

Transcript of remarks by Senior Minister of State, Dr Janil Puthucheary, at the launch of the Digital Connectivity Blueprint (DCB) on Monday, 5 June 2023

Fellow panel members

Colleagues from MCI and IMDA

1 Good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining us here today.

2 Minister made the comment that we didn't just want to do things faster. We didn't just want to, in the Blueprint, conduct business as usual but just faster; that we wanted to show we are doing something different. So, in the production of this Blueprint, we also did something different. We could have done this just as a series of spending plans – just budgets announced at a national level, but we wanted to demonstrate that we were taking a master-planning approach, integrating the various layers of infrastructure, software utilities and physical-digital interfaces. And so, we had to make sure that we didn't just provide the private sector and the various stakeholders with big plans without thinking through how our stakeholders might deploy and implement solutions based on our infrastructure. So, one of the reasons we had convened this advisory panel was to implement and design the Blueprint differently, and have discussions on how we would approach the master planning.

3 That said, we did also do things faster. I wanted to record my thanks to the members of the advisory panel, as well as the staff of MCI and IMDA, who really went all out. I know my panel members also very much appreciated the hard work that went into delivering this Blueprint within a very short time. So, this Blueprint embodies our approach for planning ahead additional digital infrastructure, and it will be the foundation for our digital future.

4 The space moves rapidly. You know about the extent of the rapidity of change for artificial intelligence.

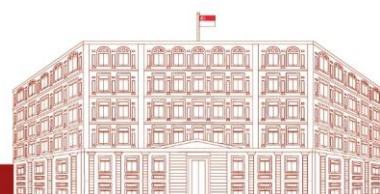
a. It's been traditionally used to solve very specific problems, such as fraud detection in finance and predictive analytics for healthcare.

b. But, you would be no stranger to the rise of generative AI. It is a radical shift, and it demonstrates the potential to transform problem-solving and creative processes across sectors.

c. The increased demand for generative AI models will drive the demand for more connectivity and greater compute power.

5 And in that is the duality of the Panel's task – the need to ensure that our digital infrastructure meets our current demands; and at the same time, planning for and enabling us to reap the benefits of the future changes and progresses in this fast-moving digital space. We must do both things at once – we can't only concentrate on our immediate needs; and we can't only concentrate on our future needs. We have to be able to engage with both. And that is even when the use cases for future demand - what people talk about as the 'killer app' - has not yet been made clear. We don't quite know exactly what every last bit of bandwidth will be applied to. We don't know exactly what every data centre, every bit of compute power will be used for. But we have some general ideas, and we need to balance current needs and future needs.

6 As I mentioned, addressing this challenge, it does require the collective perspectives from industry, tightening that link between supply and demand. Otherwise, we might be delivering a



Blueprint that the industry doesn't ultimately see as useful as possible. It will be unwise for the Government to attempt to do this on our own.

7 We convened this Advisory Panel, bringing together industry leaders, who gave us rich insights on how we need to plan for the next round about digital connectivity. We had very candid and robust discussions, online and offline.

a. The increasing importance of infrastructure planning was one of the things we discussed because we expect the interdependencies of the technologies, platforms and services in our infrastructure stack today to increase over time.

b. We discussed emerging trends in the digital space, providing clarity on some of the future possible demands on our digital infrastructure.

c. And we discussed how these future demands could translate into strategic priorities – moves that we need to start making today to enable strategic shifts of the future.

8 And so, these collective insights and hard work have culminated with this Digital Connectivity Blueprint.

9 Most of the digital infrastructure under the Blueprint, as Minister explained, is 'out of sight, out of mind'. Many of the technologies, platforms, and companies or services, work quietly behind the scenes to enable many different types of digital services that our people and enterprises use daily.

10 Very importantly, the digital infrastructure we have today has enabled Singapore to ride the wave of digitalization, and it has led to better jobs across all sectors of our economy. Today, almost every single job is supported by digital connectivity - the individual worker, the individual tasks, the individual job. They may not look very digital, but businesses, value or supply chains, and services ride on the digital foundations that we already have. There are many examples where existing jobs have been transformed through that digital process and higher value roles have been created.

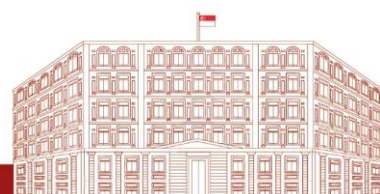
a. For example, retailers use digital payment systems, delivery platforms and other technologies. All these ride on our mobile connectivity. Jobs in manufacturing which used to be very labour intensive are moving up the value chain with the use of robotics, real-time connectivity and compute capability that digital infrastructure offer.

b. We have seen a rise in digital marketing roles as media consumption habits have shifted.

c. All of these ride on strong international connectivity so that our businesses can engage with and benefit from global markets.

11 So we must continue to invest. Invest in world-class, future-ready digital infrastructure, so that we can continue to create better jobs for our people and create more opportunities for our enterprises to continue to reap the benefits of these emerging tech trends.

12 Our launch of the Blueprint today represents our bold, collective commitment to grow our digital infrastructure, lay the foundations for Singapore and Singaporeans to thrive in our shared, digital future.



13 But ultimately, implementation is key. Bringing together this Advisory Panel, discussing the issues and planning the Digital Connectivity Blueprint with an eye on how we will implement all this, turning these plans into reality is key. And so, we will continue to work with the wider industry:

- a. To ensure that we remain at the forefront of cutting digital edge connectivity;
- b. To grow an innovative ecosystem of digital solution providers;
- c. To encourage enterprises to digitalise; and
- d. To enable our people to live work, learn and play in the digital space.

14 Building on this digital infrastructure will always be a work-in-progress. We have a strong partnership between government, industry and key stakeholders. This will be crucial as we continue to refine our plans to capitalise on the fast-changing digital trends. This Blueprint will have to be a living document, the relationships that we have with our stakeholders will have to be kept alive and dynamic, and we will have to continue to engage and wrestle with issues as the space develops. I am confident that Singapore's digital future is bright, with better opportunities, stronger trust and empowered communities.

