

SPEECH BY DR YAACOB IBRAHIM, MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE ASIAN TELEVISION FORUM & SCREENSINGAPORE 2012, ON WEDNESDAY, 5 DECEMBER 2012, 10.25 AM, MARINA BAY SANDS EXPO & CONVENTION CENTRE

Your Excellencies,
Mr Mike Rusbridge, Chairman & CEO of Reed Exhibitions
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good morning.

A very warm welcome to all participants here at the 13th Asian Television Forum, or ATF. This year's edition of ATF is significant - for the first time, ATF is held in conjunction with the film and entertainment marketing platform, ScreenSingapore.

2 The two co-located events present compelling trading possibilities. With media convergence, consumers are changing the way they access media content and services. Holding the events together acknowledges the blurring lines between television and film, and seeks to provide a platform where media professionals can discuss and brainstorm ideas on how to respond to the changes in a converged environment.

3 Last year, ATF secured more than US\$188 million dollars worth of programming sales, an increase of 26 percent from 2010. The inaugural edition of ScreenSingapore last year also secured over US\$600,000 worth of sales. Put together, we can expect that there will be more buzz generated and deals secured this year. There are already indications that this will be so - countries such as Malaysia and China have arrived with larger contingents compared to past years; we are also seeing new entrants from Australia and UK. I was told that there are close to 4,000 participants from almost 60 countries.

Meeting challenges and embracing opportunities in a converging media environment

4 While media convergence presents many possibilities, it also raises several challenges. I understand that various countries are now studying how the regulatory frameworks can be updated to address challenges arising from media convergence. In Singapore, the Government appointed a Media Convergence Review Panel in March 2012 to study the impact of media convergence on consumers, industry and society. Just last month, the Panel submitted its report with a list of 14 key recommendations to address these challenges. These relate to content regulation, enhancing the vibrancy of local content, copyright and online piracy, and licensing frameworks. The Government is studying the report carefully to determine the appropriate regulatory and policy responses to a converging media environment.

Innovating through 360-ready content to capture audiences' hearts

5 As we update our regulatory approach, the industry also needs to concurrently innovate and adapt. The converging environment will require content

owners to constantly create innovative content to capture roving eyeballs. For instance, some of Singapore's content producers have taken advantage of cross-platform development and distribution by creating 360-ready content. This approach allows content producers to create multi-screen content that go beyond traditional boundaries to capture new audiences on online platforms such as IPTV, handheld gadgets and e-book readers. Recent examples include Interactive SG's reality TV series *Angel's Gate* and Beach House Pictures' factual TV entertainment series *Hidden Cities Extreme*, both of which have captivated audiences through their highly interactive formats.

6 The Media Development Authority of Singapore, or MDA, recognises the potential presented by the generation of compelling 360 content. Therefore, MDA has been encouraging Singapore production companies to develop and create such content through its 360-ready Grant Schemes launched last September. In slightly more than a year, MDA's five Grant Schemes have received good response from media companies and individuals, with a total of US\$16m committed for 632 projects.

7 The MDA is also stepping up efforts to ensure that more broadcasters develop Public Service Broadcast or PSB programmes that are innovative and 360-ready. Efforts have been made to further strengthen the content quality of PSB programmes, as well as to increase these programmes' reach and impact beyond Free-to-Air TV, to online and Pay-TV platforms. For example, in July this year, MDA introduced a PSB Contestable Fund Scheme to extend the reach of original PSB productions to non-Free-to-Air TV platforms.

8 MDA has also revised the copyrights arrangement for public-funded PSB content, where content creators are now accorded ownership to the contents, rather than the financiers. This enables our production companies to own the contents, thereby putting them in a better position to market their assets locally and overseas, as well as on multiple platforms. Such efforts to promote quality content creation will go a long way in ensuring that PSB content stays relevant and reaches out to more Singaporeans, especially the younger, Internet-savvy generation.

