**Transcript of Speech delivered by Mr Tan Kiat How,**
Senior Minister of State,
Ministry of Communications and Information,
at IBM Singapore 70th Anniversary Preview Day (28 Feb 2023)

Mr Colin Tan, General Manager and Technology Leader, IBM Singapore
Ms Ng Lai Yee, Managing Partner & Country Leader, IBM Consulting, IBM Singapore
Distinguished guests
Ladies and gentlemen

1. A very good morning to all of you.

2. Congratulations on the 70th Anniversary of IBM's establishment in Singapore. Thank you for journeying with us all these years!

3. When IBM first established your presence here in the 1950s, Singapore's pre-independence economy was primarily based on trade, manufacturing and agriculture. The very first IBM data processing equipment that was installed in Singapore, an IBM punched card machine, went to Lee Rubber Company in 1956. In 1962, the very first IBM computer landed in Singapore, and was deployed at a government agency, the Central Provident Fund Board (CPF Board).

4. Our early leaders had the foresight to invest in technology, innovation and talent that formed the strong foundations on which we built the city that we know today.

5. The National Computer Board was set up in 1980s. It sought to drive the adoption of computers in the Civil Service, coordinate computer education and training, and develop the computer service industry. The Board partnered with IBM and the National University of Singapore (NUS) to start the Institute of Systems Science (ISS), which has since been training thousands of tech talents.

6. It is certainly not an exaggeration to say that IBM was an important partner in driving Singapore's national computerisation programme.

7. As Singapore continued to transform, we made our first formal foray into Research and Development (R&D) in 1991, with the establishment of the National Science and Technology Board. We also launched the first five-year National Technology Plan, and started building a strong base of scientists, engineers, and technologists, who would help to drive economic and enterprise transformation.

8. This commitment to investing for the future continues today. Under the Smart Nation and Digital Economy pillar of our Research, Innovation and Enterprise 2025 (RIE 2025) plan, we will be investing in the development of strategic and emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Trust Technologies and Quantum Computing.

9. Importantly, we want to ensure the translation of such digital capabilities into industry and Smart Nation use cases, so as to contribute positively to our economic growth and liveability for our people.

10. That is why we continue to welcome partnerships with industry, to drive digital transformation across the broader economy, create opportunities for Singaporeans and secure our place as a regional tech hub.
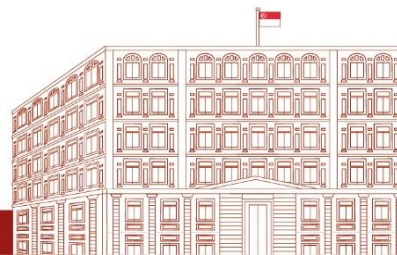
11. IBM has a strong presence in Singapore. In the area of foundational research, the government encourages partnerships between our research institutions and companies like IBM, in cutting edge areas like artificial intelligence, 5G, and quantum computing.

12. For example, NUS is the first academic institution in the region to join IBM's Quantum Network, under which IBM and NUS collaborate to identify new ways to use quantum computing to solve real-world problems. I'm very heartened to see this partnership between NUS and IBM over so many decades, and the latest one around quantum computing.

13. IBM is also working with SMU to research on the application of quantum computing on industries, and how it disrupts sectors like finance and logistics. For example, Associate Professor Paul Robert Griffin led research to understand the benefits of incorporating quantum machine learning (QML) in the credit scoring process.

14. But we are not just doing foundational research. Industry partnerships are key in translating new technologies into commercial and industrial applications.

15. Together with IMDA, Samsung, and M1, IBM jointly launched Singapore's first 5G Industry 4.0 trial as a use case for advanced manufacturing. The trial developed a 5G-enabled augmented reality (AR) solution in the form of AI-powered "Smart Glasses" to assist factory operators in assembly and inspection, which improved training efficiency for new hires by 50%.

16. Building on the success, these "Smart Glasses" have been deployed across IBM's global manufacturing sites and will be moving into Phase 2 which focuses on commercialisation.

17. Such partnerships underscore our approach to innovation, allowing us to collectively move up the value chain – higher value jobs for our people, and a stronger competitive advantage for our businesses.

18. Underpinning these efforts to drive growth and innovation in the Digital Economy is access to tech talent.

19. I am aware that some have expressed concerns if there is still a demand for such talent given the recent global retrenchments by tech firms.

20. These layoffs have been taking place given the current macro-economic uncertainties, geopolitical tensions, and over-hiring in the past few years.

21. But despite such companies right-sizing, tech skills are still in demand because of rapid digitalisation. Recruitment firms have highlighted continued demand for tech skills such as cybersecurity and data analytics. Sectors across the economy, for example banking, insurance and healthcare, are still on the lookout for tech talent.

22. In this regard, while we will closely monitor global developments, the government will persist in our efforts to reskill and upskill our workforce with industry relevant tech skills.

23. This also emphasises the need to further strengthen industry-government partnerships. We will continue to work with companies like IBM, who have been actively partnering with us to train skilled tech talent, through on-the-job training and apprenticeships.
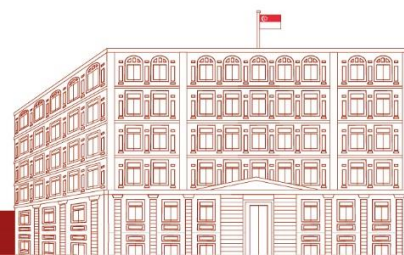
24. IMDA's Tech Skills Accelerator initiative has worked with industry to equip fresh graduates and mid-career professionals with industry-relevant tech skills. Under this programme, IBM has committed to train 300 Singaporeans in areas such as AI, Blockchain, Cloud, IoT, Software & Applications, Advanced Analytics and Cybersecurity. These have helped many to upskill, and opened up new doors of opportunities for them.

25. Take for example Ms Ong Geok Sin, who went through the Company-Led Training programme or CLT, and gained knowledge on a wide range of topics, including Scrum and Agile. She was then able to apply them in her new role as a Package Consultant, helping to design, develop and re-engineer complex application components and integrate software packages.

26. It is also important to expand access to these opportunities for our future workforce. To that end, IBM and other companies such as Carousell, Singtel and Dell Technologies, are founding members of the recently launched TeSA for ITE and Polytechnic Alliance ("TIP Alliance"). The Alliance will provide structured job pathways for Polytechnic and ITE graduates to enhance their employability.

27. I wish to commend efforts by our industry partners on this front. Such partnerships are crucial to bridge the gap between education and industry and to ensure that our workers can access higher value jobs in the growing Digital Economy. We welcome more companies to follow the footsteps of IBM and to join us in these efforts.

28. Let me conclude. We are happy that Singapore has been part of IBM's story for the past 70 years. As we look to the future, we hope that IBM will continue to grow in Asia through Singapore. Wishing all of you many wonderful memories and years to come, many fruitful partnerships and more importantly, have a great session today.

29. Thank you.