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SPEECH BY MR MOHAMAD MAIDIN PACKER MOHD, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AT THE LAUNCH OF THE CISCO SYSTEMS NETWORKING ACADEMY AT GREENVIEW SECONDARY SCHOOL ON 21 MAY 99 AT 11.00 AM

Mr Andrew Chew Hui Keong, Principal of Greenview Secondary School, Dr Varaprasad, CEO and Principal of Temasek Polytechnic, Mr Tan Dek Yam, Director of Temasek IT and Applied Science School, Mr Todd Abbott, Managing Director, South Asia, Cisco Systems, Distinguished Guests, Parents, Teachers and Pupils.

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I am very pleased to be here this morning to officiate at the launch of Cisco Systems Networking Academy programme at Greenview Secondary School.

2. The rapid advancement of technology has changed the world in which we live significantly. Information Technology has made it possible for us to communicate readily and work with people from all over the world. CEO of Cisco Systems, John Chambers, told government and business leaders in Asia when he toured the region last year, "Jobs and wealth will go to those countries with the skills and the infrastructure necessary to compete in the Internet Economy". We must, therefore, prepare ourselves to thrive in a world where information and knowledge will be the engines of productivity and economic growth. Our schools must prepare pupils for a more competitive and interconnected world. Our children must be adept at handling new technologies and they must be taught the necessary skills to harness the full

power of information technology.

3. The Masterplan for IT in Education is designed to do just that. It is part of our education system's strategies to meet the challenges of the 21st century. We use information technology to help equip our young with learning skills, creative thinking skills and communication skills as well as to become IT-literate. This is a key strategy for producing a workforce of excellence for the future.

4. The importance of the Internet economy is epitomised by the first goal of our Masterplan for IT in Education – and that is, to enhance linkages between the school and the world around it, so as to expand and enrich the learning environment. Teachers and pupils now tap into a growing wealth of educational resources outside the school. Increasingly, they will communicate and collaborate with other educational institutions, local and foreign and the community at large. These new learning connections will help pupils develop the perspectives required to work and live in an increasingly borderless world.

5. The Ministry of Education strongly encourages the Institutions of Higher Learning and the private sector to be active participants in this process of linking schools to the outside world. These institutions can help to provide the necessary expertise to schools. They can, for example, play an important role in developing the school curricula and in educational research. The active involvement of the private industry is integral to the provision of content and other related services to schools under the Masterplan. A close link between schools, IHLs and the private industry will therefore facilitate cross-fertilisation of ideas and strengthen the education system as a whole.

6. I'm glad to see that Cisco Systems and Temasek Polytechnic have come together to set up a Local Networking Academy programme in Greenview Secondary School.

7. The need for networked applications and instruction in schools today is a fundamental part of the educational infrastructure, just like good lighting and adequate facilities and resources. Cisco Systems, being a world leader in the field of networking, is in a good position to offer its expertise to schools. Through an innovative partnership with educational institutions across the world, Cisco Systems has been preparing students worldwide for the demands and enormous opportunities of the information economy while creating a qualified talent pool for building and maintaining networks. I understand that the founders of Cisco Systems were educators who grappled with the same challenges that still confront thousands of educators and millions of students around the world.

8. I applaud Cisco's and Temasek Polytechnic's efforts which go beyond connecting pupils to the Internet, and actually train and prepare them for jobs of the future. It is this kind of partnership between the industry, the IHLs and the schools, which will ensure that we have a competitive workforce into the 21st century.

9. I am encouraged to see the efforts put in by Mr Andrew Chew and his team

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of committed teachers at Greenview Secondary School to make this collaborative project become a reality. I also understand that this project not only benefits the pupils of Greenview Secondary; the Principal has also kindly offered the pupils from 4 other secondary schools in the East cluster to participate in this programme as well.

10. Finally I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Greenview Secondary School on the launch of their Cisco Networking Academy programme and wish them further success in the new challenges that lie ahead.

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