

PRESS RELEASE

Information Division, Ministry of Communications & Information, City Hall, Singapore 0617 • Tel. 3307269 / 3307270 / 3307271

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**SPEECH BY MR TANG GUAN SENG, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY,
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, AT THE OPENING OF
SINGAPORE COMPUTER SOCIETY CONFERENCE 1986
AT THE WESTIN PLAZA ON FRIDAY, 5 DECEMBER 1986 AT 8.45 AM**

It is my pleasure to be present here today to officiate at the opening of the third Singapore Computer Society Conference. The role of Information Technology, or IT, has taken on a new significance in recent years. New technological developments in both the computer hardware and software fields have brought about new products and services that are designed to make users in many sectors of the industry more efficient and productive. The impact brought about by IT has so far been mainly beneficial and our local companies cannot afford not to take into account the potential of IT applications in their bid to improve their competitiveness.

The successful computerisation of any company requires a long-term commitment by the management and staff. It is important that the company fully understands the many issues involved in introducing a computerised system into any operation. Proper strategic planning and feasibility studies prior to the implementation stage will help the management see clearly the areas that could effectively be computerised, the changes that need to be instituted and the manpower resources that have to be retrained or redeployed. This will help the management to develop an overall IT strategy to meet the present and future needs of the company. Such an IT strategy, if properly formulated, could lead to the company gaining a competitive advantage over its rivals.

Appropriately enough, the theme of the Singapore Computer Society's Conference this year is "Managing Information Technology" which will cover many of the issues and technological areas that computer users and professionals will encounter in relation to their computerisation programmes. These will allow participants to get a better understanding of how to manage their software and hardware systems effectively. The message is clear that without a proper and planned approach, new users can encounter disastrous failures that may give rise to disillusionment with IT and computers forever.

A recent survey on IT users conducted by the National Computer Board early this year showed that there are currently 8000 IT users in Singapore, including micro-computer business users. This represented a growth of 440 percent over the number of 1800 users in 1982. This growth is significant and it showed that the National Computer Board has made good progress in promoting computer awareness and fostering the utilisation of IT in businesses and industry. Over the next several years, the projection is for an additional increase of 1300 to 1500 IT users each year.

The National Computer Board will be the main implementation agency of the National IT Plan, a blueprint drawn up last year by a committee comprising representatives from the National Computer Board, Economic Development Board, Singapore Telecoms and the Institute of Systems Science. The National IT Plan takes a seven-prong approach. One of these approaches is the promotion of IT Application. Action programmes will be introduced by the NCB to assist and guide new users, especially the small and medium-sized enterprises, towards the proper adoption of Information Technology.

In order to achieve a high level of computer literacy within the Singapore population, the Government will be setting the direction to foster the development of IT culture in our society. IT awareness will be promoted through the mass media, schools, community organisations, People's Association and the trade unions. Such a concerted effort will help to increase the overall level of computer literacy and create a supportive environment for the greater application of computer technology in our lives. The push towards greater IT application will achieve success only after the Singapore society has developed to a stage in which it will readily accept the use of information technology as one of the important means to help improve their businesses and operations.

This Conference organised by the Singapore Computer Society is an important event held under the auspices of INFORMATICS '86. INFORMATICS '86 is a major event promoted by the Government to foster public awareness and interest in Information Technology. I understand that the INFORMATICS will be an annual affair from now on. INFORMATICS will be turned into a week of eventful programmes, which will include exhibitions, conferences and competitions, to focus on the various facets of information technology and its effects on our society. In this conference, a list of distinguished speakers have been lined up by the Computer Society to share their experiences and expertise with you on many topics.

I wish all participants an interesting and fruitful session.

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