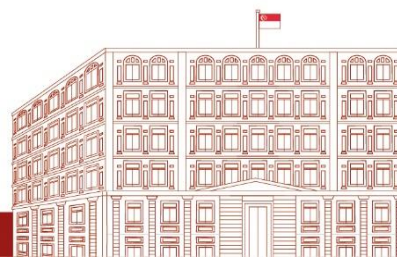**Transcript of Opening Address delivered by Dr Janil Puthucheary,
Senior Minister of State,
Ministry of Communications and Information,
at Tech in Asia Conference (21 Sep 2022)**

Mr. Willis Wee, Founder and CEO of Tech in Asia
Ms. Maria Li, COO of Tech in Asia
Mr. Terence Lee, Editor in Chief of Tech in Asia

1.   Thank you all for inviting me to join you here today, alongside a very exciting line-up of speakers who I hope will uncover technology trends and opportunities in Asia.

2.   We convene at a time of rapid change happening all around us: Coming off the back of a pandemic, deepening geopolitical tensions, and new economic disruptions, our environment is fraught with increasingly complex challenges. Working from home, and flexible work arrangements, these are things that have changed our lives on a very deep personal level affecting our families, and our homes.

3.   Things like genomics, artificial intelligence, the importance of live public health data to make our day-to-day decisions in our businesses, in our work and in Government - these are things that are affecting us as our society, the world, and our future has changed in ways unimaginable.

4.   To look at the theme that I was asked to speak about, "Build to Last", I really have to ask the question, what is it going to take to remain relevant, two or three years from now, or ten years from now? What is it that we are going to do to build to last as entities or organisations? Our products and services may be disrupted, but we have to have a role to play in remaining relevant. What are the possibilities made within constant change? What is the mindset for constant adaptability?

5.   What are these fundamental building blocks for that adaptability that will be vital for us to thrive in the digital future? We spend some time thinking about that for us here in Singapore and I am going to explain some of them.

6.   It starts with secure and resilient digital infrastructure that connects seamlessly, and that has interoperability as a fundamental expectation. This is a significant role for the state to make sure that this happens.

7.   Secondly, we have to ensure that our business rules are pro-business, that we lay the foundations for a vibrant interdependent digital economy that is interdependent both within and across our borders.

8.   None of this is going to happen unless we have a highly-skilled workforce, equipped with industry-relevant skillsets for jobs of the future; and competitive enterprises, that can innovate and seize new opportunities, incentivised to do so rather than locking the status quo.

9.   With these four factors, we become not only resilient and adaptive to the change happening around us; but potentially the drivers of change, with a lasting impact.

10.   In Singapore we will continue to invest early in digital infrastructure, ensuring that our people and our companies are well positioned to benefit early from whichever disruptive change, digitalisation and the use of technology to transform our lives in our economy.

11.   We decided to invest early in 5G networks. Our telcos are on track to achieve nationwide outdoor coverage through standalone networks by 2025. The Government and our partners have been working to develop use cases across many sectors that take advantage of 5G's high speeds and low latency, creating new opportunities as a result of that early investment in the infrastructure.

12.   Similarly, we will continue to invest in our broadband infrastructure to deliver access speeds 10 times faster than what we have today here in Singapore.

13.   The latest technology, while helpful in sprinting ahead of the competition, is of no relevance if it is not trusted. Hence, even as we invest in our digital infrastructure to grow that digital economy, we have to ensure that our digital infrastructure is secure and resilient.

14.   Instead of viewing security and resilience as costs, we think of them as enablers of the digital economy. A more secure and digital infrastructure that is resilient will enable us to engage with each other, with competitors, collaborators, and partners, with greater confidence and greater trust. This greater security and resilience will enable us to move faster and go further.

15.   For example, increasing numbers of businesses are taking advantage of cloud platforms. The value proposition from cost, technical agility, commoditisation is clear, but the cybersecurity of the cloud is increasingly becoming more and more important. We have tried to provide clarity on the levels of security by different cloud service providers, by rolling out the Multi-Tier Cloud Security standard from the Government. This gives businesses a framework for assurance that their data and systems that are hosted on the cloud are adequately protected within a framework that is easily explainable and inter-operates within other sets of governance frameworks.
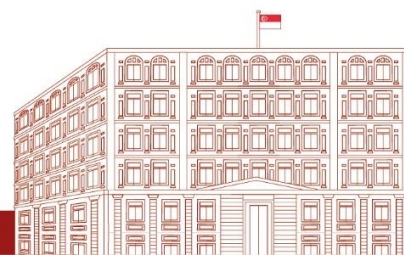
16.   Another example would be the Domain Name System Security Extension or DNSSEC. The DNS is the naming system or the address book of the Internet. It is an important part of the Internet infrastructure today. However, there are security vulnerabilities in DNS that allow malicious actors to divert legitimate traffic toward bogus destinations. Both our Cyber Security Agency of Singapore (CSA) as well as our Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) are working with the Internet Service Providers to implement this system security extension to DNS across Government agencies and local Internet domains to protect users and give them this assurance that they are protected from DNS vulnerabilities.

