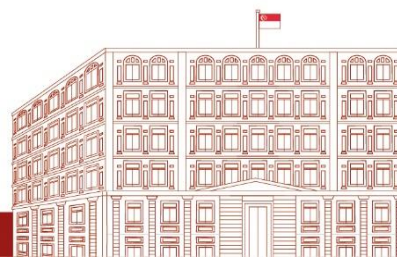


**Transcript of Opening Remarks delivered by Dr Janil Puthucheary,  
Senior Minister of State,  
Ministry of Communications and Information & Ministry of Health  
at YouTube Creators for Impact (15 Nov 2022)**

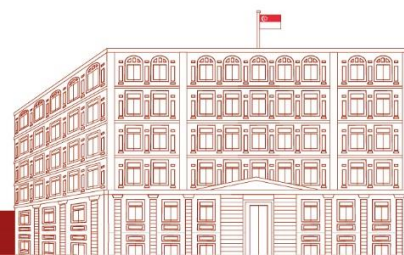
Mr Ajay Vidyasagar, APAC Managing Director, YouTube

1. Thank you for inviting me to join you today. The issues that we are dealing with collectively for those of us in the room, I think in a way, are the defining issues of the day – how do we deal with information and misinformation, the engagement and education of the public around this. The access to information only grows and so the importance of all of us educating ourselves, our peers, our friends, our family, and our society in engaging and using that information purposefully and productively.
2. That challenge is only going to increase over time, because the opportunity for misinformation and the opportunity for the information that is there to be overwhelming, to cause distress, to be hurtful and harmful, is not going to reduce and is only going to increase as we do more in this space.
3. I am very heartened to hear about the efforts of YouTube together with the creative community to try and think about how you take these skills that you have, the platform that has been created, the opportunity that society has provided to drive socially impactful change for good and produce material that is engaging, drives the social outcome that is informative and deals with some of the difficulties, challenges and dysfunctions that we open ourselves to.
4. It is no different when we started with the printing press, where people could publish all kinds of harmful things and someone in society would say this is undesirable, inappropriate and needs to be blocked. Over time, the answer has always been providing more information, engagement and an understanding of how to use the information that there is.
5. COVID-19 brought to the fore two things: misinformation and mental health challenges. Misinformation, partly because so much new information was being developed. In a way, it is a remarkable testament to our humanity and what we did as a civilisation and society to rise to the challenge of COVID-19 to provide information, whether it was the genome or vaccines around the world in real-time. But the fear, anxiety and activity created the opportunity for lots of misinformation to come along in parallel.
6. In a way, that is always going to be the case. Every time you have any events of significance, or there will come in its wake a lot of misinformation, so we need to have strategies to deal with that.
7. At the same time, there was this issue of mental health, stress, and anxiety of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with the concerns about being isolated under quarantine and safe management measures. This was exacerbated because during the circuit breaker period, we were logging on, not just to YouTube but to the entire online space. We were engaging with the



world through our screens and phones, and in that consuming sometimes what was a fair amount of toxic and negative material. The pandemic in a way allowed us to think about what our responses would be to this information, and we did quite a lot of work.

8. The reality is both the issues of misinformation and the stresses of mental health were there before the pandemic and we have to think about what we will do when we return to business as usual. For mental health, one of the things that we did as a result of our experiences through the pandemic was to set up the Interagency Taskforce on Mental Health and Well-being, which I chair.
9. Google is one of our partners on the Taskforce and one of the things that we have had to think about is the role of technology and goal of social media. When we started our discussions, quite a lot of it was around a call for us to do more, to regulate the space, and to do more to prevent the toxicity and harm. And we have had parallel work around online harms and online falsehoods.
10. One of the things that we tried very hard to do within the Taskforce was to think through to what extent could technology and social media be a force for good, because we do need to regulate and deal with the harms and harmful content. But the exposure and access to technology is a fact of life. We are not going to turn off social media, social network or the online access to content.
11. Given that is where people are spending their time and getting their interactions, how would you then take that opportunity and turn it to the positive? That is where quite a lot of our conversations have been about.
12. The answers, I think, have to be fairly nuanced and complex. It cannot be about the regulatory or policy approach alone. I think you need a combination of regulation matched with a fair amount of effort around educating our public on how to use the content well. We thought about what we might do in schools, in terms of teaching students how to access content.
13. We need a fair amount of education for parents – how do guide your children and young people to use a space that you yourself are not a digital native? Within my family, the way in which my children and I access YouTube are quite different. Do I have then the tools and the understanding to guide them appropriately?
14. We are developing a parents' toolbox around mental health issues.
15. We also need to work with the people who create the content online. One of the great things that the advent of the Internet was that it democratised and flattened the hierarchy around who could create material that was available to the rest of the world. That is when we can continue – everyone can potentially be a content creator. But when everyone can potentially be a content creator, how do you make sure you help those that produce quality content and content that is driving a positive agenda? You need a way in which that gets seen by a lot more people than the negative and toxic stuff. I think that is what a lot of this effort is about and I am very heartened that you are all involved in this effort, so I think it needs a nuanced and complex strategy around these periods.



16. We will do more as we learn about what works and what does not work, and learning about what works and what does not work requires partnerships with industry and partnerships with society. That is quite a lot of the work that we are doing now in the Taskforce as well.

17. Thank you all very much. I look forward to having a discussion and answering your questions.

