

Transcript of Speech by SMS Janil Puthucheary at the MOU Signing between Singapore Women in Tech and Polytechnics and launch of Cross-Polytechnic Girls in Tech Committee (13 May 2022)

Dr Ong Chen Hui, Chairperson, Singapore Women in Tech

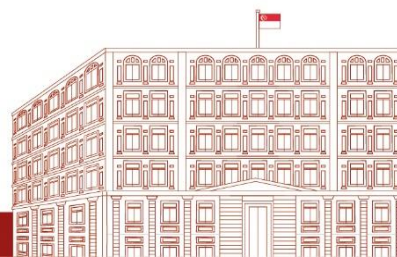
Mr Dennis Ang,
Mr Patrice Choong,
Ms Wong Wai Ling,
Mr Liew Chin Chuan, and
Dr Eng Pin Kwang, Directors of the Polytechnics' Schools of ICT

Colleagues and friends

1. Good afternoon. I am delighted to be here to witness the MOU signing between Singapore Women in Tech and Nanyang Polytechnic, Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Republic Polytechnic, Singapore Polytechnic, and Temasek Polytechnic. The key impact of technology on our lives is that it is bringing, and will continue to bring, exciting opportunities for Singaporeans and for Singapore. On a very prosaic level, it has led to increasing productivity, it is shaping how we work; but in practical terms, it creates great progress and great jobs not just in tech, but in many other sectors as well. Within tech, it creates great jobs for Singaporeans that pay well and progress well, such as in particular areas like software development, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity.
2. The role that women have played in Singapore in advancing technology is significant already. We are today one of the top tech talent hubs in the world. Part of that is because of the progress that we have made in getting women into the workforce and education. Today, about four in 10 students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in our local institutes of Higher Learning are girls. According to a Boston Consulting Group study, 41% of Singapore's tech professionals are women, one of the highest in the world and well above global average of 28%.¹
3. We have come a long way, but there is more to do. The Singapore Women in Tech initiative has made significant strides since IMDA launched it in partnership with the tech industry and community in 2019. It has reached more than 120,000 people via initiatives such as coaching and hackathons by progressive companies, including Amazon, Microsoft, and PayPal.² It received over 1,400 nominations for the SG 100 Women in Tech Lists in 2020 and 2021, honouring women who have made significant contributions in tech.
4. The Government will continue to push for inclusivity and diversity in tech, in partnership with industry and education institutions. This is part of our efforts to build an inclusive digital society where all Singaporeans, including women, participate in and benefit from the growing digital sector.
5. To continue to encourage more women to enter and progress, we have to start early and spark interest among girls while they are still studying and discovering their strengths. I am heartened

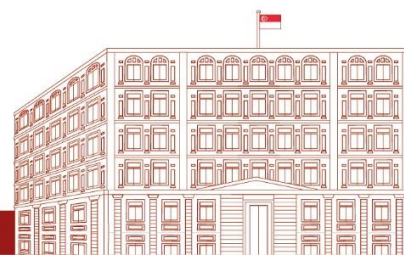
¹ BCG-IMDA Report, 2020.

² Key companies that have made the SG WiT Corporate Pledge, where companies commit to creating a conducive environment with strong support systems to attract, retain and develop more women tech professionals.



by the Polytechnics' support for the MOU with Singapore Women in Tech and their commitment to launching and growing the Cross-Polytechnic Girls in Tech Committee.

6. The Committee will be made up of hundreds of girls studying in infocomm technology courses in the five polytechnics, who will form a community supporting one another to deepen their interests in a career in technology. They will have access to talks, workshops, competitions, and mentorship opportunities facilitated by SG Women in Tech, honing their skills and connecting with industry role models. One key activity they will participate in this year is the annual 'Girls in Tech Week' in October, where they will visit companies and attend sharing sessions by female tech leaders on their career experiences and motivations.
7. For the students, your journey ahead will include challenging coursework and projects. You will also find yourselves having to continually upgrade your skills to keep up with the different types of innovation and disruption. You will not be alone – many people have walked this path and will be walking this path with you, especially your teams of facilitators, faculty and peers in your Polytechnics and a community of aspiring learners and tech practitioners.
8. One of the students who found her calling and community is Yu Hui, a third-year student at Temasek Polytechnic's Diploma in Financial Business Informatics. She found her interest in tech by watching YouTube videos on web and mobile app development and decided to apply for a Higher Nitec in IT Applications Development, where she learnt how to code. It was an internship stint at PayPal's innovation lab and a hackathon that confirmed her passion for a career in technology. She started participating in more hackathons, and when she heard about the Cross-Polytechnics Girls in Tech Committee, she volunteered, hoping to increase her exposure to industry opportunities and encourage her peers to pursue their interests in tech.
9. I wish Yu Hui and all Polytechnic students in ICT courses all the best with your studies and hope you to take advantage of the resources and exciting opportunities made possible under the Cross-Polytechnic Girls in Tech Committee.
10. I would also like to appreciate the industry partners that have stepped forward to develop the next generation of women tech talent. Companies and practitioners hold the key to cultivating practical hands-on skills and inspiring interest in tech among students. Many companies are partnering the Cross-Polytechnic Girls in Tech Committee to launch the following programmes. For example:
 - i NCS and vLookUp will jointly organise a two-week hackathon for Girls in Tech in June 2022;
 - ii Accenture will provide coaching and mentoring for selected Polytechnic girls through a structured one-year Technology Development programme;
 - iii ST Engineering will be organising a Tech Innovation Day for Polytechnic girls to immerse in emerging technologies and engage with female tech leaders; and
 - iv Cisco's Networking Academy will continue to partner learning institutions including polytechnics to upskill talent in cybersecurity, network, and programming.
11. I hope more industry leaders will join the more than 50 companies that have pledged to create a conducive environment to attract, retain and develop women in tech, and support Singapore Women in Tech and the Polytechnics' efforts to nurture young talent.
12. Thank you all very much - the Polytechnics and industry partners, the many women who play an important role in mentoring and being good role models for championing inclusivity and diversity in tech, the many enlightened men who are playing their part in making this happen as well. We must be part of this journey of progressivity and inclusivity.



13. It is an important national agenda, advancing women's development, including equal opportunities at the workplace. We have spoken about it extensively, most recently in Parliament last month through the motion on the Singapore Women's Development White Paper. Getting this right is important for all of us – men and women, our children and the next generation. It is important for us in terms of the country that we wish to become in the future and grow into progressively over time. It is important for us to create the opportunities for Singaporeans that we know are so important for their future.
14. Infocomm Technology provides especially exciting opportunities for women and girls to be part of designing that future for Singapore. I hope to learn about more stories of success, of interest and motivation, of curiosity and commitment, of women in technology supporting the development of women and girls in this very important space.
15. We are well on the way to creating a community of future women leaders. The work is never going to stop, and we have to commit ourselves to it and keep it going for the next generation.
16. Thank you very much, and congratulations once again on the MOU.

