

**Transcript of Speech delivered by Mrs Josephine Teo,
Minister for Communications and Information,
at Techblazer Awards 2023 (23 Aug)**

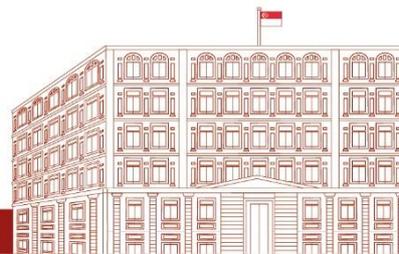
My cabinet colleague, Senior Minister of State, Dr Amy Khor

Mr Wong Wai Meng, Chair, SGTech

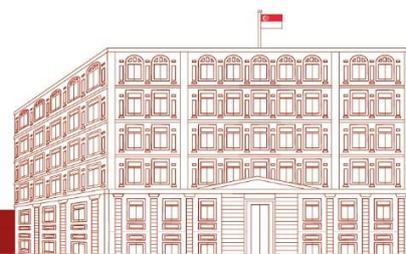
Colleagues

Distinguished Guests

1. Good evening. I am happy to join you for tonight's Awards presentation and to celebrate the innovators in the tech industry.
2. Many of you here are deeply invested in the community of innovation practitioners in Singapore. You appreciate the need to innovate and support each other in fostering a culture that encourages experimentation, risk-taking and collaboration.
3. Equally, as innovators, you understand your responsibility to ensure the trustworthiness and safety of your solutions. Entrenching such a culture takes time. It also takes close partnership between the government and industry. Industry brings to the table market insights, valuable resources, and practical expertise. Their requirements tend to produce innovations that are relevant, feasible, and can effectively address real-world challenges.
4. Government, on the other hand, must respond to citizen expectations for safety, consistency, and inclusion. In addition to taking a broader societal perspective on innovations, government has a duty to regulate appropriately. Strong partnership between Government and industry help to make sure innovations continue to flourish, while downside risks are mitigated.
5. Tonight's organisers, SGTech and IMDA, and in fact, many at tonight's event are partners who have contributed much towards this effort. The Techblazer Awards, and the range of entries received from all sectors of the economy, are a strong testament to this ethos.
6. Several shortlisted finalists stand out, in particular. One of the finalists in the Student Techblazer category is Terrahackers. The team designed a solution to tackle gaps in natural disaster detection and post-disaster operations.
7. Another finalist is St John's Home, from the Best Adoption (NGO) category. It deployed a patient monitoring device at its long-term care facility to increase productivity of care workers and also to ensure that the patients are well taken care of. Not only is the device innovative, it shows how technology can be used for the public good, through saving or improving the quality of lives.
8. However, whilst the rapid pace of technological advancement generates immense opportunities to innovate, it also raises concerns. These range from the accelerated depletion of natural resources, to increased energy consumption and the potential for exacerbating climate change.



9. The question of sustainability should not be overlooked in our pursuit of technology. This also means promoting sustainability alongside innovation. In doing so, we can help ensure that the benefits of technology are enduring and long-lasting.
10. I am heartened that SGTech has been a champion of this thinking. Wai Meng talked about the Sustainability Guided Programme for SMEs, for example. It is also timely that you have introduced a new category of Techblazer Award called the “Carbon Zero Award”.
11. Beginning this year, SGTech will recognise innovations that have made a measurable impact towards reducing carbon emissions. One of the finalists for this category is VFlowTech, whose vision is to create scalable, affordable energy storage solutions that are sustainable.
12. The company reinvented vanadium redox flow technology and created a safe and environmentally friendly battery with 25 years of useful life. They now have their systems in place in countries such as Australia, Africa and Thailand.
13. VFlowTech is also one of many companies that benefitted from IMDA’s Spark programme. The “Spark” programme recognises that new tech companies often face challenges in securing their first customers and aims to help early-stage companies gain access to potential projects and build their credentials. Having benefitted from “Spark”, VFlowTech was also invited to join the AI Verify Foundation. We hope they can contribute towards developing AI testing tools to enable responsible AI in Singapore.
14. “Accreditation” is another programme by IMDA to support Singapore-based enterprise tech product companies. It helps growth stage companies secure contracts with government agencies and large enterprises.
15. Both programmes have gained good momentum and helped 190 companies to date. Companies on the “Accreditation” and “Spark” programmes can tap on the Tech Acceleration Lab, or TAL, to shorten their deployment timelines for government projects.
16. TAL is a sandbox administered by IMDA. Companies can demonstrate Proofs-of-Concept (or PoC) for Government projects through short-term access to the Government Commercial Cloud. Since TAL’s launch in 2021, 46 PoCs have been completed, of which 20 have successfully converted into paid contracts.
17. I am pleased to announce that we have expanded TAL and made it available for private sector projects through TAL Enterprise. PoCs for the private sector face similar challenges as Government PoCs, such as the complex environment setup with enterprise-grade IT security and compliance requirements.
18. Companies can therefore tap on the TAL Enterprise sandbox to accelerate deployment of their PoCs with private sector clients. They can also benefit from POC deployment reviews by tech advisors based on industry best practices.
19. With TAL Enterprise, newer companies with less track record have a better chance of getting recognised for their capabilities.
20. A finalist in the Most Promising Innovation category, Scantist, was among the first to deploy a PoC on TAL Enterprise, leading to a successful outcome with their client. We look forward to seeing more examples of successful PoC deployments on the TAL Enterprise.



21. In closing, let me reiterate the government's commitment to partnering industry, combined with our investments into the tech ecosystem. We hope to see many more innovations and successive batches of Techblazers making their mark in Singapore and internationally.

22. Thank you, and congratulations again to all the finalists!

