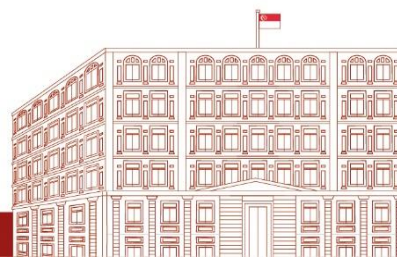


**Speech by Mrs Josephine Teo,
Minister for Communications and Information
at CyFy 2021 (19 Oct 2021)**

Mr Sunjoy Joshi, Chairman, Observer Research Foundation
Ms Trisha Ray, Chair of CyFy 2021
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

1. It is my great pleasure and honour to join you today for the CyFy conference. It is certainly timely for us to discuss the subject of “Trusted Partnerships for a Secure Digital Economy”.
2. We all recognize that trust is crucial, both in the analogue and digital worlds. Yet, recent findings from the 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer tell us that overall trust levels in key institutions such as governments, businesses and the media remain low at 56%.
3. Trust is an abstract concept. It may be helpful to unpack the various elements of Trust. Why is trust important? Can we build trust, and how?
4. Let me share my thoughts on this, in the context of accelerating digital transformation.
5. Steve Jobs once observed that: “Technology is nothing. What’s important is that you have faith in people, and they’re basically good and smart, and if you give them tools, they’ll do wonderful things with them”. We all hope he is right.
6. But today, digital technologies are facing a trust deficit. Recent incidents such as the SolarWinds breach of 2020, the Colonial Pipeline attack in May this year, and the frequency of cybercrimes have given tech a bad name.
7. In the same 2021 Edelman survey, trust in technology dropped 9 percentage points from a decade ago, from a high of 77% in 2012 to 68% in 2021.
8. Concerns over the use of tech are understandable. It is important that we address them. This will enable us to fully utilise the true value of tech to secure economic and social progress. We can do so by doubling down on our investments in the currency of trust.
9. Governments must invest in creating a trusted and inclusive digital environment for its citizens. Citizens must be able to trust how we use and manage tech; to trust that tech is used to better their lived experiences and provide better government services. This is increasingly a feature of the social contract between the state and individual.
10. One of the ways to build trust in Singapore is through the provision of secure systems and trusted infrastructure. We have our National Digital Identity, Singpass. It provides a convenient and secure way for Singaporeans to access over 1,400 digital services by more than 340 public and private-sector organisations. Users are prompted each time organisations request for personal information. More than 70% of Singapore residents are on it. Its tremendous popularity is testament to the trust that users have in the system.
11. We also build trust in the balanced approach that we take on data protection. We recently amended our Personal Data Protection Act to ensure that personal data is not only used discriminately, but in ways that promote business innovation.



12. Governments alone cannot bring about a trusted and inclusive digital environment. We need a holistic, transnational and multi-stakeholder approach to ensure that tech is used in an accountable, safe and transparent manner.

13. Let me illustrate with some examples. To foster trust in the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Singapore has developed a Model AI Governance Framework, as well as an Implementation and Self-Assessment Guide for Organisations (ISAGO). These have proven to be useful industry references which enable AI to be used in a trustworthy way, and, more importantly, with people's needs and concerns in mind.

14. These references are even more pertinent as AI is increasingly adopted for high-impact autonomous decision making, such as in medical diagnosis and financial credit scoring. We have gone a step further by investing S\$50 million over the next 5 years to bolster digital trust capabilities.

15. In recent years, tech has become the new battlefield for geopolitical contestation and competition. Underlining this is a trust deficit among various parties. It is important to reach consensus on rules, norms, principles and standards in cyberspace. Such rules of engagement will create a stable and consistent environment where all can thrive and prosper.

16. This is why Singapore is an active participant at UN processes, such as the UN Group of Governmental Experts (UNGGE) and the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security. Singapore's Permanent Representative to the UN in New York, Ambassador Burhan Gafoor is the current Chair of the 5-year OEWG. We look forward to working with states to explore what we should do to support the creation of a multilateral order in cyberspace.

17. At the regional level, ASEAN has similarly been a champion for such international rules. It is the only regional organisation to subscribe in-principle to the 11 voluntary, non-binding norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace. ASEAN member states have also committed to develop a Regional Action Plan, which will guide the implementation of these norms.

18. Trust in the digital space also requires us to put in place safeguards against the breakdown in social cohesion of our societies. This is why Singapore enacted new legislations, such as the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (POFMA) and Foreign Interference (Countermeasures) Act (FICA). These are aimed at keeping our citizens safe from the scourge of online ills, misinformation and hostile information campaigns.

19. Our industry players, too, have come on board by being a part of the Singapore Together Alliance for Action (AFA) to tackle online harms, especially those targeted at women and girls.

20. Let me conclude. Just as the digital world holds much promise, it has also increased the risks involved. In such an environment, trust is the new digital currency. All parties - governments and industry players alike - have a role to play in its investment to build collective defence and safety.

21. On that note, I wish everyone a fruitful conference.

