OPENING REMARKS BY MRS JOSEPHINE TEO, MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION, AT APPLE'S SWIFT EXPLORERS SINGAPORE ON 19 JULY 2023, 9.15AM

DEVELOPING DIGITALLY SKILLED PROBLEM SOLVERS TODAY, FOR THE FUTURE

Mr Richard Hames, Senior Director of Apple Retail in APAC,

Mr Jancu Koenig, Senior Director of Retail Engagement & Marketing in APAC,

Colleagues from Apple,

Teachers,

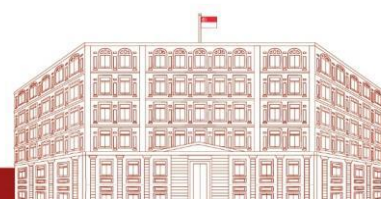Students,

A very good morning.

Introduction

1.   I want to start by saying how impressed I am by all the presentations. I loved the fact that technologies are not only being used for entertainment and to bond with your friends, but also be of service to the groups that you are designing the app for.

2.   I recall that when the iPhone was first released in 2007 – which was before most of you were born – it transformed the way we consume and engage with content, and how we interact with one another. The app ecosystem that we are so familiar with was integral to this transformation. Almost 20 years on, it is heartening to see so many young people developing your own apps and leading the way,

As digital technologies grow more pervasive, digital skills have become key to enable individuals to participate meaningfully and embrace opportunities in an increasingly digital world as well as benefit the wider community.

3.   We can see how digital technologies have become an essential part of our daily lives. From home-based learning to connecting with one another on social media, online shopping, streaming our favourite movies and tv shows, these digital activities have become part of our daily routine.

4.   Digital will continue to be a core part of our lives and certainly in Singapore, we would like to see new innovations that serve to improve our productivity, and contribute to us having more meaningful experiences in how we interact with one another. This means that we must continue with our Smart Nation endeavours: putting in place the

necessary digital infrastructure, continuing to design inclusive government services, and helping our people to embrace opportunities in an increasingly digital future.

5.   But a successfully digital Singapore will only be possible if our people have some level of digital proficiency. For the younger generation and the generations to follow, digital proficiency is going to be much more necessary. Our students are acquiring the skill sets that their parents' generation was not required to have and perhaps did not have an impetus to acquire. They are doing something really interesting and building for themselves a future that can take them far. I am glad to see that happening. At this point, I would like to encourage our students who are keen to deepen your learning in tech to do so by joining an Infocomm Media Club in your school. Do also bring more friends on board. You could also take Computing as an elective subject at Upper Secondary. Or perhaps, you could even take up scholarships like the SG Digital Scholarship to pursue tech or media-related studies, enabling you to develop deep and useful skills that could benefit communities and serve society.
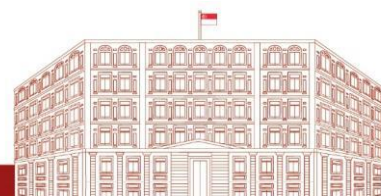
6.   A digitally proficient Singapore can also better harness digital to help the community. This can be done through digital solutions that address real-world problems, such as national challenges like ageing, healthcare, education and sustainability.

    a. I had the pleasure of listening to Kenryk from Pathlight School share about his Isight app. The app helps to identify eyesight problems in young people and facilitate timely treatment by providing colour blindness and visual sharpness tests and practical eye care tips.

    b. And I must mention the Junior Mathematicians app by Kranji Primary School which makes learning mathematics a lot more fun for students through daily challenges, innovative games and even an in-app forum to facilitate peer-learning.

7.   To the students here today, I hope you continue honing your digital skills and apply yourselves creatively to develop innovations that will not only enhance others' lives, but also help build a better Singapore. May you also continue putting people at the heart of the digital solutions you create, using your skills for the greater good to solve problems that others may face.

<u>Partnership with industry and the community is needed to nurture future generations of digitally talented problem-solvers that can give back to society and contribute to Singapore's "heart ware".</u>

8.   The other important aspect of how we do this is partnerships with companies. We do want to ensure that the skills that our younger generation are building up are relevant. They need to be relevant to our businesses and more importantly, to societies. And that is why we prefer not to carry out these programmes in a vacuum. We would like to bring in partners like Apple and many other tech companies out there

that know what it takes to develop digital proficiency; that also know what kind of skills are useful for the development of products and services that societies are in need of and have a demand for. Such partnerships will be very important, and I hope that we can continue to build these relationships further.

9. To further my point, let me share with you the experience of Jiang Tongyu who participated in a similar programme, the Swift Accelerator Programme, organised by IMDA and Apple to develop secondary school students' coding skills.

    a. After joining the programme, Tongyu went on to chair Raffles Girls' School's Infocomm Club and won the Distinction award in the Tech category at the 2022 Infocomm Media Club Youth Awards for her team's project called "Healing Café" which provided a one-stop platform for mental health resources.

    b. Tongyu also emerged as one of the 375 winners of Apple's Worldwide Developers Conference Swift Student Challenge this year for her "City Night" app which reminds users to care for themselves and accept support by others amidst the busy-ness and challenges of life.

10. Tongyu is another great example of how this programme has ignited her interest and allowed her to go further.

<u>Educators also play a key role in empowering students to grow their digital proficiencies and thrive in a digital future.</u>

11. Finally, I want to say that this is a very energizing way to start the day, and I love nothing more than seeing our young people so enthusiastic. I can sense your energy, passion and capability. This gives me a lot of hope, joy, and confidence in our future.

12. I want to also take this opportunity to thank your teachers; I see that they have worked very hard to pick up new knowledge and skills so that they can continue to be good mentors and guides to their students; working with your students on projects, in my time, we could only dream about, we could not imagine.

<u>Conclusion</u>

13. Thank you once again for having me. Have a great day. Congratulations to all of you.

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