Local Free-to-Air content goes online

9 Even as we revised our schemes and PSB framework to prepare for the converging media environment, I am glad that Singapore broadcasters are also rising up to grasp the opportunities.

10 For example, national broadcaster MediaCorp will launch its Over-the-Top (OTT) platform Toggle early next year to meet the on-demand needs of today's media savvy audiences. An interactive service that goes beyond the television set, Toggle brings entertainment, lifestyle tips, news and information to viewers across multiple devices, whether you are accessing Toggle online, on smart phones, tablets and connected TVs.

11 With Toggle, you can have online access to MediaCorp's content from the seven Free-to-Air channels, rights permitting. Local content, such as news and dramas, is available on demand just six hours after telecast and for at least a month, so you can now share your favourite reports and programmes with your family and

friends. Furthermore, national events such as Chingay and National Day Parade will be streamed live, thereby keeping Singaporeans, especially those abroad, closer to developments at home.

12 Singaporeans residing overseas can expect to access the online platform as early as June 2013. Singaporeans here will also be able to access MediaCorp's content, not just online, but also on selected mobile platforms by next year. MediaCorp is currently holding a beta trial of Toggle. In fact, today's opening ceremony is being streamed live to Toggle's beta users. With these added conveniences, I hope we will be able to cultivate a greater following and enjoyment of Singapore-made content and events.

13 On the content side, MediaCorp has also been demonstrating its ability to ride on the converging environment wave and produce innovative content. MediaCorp's latest drama, *96°C Café* (pronounced as 96-degrees Celsius Café) will be telecast online on xinMSN in February, before its run on Free-to-Air TV in April. The drama's theme song, *Ka Fei Lian* (咖啡恋, which means "Coffee Romance") by Wise Entertainment, is also the first original theme song to be supported under the MDA and MediaCorp joint initiative where local talents are invited to produce original theme songs, as a step towards creating greater synergy between the music and broadcast industries. I understand that seven projects will be supported under this joint MDA-MediaCorp initiative.

A rising local film industry

14 Beyond broadcast, the local film industry is also taking advantage of Singapore's strategic location, business friendly and robust intellectual property environment, creative talent, and modern digital infrastructure to provide better media services for the film industry and develop more Asia-made content. By early next year, two digital soundstages will be ready in our future Media City, the Mediapolis, at one-north Buona Vista. These two soundstages is expected to be able to service high-value digital productions from anywhere around the world. We warmly welcome both local and international film makers to shoot and produce in our soundstages.

15 Efforts are also currently undertaken by the MDA and the Singapore Film Commission, or SFC, to increase output of local films, train scriptwriters and film makers, as well as grow strong enterprises within the industry. On this note, I am pleased to announce that SFC will be supporting eight local film makers to embark on their first or second feature film under the New Talent Feature Grant. The eight projects cover a range of genres including documentary, romantic comedy and art-house films, each reflecting the wealth and variety of stories stemming from our rich local culture. I look forward to seeing their works on the big screen in a year or two from now.

16 At the same time, we are also seeing a sustainable pipeline of local content coming forth with a bumper crop of at least 13 Singapore films hitting the screen next year. There is also an emerging breed of filmmakers who are prepared to go beyond Singapore films to produce Asian-inspired stories. For those who are keen to know about Singapore's talent, you can catch some of their products at *Sneak Peeks*, a

film showcase at ScreenSingapore, as works of veterans and young talents are featured.

Conclusion

17 Lastly, I invite all of you to drop by the Singapore Pavilion, which is showcasing more than 600 hours of content from 100 or so local companies. Do talk to our Singaporean producers who will be more than willing to share their works and explore possible business collaborations. To all participants, I would like to thank each of you for your continued support. I believe the combined market will make your trip a fruitful and meaningful one. To all overseas delegates, a warm welcome to you and may you have an enjoyable stay in Singapore. Thank you.

National Archives of Singapore