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ANNOUNCEMENT BY MR S DEANABALAN, MINISTER FOR CULTURE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AT THE LAUNCHING OF A PILOT TELETXT SERVICE BY SBC AT RADIO AUDITORIUM OF SBC ON FRIDAY, 18 FEBRUARY 1983

SBC will launch a pilot broadcast teletext service by June/July this year. This service will allow a viewer at the touch of a button, to switch from normal TV programme on Channel 5 or 8 to receive on his TV screen Teletext pages of the latest news, sports fixtures and results, cultural events, weather and travel data, consumer guides and host of other useful information including SBC's Radio and TV schedules.

2 Broadcast teletext is a tested technology which is remarkably simple in concept and relatively inexpensive to operate. It is a system of transmitting words or printed pages of information including simple maps and diagrams, by utilising the unused lines in the 625-line of the TV screen. The information is transmitted to all TV receivers but only those fitted with a teletext decoder can receive it. Viewers can buy or rent either a separate decoder or one of the newer generation TV sets which have a built-in decoder.

3 The SBC pilot Teletext service will provide initially some 100 pages of information each on Channel 5 and Channel 8, each page consisting of 24 lines with 40 characters per line. By using a remote-control key pad, a home viewer can pick the page he wants from an 'index' page displayed on the TV screen. The average access time for

each page from a magazine of a hundred pages is about six seconds.

4 With teletext, SBC will now enter the world of "electronic information". This means that viewers can switch at any time between 7 am to 12 midnight for the latest news, rather than having to wait for the next regular bulletin, either on Radio or TV. Besides local and world news, teletext can bring into homes and offices financial news, market reports, exchange rates, bullion and commodity prices with unrivalled immediacy. All these will be in addition to the normal TV programmes. These pages of visual news and related information will be prepared and edited by SBC editorial staff. The advantage of disseminating information via teletext is the speed with which fresh information can be provided.

5 For SBC, this step up the technological ladder will mean greater productivity and another step in its commitment to continually upgrade its services to the public. The output of information from TV will be greatly increased with the introduction of teletext. It will complement the efforts made over the years by SBC to increase informational programmes on the two existing TV channels.

6 The capital cost of the pilot service will be about \$1 million. The operating cost for the service will be quite small. This is because the service will make use of much of SBC's existing technical infrastructure and the experience of its staff. SBC will provide this service free of charge to the viewer but information providers and advertisers will subscribe at a competitive rate to help offset the cost of the services.

7 In the UK, where teletext was pioneered, the service has been firmly established. In the past two years, teletext has been introduced in the US, Europe, Canada and Australia. Singapore will be the first country in Asia to start a teletext service.
