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SPEECH BY MR TANG GUAN SENG, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY,
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, AT THE OPENING OF
THE NATIONAL SOFTWARE COMPETITION '86
AT THE WESTIN PLAZA ON FRIDAY, 5 DECEMBER 1986 AT 9.00 AM

I have always been fascinated with the rapid development of technology over the last few decades. Desk top computers capable of performing millions of instructions per second have evolved from its humble beginnings as a mechanical calculator. Slide rules, an indispensable tool of scientists, mathematicians and students barely ten years ago, have now become obsolete. More remarkable however, I believe, is the ability of our children to accept and adapt to all these changes. Steve Jobs did the world a greater favour by bringing its attention to the capabilities of desk top processing. It gave us the opportunity and an inexpensive way of introducing computers and information technology to our students.

Computer literacy has made deep penetration into the schools and colleges in Singapore. Computer Appreciation Courses for secondary schools were introduced in 1981 with the purpose of developing the students' interest in computers and their applications. Today, we have Computer Appreciation Clubs in all the 140 secondary schools.

To promote computer education in secondary schools through Computer Appreciation Clubs, the Ministry of Education plans to provide an additional nine microcomputers

to each secondary school, bringing the number of micro-computers in each secondary school to 12 or more. Schools which need more could do so under the dollar for dollar scheme. If these facilities are made available mainly to the lower secondary students, it is possible for almost all secondary students to have some knowledge in computers eventually.

In Junior Colleges, Computer Science is offered at GCE 'A' level and 1200 or seven per cent of all JC students are taking the subject. However, for all pre-university students to have an opportunity to acquire computer appreciation and literacy, additional resources should be provided. Hence, each JC and centralised pre-university centre will be equipped initially with a computer laboratory consisting of 25 microcomputer systems. Those JCs that want more can either make use of the \$1 million grant or raise funds on a dollar for dollar basis. Similarly, secondary schools with pre-university centres will also be given additional microcomputers.

Looking back at our effort in the past and plans for the future it is clear that we have been preparing our new generation for the Information Age. The leaders of tomorrow will be computer literates and will know how to harness information technology for maximum competitive advantage.

I see the National Software Competition as one of the catalysts to spur our students on. I am sure the finalists must be anxiously waiting to start. I would like to take this opportunity to wish them all the best and success in the competition. I now declare this competition open.

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