, the young kids read up on the 151 Pokemons, their characteristics and evolutionary history. I thought all this was useless knowledge until I read an article in the International Herald Tribune that, in fact, Pokemon imparts certain Japanese cultural values of group co-operation to youngsters. This made me feel a little better about my own children spending hours everyday on the game.

7 If learning can be made as fun as Pokemon is for young children, we would become a knowledge-based economy in no time. The key is good teaching and good teaching material which take into account the likes and dislikes of students in different age groups. Adults have a different sense of what is interesting. The teaching method for those in the 50's cannot be the same as that for those in the 20's.

8 Our objective is to make Singapore a 21st century education hub in the region. We have always been an education hub for the region. Singapore as an education hub will also help to create a strong foundation for Singapore as a hub for Internet and e-commerce. Similar skills are needed. We must accumulate a critical mass of such talent here.

9 To create the software for 1to80.com, Acer is building up a development team in Singapore. Since Asia is not homogeneous, the content created will be customised to meet different local needs in different parts of the Asia Pacific. Acer's entire

gy19991117a

value chain of content creation, aggregation and management for 1to80.com will be based here.

10 Acer's partnership with Singapore goes back many years. Acer Computer International Pte Ltd was awarded OHQ status in Jun 1994. Singapore is the regional headquarters of 1to80.com, the education portal of the newly-formed Acer Digital Service Group. I wish Acer great success on this new 1to80.com venture. Acer's success will be Singapore's success.

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