

MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION

ADDENDUM TO THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

MR S ISWARAN

MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION

1 COVID-19 has reinforced the imperative for businesses and individuals worldwide to be digitally-ready. The Ministry of Communications and Information (MCI) will maximise Singapore's "digital dividend" by creating new jobs and driving digital innovation, and bridge the "digital divide" by establishing a baseline level of digital access and skills for all. Further, in a digital age where our common spaces are no longer just physical, MCI will protect our online and offline spaces, and build trust in our institutions and cohesion in our society through public communications and engagement.

Riding Out the COVID-19 Storm

Helping Workers and Businesses Overcome COVID-19

2 As part of the Government's priority to create jobs for Singaporeans, MCI will accelerate the creation of tech and tech-related jobs in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector, and across the economy. We will ramp up placements, traineeships and skills upgrading under the SGUnited Jobs & Skills Package, as well as the TechSkills Accelerator (TeSA) and Cybersecurity Development Programmes. The jobs for both fresh graduates and mid-career professionals will be in growth areas like cloud computing, Artificial Intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, data analytics, software and network engineering, as well as executive roles in business transformation for companies going digital.

3 MCI will step up efforts to digitalise our Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) which employ almost 70% of our workforce. We will provide targeted financial assistance through the Digital Resilience Bonus (DRB) for the most affected Retail and Food Services sectors, in addition to broad-based schemes such as Start Digital Packs, the Productivity Solutions Grant, and Grow Digital e-commerce platforms for SMEs to access overseas markets.

Emerging Stronger Together

Transforming our Economy through Digital Innovation

4 Companies have been going digital to enhance productivity, build new

businesses, and grow internationally. MCI will promote a vibrant ecosystem for digital transformation through international connectivity, progressive regulation, and public-private partnerships. To help companies access growth in Asia and beyond, Singapore is developing an international network of Digital Economy Agreements (DEAs) with like-minded countries, to establish interoperable digital systems and frameworks for data flows and electronic transactions, and ensure an open digital trade architecture. Singapore has signed DEAs with Australia, Chile, and New Zealand; talks are ongoing with the Republic of Korea. The Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA), together with Enterprise Singapore (ESG) and the National Research Foundation (NRF), will build on the National Innovation Challenges to catalyse the development of new products, services, and business models that will better position sectors such as logistics, maritime, and modern services for growth in a digital era.

5 MCI and Digital Industry Singapore (DISG) will continue engaging large global tech companies as investors, industry partners, and policy stakeholders. We will support the growth of local digital champions in areas such as AI, cybersecurity, communications, and digital platform services, assisting them with talent acquisition, market access, and capability building. We will also raise the digital capabilities of our enterprises, equipping them with digital tools to transact seamlessly, access overseas opportunities, and create good jobs.

6 Singapore's innovation ecosystem will be empowered by our investments in world-class infrastructure, as well as research and development (R&D). We are building a secure and resilient 5G communications network, which will provide the foundation for innovative applications and services. We will grow indigenous capabilities in technologies that drive value creation. MCI will collaborate with academia, industry, and other partners to strengthen R&D and translation capabilities, particularly in data, AI, cybersecurity, media, and communications technology.

Building an Inclusive Digital Society

7 MCI aims to enable every Singaporean to thrive in a digital society. We will ensure that all Singaporeans have a baseline level of affordable digital access, especially vulnerable groups such as low-income seniors and families. Singaporeans will be equipped with the digital skills and literacy needed to go online safely and confidently. The SG Digital Office, which brings together Digital Ambassadors, volunteers as well as corporate and community partners to drive the nationwide digitalisation movement, exemplifies the importance of working with the community to bridge the "digital divide".

8 MCI will build lifelong learning communities. Libraries and archives provide trusted information services and inclusive social spaces that foster lifelong learning and an appreciation of Singapore's history. The National Library Board (NLB) will roll

out a five-year Libraries and Archives Plan to prepare Singaporeans for a digital future. Partnerships with volunteers and organisations will create more opportunities for people to learn together, connect with our shared history and culture, and engage with curated content and customised services, both physical and digital. NLB will strengthen access to services for segments of our society, such as working professionals, who require more curated resources for learning and skills development.

Protecting Common Spaces Online and Offline

9 The Government adopts a balanced approach towards content regulation, on both the Internet and other media, to facilitate informed media consumption choices and to expand the common space for diverse views that respect our society's values, while protecting our social harmony. We will continue to refine our content guidelines in consultation with independent advisory panels and stakeholders across the community, to reflect our evolving societal norms and diversity of perspectives. We will also nurture and support local media companies, who play key roles in our news and social media landscape.

10 MCI will keep our cyberspace secure so that Singaporeans can benefit from digitalisation. We will strengthen the cybersecurity of our Critical Information Infrastructure (CII) – systems providing essential services, such as energy, telecommunications and water. The focus will be broadened beyond Information Technology systems to include Operational Technology. The Cyber Security Agency of Singapore (CSA) will implement the Safer Cyberspace Masterplan to secure Singapore's digital core, safeguard cyber activities, and nurture a cyber-savvy population. CSA will maintain vigilance over the evolving threat landscape, and develop tools to protect Singapore's cyberspace from new and emerging forms of cyber-attacks. Singapore will also work with our international partners to build a resilient and secure international rules-based order in cyberspace.

11 Ultimately, the most important line of defence against digital harms is a well-informed and discerning citizenry. We will deal with evolving digital harms, by drawing on the collective responsibility and capability of the Government, industry, and our citizens. MCI will work with academia and community partners to augment the reach and impact of our public education campaigns that will empower Singaporeans with information and media literacy skills to protect themselves from digital harms.

Building Trust and Cohesion Through Communications and Engagement

12 MCI will play its part to strengthen social cohesion and trust in the Government through timely, accessible, and inclusive Government communications. MCI has leveraged a range of traditional and digital media platforms, including mobile

messaging applications in our official languages, to reach Singaporeans of different age groups and backgrounds. MCI will further enhance its Whole-of-Government communications strategy by using analytics and technology to tailor content to different segments based on their needs and preferred platforms. MCI will explore new ways to disseminate official information in the vernacular languages.

13 MCI will work with all its stakeholders, including through the Government's engagement platform REACH and industry associations, to understand their concerns and seek suggestions on policy challenges. Together, we will seize new opportunities and forge a thriving digital future for all.

* * *