

**OPENING REMARKS BY MRS JOSEPHINE TEO, MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND
INFORMATION, AT SAFER WITH GOOGLE ON 7 JULY 2023, 11.22AM**

SINGAPORE'S APPROACH TO ENSURING SAFETY AND TRUST ONLINE

Ben King, Managing Director, Google Singapore

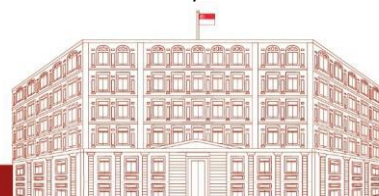
Colleagues and friends

The Government is committed to ensuring our people's safety and trust online, in partnership with industry and the community.

1. Good morning, everyone. I am happy to join you today and would like to thank Ben, Ajay, and Sherie for sharing about the new initiatives Google is launching in Singapore.
2. By now, almost everyone has experienced how much more digital technologies have been integrated with our lives.
3. There's more to come. Fast-moving developments in generative AI, cloud, AR/VR and other technologies are expanding the bounds of what we can achieve in our digital economy and digital society.
4. And yet, MCI's latest Digital Readiness Survey in 2022¹ tells us not to get ahead of ourselves.
5. While 75% of Singaporeans still view digitalisation positively, discomfort is growing. As a result, just about half of the respondents of the 2022 Survey said they were willing to accept the risks that came with using technology, a drop from 66% in 2020.
6. Clearly, there's a need to strengthen trust and safeguard the wellbeing of our citizens when they go online.
7. This is why Singapore has steadily enhanced our regulations to better protect our people, in particular, the young and vulnerable.
8. On Wednesday this week, Parliament passed the Online Criminal Harms Bill, to help police and other law enforcement agencies take quicker action to disrupt crimes carried out online, especially scams.

¹ The Digital Readiness Survey 2022 was conducted with a random sample of over 2,000 Singapore citizens aged 15 years and above. The latest DRS findings showed that 75% of respondents agreed that overall, digitalisation has a positive impact on society. However, this was also accompanied by an increased sense of wariness towards technology:

- 65% were generally keen to try out new digital technologies (↓ from 73% in 2020)
- 51% were willing to accept the risks that come with the use of technology (↓ from 66% in 2020).





9. Singapore has also set up the Anti-Scam Command, to consolidate expertise and resources from the Police and major banks in combatting scams.

10. Even earlier this year, my Ministry introduced the Online Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act, which came into effect on 1 February 2023.

11. It aims to minimise the reach of harmful content, like videos that advocate suicide, self-harm or physical and sexual violence, before it reaches our citizens. Equally important, it empowers users to report any harmful content and unwanted interactions.

12. I am sure our partners at Google remember the many discussions with IMDA and MCI colleagues, before I introduced the Bill in Parliament. The consultation had also greatly benefited the people sector. In fact, one of the efforts resulted in the formation of SG Her Empowerment (SHE), an organisation dedicated to protecting women and children from online harm.

13. As we developed this new piece of legislation, we made a concerted effort to consult with a wide range of stakeholders, including members of the public, community groups and industry partners, to ensure we took in a wide range of perspectives.

14. Following from the Online Safety Act, later this month, we will introduce the **Code of Practice for Online Safety**.

15. The Code of Practice will require Social Media Services (SMSs) to have systems or processes in place to prevent Singapore users, particularly children, from accessing harmful content online.

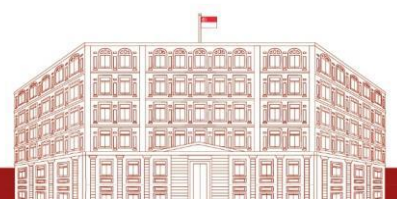
16. This includes establishing community guidelines, providing users with access to tools to help them manage their own safety, and proactively detecting and removing child sexual exploitation and terrorism content.

17. Given how quickly the landscape evolves, we need to keep the conversations on safety and trust going, as we have done in developing the Code of Practice.

18. This is key as tackling harmful online content is a large and complex undertaking that no single entity can address on its own.

19. As such, the Government has taken an accretive and collaborative approach. We collaborate with the private sector and listen to the people sector in order for us to find effective interventions against online harms.

Besides regulations, the Government will also work together with industry and the community to co-create solutions, best practices and community guidelines to provide guardrails for safety and trust for our digital and online spaces.





20. The Digital for Life (DfL) movement represents our 3P – Public, Private and People – sectors coming together to help Singaporeans reap the benefits of digital in all aspects of life. A key part of this movement is helping Singaporeans embrace digital learning as a lifelong pursuit.

21. We appreciate that Google has been a strong DfL supporter since the movement was launched in 2021, and has actively promoted many different initiatives.

22. Today, Google will launch the **YouTube Priority Flagger** programme in Singapore.

23. The Priority Flagger programme seeks to empower community partners, by training them to assess content that violates YouTube Community Guidelines.

24. These Priority Flaggers will be able to flag content directly to Google, allowing problematic content to be prioritised for review.

25. By having the community play a bigger role in building trust and safety, Google is taking steps to build a better, more resilient internet, where different parties work in concert to amplify positive outcomes.

26. Another notable initiative that Google is launching today in partnership with the Cyber Security Agency of Singapore (CSA) is the new **Google Cybersecurity Certificate** for businesses.

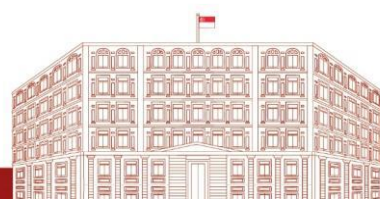
27. Through this initiative, businesses can send their employees to attend courses on scholarships from Google. Through these courses, participants will attain Certificates and acquire foundational skills in cybersecurity.

28. I look forward to more of such partnerships between Government and industry players, to build capacity among our businesses.

The Government is also working with different players to strengthen digital literacy and public education.

29. We are also working with different players to strengthen digital literacy and public education. To promote digital literacy, one useful initiative is to ensure people are savvy enough to understand, identify and thereby avoid scams.

30. Google's **Creators for Impact** initiative will contribute to raising public awareness of scams, by tapping on influencers and domain experts to create content that resonates with the broader community. It is a timely effort given the increased prevalence of scams worldwide, enabling us to come together to make anti-scams communications more effective.





31. Another cross-sector collaboration is the **Be Internet Awesome programme**, launched here in Singapore in 2022, by Google, together with the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) and the Media Literacy Council (MLC).
32. I am heartened to hear that this programme has been successful in helping to equip our young people with positive cyberwellness and online safety habits.
33. Having already connected with 50,000 parents and children in the first run, they next intend to teach over 100,000 Singaporeans how to be smart, alert, strong, kind and brave online over the next two years.
34. Overall, I am very encouraged to see ground-up efforts taking off in the spirit of the DfL movement.
35. I certainly look forward to more partnerships in support of the nationwide DfL movement. We can and we will, together, excite people about technology, uplift our people and capabilities across all segments of society.
36. Thank you.

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