

## **SPEECH BY SMS JANIL PUTHUCHEARY AT THE LAUNCH OF SINGTEL CYBER ELEVATE PROGRAMME ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2023**

Mr Ng Tian Chong, CEO, Singtel Singapore

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

### ***Thriving Amidst Risks***

#### **Introduction**

1. Thank you for inviting me to join you this afternoon for the launch of Singtel Cyber ELEVATE Programme.

2. I remember that when I first got my mobile phone, I had to go to the telco's office. Now, I do all my transactions with my telco online, because I trust those transactions. And one of the key reasons for this trust is the cybersecurity associated with the online platform. Ultimately, that is what we are all trying to do - to drive trust as government, as businesses, as citizens, as well as for the platforms in our devices. Driving trust requires significant investment in people, processes, and technologies.

3. So, I am pleased that the Singtel Cyber ELEVATE programme exists. It focuses on improving cyber resilience and capabilities for our Small-Medium Enterprises (SMEs), drawing on the resources and commitment from Singtel and its partners Drew & Napier and Blackpanda. This spirit of helping each other is commendable and necessary, and will go a long way to developing the community spirit we need for a strong and healthy cybersecurity ecosystem. Thank you very much to Singtel, Drew & Napier and Blackpanda for doing your part.

#### **Cybersecurity is key to building a Smart Nation.**

4. Just like the trust I have in my phone and online transactions is key to my online participation, cybersecurity is a key enabler for our Smart Nation vision here in Singapore.

5. We trust technology to simply work and function whenever and wherever we need it. We entrust our most personal, sensitive, and valuable information – from financial transactions to government communications, from medical records to our very identities – to the ether of cyberspace. All this is possible only if there is trust in digitalisation and technology such that we know our information will be handled securely and responsibly. Without trust, there will be a lot more hesitation from many of our friends, family and citizens.

6. Having good cybersecurity is key to keeping this trust. One breach or incident might be enough to make people lose trust and turn people off digital technologies. That one incident would derail our efforts to becoming a Smart Nation greatly.

7. Your businesses can also reap the potential of digitalisation. What is true for us as individuals, as families, and as a nation is also true for businesses. Your business can reap the potential of digitalisation, saving costs or opening new business opportunities. If your cybersecurity is poor, customers will lose trust and be hesitant to work with you. Your employees might be hesitant to work for you. The confidence that people need in you and

your product to embrace your suite of digital tools will fail. And you will not be able to take advantage of the technology to streamline your processes, drive transformation and collaborations with other companies.

8. I encourage all of you to take cybersecurity seriously and consider what we can do to preserve trust in the digital domain.

### **Cybersecurity does not have to be daunting for SMEs.**

9. This applies to all businesses - big companies and SMEs alike. In particular, cybersecurity may appear to be a daunting task for our SMEs. This is understandable as most, if not all, SMEs do not have access to the scale, resources or expertise that larger companies may have.

10. However, SMEs also have one advantage. Collectively, they make up a large part of our economy. But individually, each business is relatively small and that means a relatively small attack surface and the risk of you being a primary target is relatively small as compared to bigger companies. Correspondingly, what you might need for adequate cybersecurity is not the same as large-sized companies or those that form the infrastructure backbone. Basic cybersecurity measures and hygiene would already be very helpful in transforming your risk profile, such as installing antivirus software and performing proper backup of data. These are not prohibitive and only require commitment and discipline to implement and follow through.

11. The Government is likewise committed to supporting our SMEs improve their cybersecurity. The Cyber Security Agency (CSA) provides free **Cybersecurity toolkits** on their website to help SME owners learn what they can do to keep their companies safe from cyber threats. CSA also rolled out a **Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs)-as-a-Service** scheme earlier this year. Eligible SMEs can receive up to 70% funding support, and the CISO-as-a-Service providers will work with SMEs to develop tailored cybersecurity health plans to improve the firm's cybersecurity posture and work towards obtaining the Cybersecurity Essential Marks.

12. The **Cyber Essential and Cyber Trust marks** are part of a certification scheme for organisations to recognise their commitment to cybersecurity. The Cyber Essentials mark is designed to be accessible for most SMEs, and intended to help SMEs differentiate themselves from others so that customers seeking to work with firms that adopted good cybersecurity practices can identify them easily. More than 170 organisations have already received their certifications, or are in the process of receiving their Cyber Essentials or Cyber Trust certification, and I would also encourage you to tap on the CISO-as-a-Service scheme and participate.

### **Good cybersecurity depends on the community.**

13. Cybersecurity is a team effort. Apart from government efforts, industry and community efforts are equally important and valuable in strengthening our collective cyber defences collectively. Companies that can do more should lean forward and do more to help others level up and improve.

14. The **Singtel Cyber ELEVATE Programme** launched today is a good example. The new programme brings together practitioners of various expertise, including legal and incident response experts, to provide training workshops to elevate participating SMEs' cybersecurity posture. In the unfortunate circumstance where organisations suffer a breach within the contract period – which I certainly hope not – there will be help to guide SMEs on the

containment, remediation, and management of the incident. Eligible SMEs can receive up to 90% funding support in the form of SSG grants when signing up for the programme.

15. I am heartened to see Singtel and partner companies like Blackpanda and Drew & Napier doing your part to pool your resources and expertise for the benefit of so many others. Such efforts will not be effective if there are no participants. I would therefore encourage all of us here, especially SMEs, to not only sign up for the programme but also to help spread the word. Without active participation and a joint commitment towards cybersecurity, it will be an uphill battle for the community to advance collectively.

16. Cybersecurity is a team sport, but also a community response. We are only as good as our weakest link. Your SME may be strongly protected, but if everyone else that you do business with is not, everyone suffers. The more of your friends that you bring along, the stronger your defences will be.

### **Conclusion**

17. Cybersecurity is a foundation for Singapore to digitalise confidently and achieve our goals. This is also true for you and your business.

18. We need all of us to be responsible and commit to do what we can to better secure our systems and organisations from cyber threats. For those who can do more, lean forward and provide the support to those who need it. This will only make our entire cybersecurity ecosystem stronger and more sustainable in the long term. This is a team effort, and we all can play a part. We, in the Government, will continue to play our part.

19. On that note, I would like to offer my warmest congratulations again to Singtel, Drew & Napier and Blackpanda on the successful launch of the Singtel Cyber ELEVATE Programme.

20. Thank you, and I wish you a very enjoyable collaboration.

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