

SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, MR LIM KIM SAN, AT THE INAUGURAL CEREMONY OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF SIGNATORIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE ORGANISATION (INTELSAT) AT THE ISLAND BALLROOM, SHANGRI-LA HOTEL ON TUESDAY, 6 APRIL 1976, AT 10.30 AM

I am happy to be given the privilege of inaugurating the Fourth Meeting of Signatories of INTELSAT and to welcome you on behalf of the Singapore signatory.

2 The history of telecommunication services in Singapore dates back over a century. The initial developments were externally orientated. In 1871, the first submarine cable down the Straits of Malacca was opened for traffic. The highlight of this auspicious occasion was the arrival of the first telegram to Singapore from London via Gibraltar and India. A decade later, Singapore was referred to in military publications as an important station between India, China and Australia.

3 Singapore lays claim to be one of the first, if not the first, cities in the East to introduce the telephone. The very first "hello" on the telephone was reportedly exchanged when a trial of the instrument was made only 3 years after its invention by Alexander Graham Bell in 1876. Following this event, an enterprising local manager of a trading company started a small telephone switchboard of 50 lines capacity. Later, increasing demand, especially by business houses, led to the setting up of the first public telephone service in 1881. Subsequently the growth was rapid.

4 Singapore attained Independence in 1965. The Government recognising the importance of telecommunications as part of the essential infrastructure for economic development, invested heavily on equipment and plant to modernise, expand and upgrade the national and international telecommunication services.

5 The first telephone made its appearance in Singapore about a hundred years ago. Today, there are 330,000 telephones or 14.7 telephones per 100 population. The demand growth in the past averaged 18% per annum. Current projections indicate that a growth rate of 20% can be expected in the fiscal year 1976/77 and there could well be over 400,000 telephones in Singapore before the end of 1976.

6 In international services, facilities have also been expanded to match demand. Singapore participated with other Commonwealth countries in the laying of the global submarine telephone cable system which extends from Singapore to Hong Kong, Australia, across the Pacific through Canada to the United Kingdom. The South-East Asia section known as SEACOM with Singapore serving as the western most terminus was commissioned in 1967. Thus, Singapore was linked to the major cities in the world with high quality, static-free communications for the first time. In the same year, the first semi-automatic international telephone exchange was brought into operation.

7 Reflecting Singapore's emerging status as a global city, international telecommunication services expanded in size with improvement in grade of service. The demand for international calls has been increasing at the rate of 25% per annum and for international telex calls at the rate of 66% per annum for the past few years.

8 International subscriber dialling telephone service or ISD was introduced to subscribers at the beginning of this year and it is available to-date to Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Japan, West Germany, United Kingdom and the United States of America.

9 Singapore established the first satellite earth station in 1971 with 13 direct satellite circuits working towards the Indian Ocean satellite. Subsequent demand growth was spectacular necessitating the establishment in

1974 of a second antenna working towards the Pacific Ocean satellite. With these two antennae bringing extended coverage, Singapore has 190 satellite circuits in operation and is now able to establish direct satellite communications with two-thirds of the world.

10 As experts in the provision and operation of telecommunication services, you are only too well aware that the telecommunications business is highly capital intensive. In fact, the forecast is that over the next 10 years, massive capital investment totalling \$2,770 million, will have to be expended by TAS for the development of telecommunication services in Singapore.

11 Regional and international cooperation through organisations such as INTELSAT can and should help reduce capital expenditure by telecommunication administrations.

12 I am particularly pleased to note that in your discussions over the next few days, you will be examining ways and means of utilising existing network more efficiently so as to reduce capital investments.

13 Singapore has always attached significance to participation in the activities of international and regional telecommunication organisations. We are members of the ITU, INTELSAT as well as the Commonwealth Telecommunication Organisation. We are cooperating with other countries in the ESCAP region to form an Asian Telecommunity, and are studying the possibility of introducing an ASEAN/submarine cable network with our fellow ASEAN members.

14 We will continue to contribute to and support the activities of INTELSAT through representation in the Asia Pacific Group in the Board of Governors as well as direct representation in the Assembly of Parties and Meeting of Signatories.

15 I note you have a full agenda for the Fourth Meeting in Singapore. I sincerely hope that you will be able to complete the business successfully and on time so that you will have some opportunity to see our Garden City.