17.   We can do a lot for infrastructure. We can build systems that shore up trust and resilience. We can use innovative technologies, but we must continue to invest in our people. As the digital economy in Singapore has grown, so has the demand for tech talent.

18.   Digitalisation has created many exciting job opportunities for fresh graduates and mid-career workers. We need to continue to provide opportunities for training and learning, to groom the next wave of tech talent, to make sure that there are people capable of seizing the opportunities that we create and powering the companies that will take advantage of these opportunities.

19.   We have been working with industry to train Singaporeans to take on emerging roles in technology. To meet the industry's immediate talent needs, our flagship scheme, Tech Skills Accelerator (TeSA) has placed and trained more than 12,000 individuals directly into good tech jobs, and trained another 160,000 in tech skills already in jobs with the next wave of tech skills since 2016. TeSA has curated programmes for many groups from different backgrounds and with varied educational qualifications.

20.   IMDA also launched a new TechSkills Accelerator (TeSA) for ITE and Polytechnics (TIP) Alliance. This new programme brings companies together with the training providers, and our ITE and Polytechnic students through internships, apprenticeships, and work-study programmes. Over

the next 3 years, ITE and Poly students and graduates will benefit from 1,000 job openings created by the companies on this TIP Alliance.

21.   We hope and welcome more firms to join us in this effort to grow our local tech talent pipeline, curating these opportunities for students, helping them develop their skills, understanding the market right at the start of their career, plugging them in to the best opportunities and giving them that boost right at the beginning, that we hope will help us with our tech talent pipeline in the medium term.

22.   Local enterprises are critical to drive innovation here in Singapore, and we will continue support our local tech companies to grow – not just within Singapore, but also beyond. One example is Pulsifi, a HR tech firm based in Singapore. Founded in 2016, Pulsifi's People Data Platform taps on AI to accurately predict candidates' job performance and work potential, fit to role, work styles and values. This has reduced by up to 70% in manhours for talent acquisition and management. Pulsifi benefited from the Enterprise Development Grant by Digital Industry Singapore (DISG). It has gone on to win numerous awards and most recently, managed to secure a global contract with the Nestle group.

23.   Besides grants, we also provide support to accelerate the growth of promising Singapore-based tech companies, such as through IMDA's Accreditation@SG. We work with companies and enterprises through IMDA and essentially accredit them as a solutions provider. One example is Hubble.Build. Hubble.Build tapped on Accreditation's networks to become one of the solution providers for the local construction sector. Hubble.Build also managed to raise S$11.35M in January 2022 during their Series B funding, and they have expanded their headcount in Singapore as well.
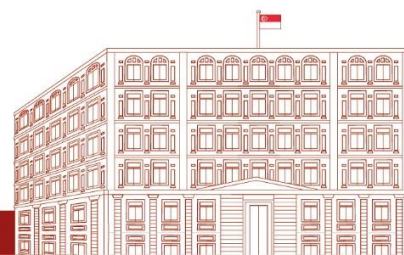
24.   We encourage young startups with innovative solutions to use these approaches that we have for funding and accreditation programmes to find your first reference customers and welcome developed tech SMEs to further your business ventures through these programmes.

25.   A vibrant tech ecosystem is key for these ideas to find their way out into the world. Through programmes such as IMDA's SPARK, we support Singapore-based start-ups by connecting growing companies with our Community Partners. This includes global consultancy firms, law firms, integrated communications firms, product design firms, and tech giants such as Meta and Google, providing expertise to groom our talent and grow our tech ecosystem to support community use-cases and community challenges as well. I welcome more to step forward, to partner with us, to support each other in building a vibrant tech-driven community.

26.   To conclude, three fundamentals that we are focusing on for the digital economy: Investing in digital infrastructure, especially in emerging and new technologies; Investing in people to develop our local talent pipeline; and Investing in our ability to grow and develop a vibrant tech community.

27.   We hope that these efforts will lay the foundation for Singapore to become a leading tech and innovation hub.

28.   And then we return to the question of what truly lasts in a rapidly changing digital economy? What truly lasts are the people and the community that they build around them, just as Tech in Asia has changed in unimaginable ways since it first started, the aspects of our work that will last are the communities that we can build, the talented people that we can bring along on the journey and the partnerships that we create that can lead to future excellence and innovation.

29.   Digital leaders like yourselves coming together as a community of practice and expertise, pushing the boundaries of our local tech scene. I look forward to partnering all of you in developing the possibilities for the future of Singapore.

30.   Thank you very much for inviting me here.