

Opening Remarks by Prof Lily Kong, Vice-President, University and Global Relations, National University of Singapore at the Official Launch of SoC Infocomm Fest, 14 December 2007, 6pm, University Cultural Centre

Rear Admiral Lui Tuck Yew, Minister of State for Education,

Prof Mohan Kankanhalli, Acting Dean, School of Computing,

Distinguished Guests, Supporters, Partners and Participants of the Inaugural SoC Infocomm Fest,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening to everyone, and a very warm welcome to NUS.

At the National University of Singapore, we are mindful of the need to engage with our wider community, and especially our young people, to inform, inspire and excite. In this regard, I am pleased that NUS' School of Computing is endeavouring to reach out to our young people, to inform about the value of information communication (or infocomm) technologies, to stimulate interest in this area, and to excite young minds about future possibilities.

We live in an increasingly dynamic and digitised world, where infocomm technologies are all pervasive. Indeed, they are central to our competitiveness. Yet, the ubiquity of infocomm technologies in our lives may mean that we often take them for granted, and they are not the exciting frontiers which young people may seek to explore.

Within the NUS community, we are excited by the difference that infocomm technologies can make in diverse fields, and the pioneering research contributions that our colleagues in the School of Computing are making. For instance, in the field of biotechnology, our infocomm expertise has helped to unlock the intricacies of the human genome. In space exploration, NUS expertise in complex scheduling has played a significant role in ensuring the optimal scheduling and deployment of NASA scientists and engineers in the **Mars Rover Landing** project¹ In Singapore, NUS expertise in complex scheduling has also served to ensure that berths at our busy port are allocated efficiently to ships.

As educationists, it becomes our duty to re-ignite in students the curiosity about infocomm technologies. Indeed, to help build up the next vanguard of infocomm talent for our dynamic economy, we need to encourage our young people to venture into the brave new world of discoveries and innovations that infocomm knowledge can unlock.

¹ Source: www.friartuck.net/news-events/2004/news03.htm. FriarTuck is an NUS-SoC spin-off.

It is with all this in mind that the inaugural SoC Infocomm Fest was initiated. It is fun and it allows hands-on participation by our young guests and visitors. For example, the First LEGO League component in the Infocomm Fest is aimed at acquainting students as young as 10 years of age with first-hand experience of how Artificial Intelligence can be both practical and stimulating. At the same time, appealing to the mathematically inclined among our secondary school, junior college and polytechnic students, Algo*Mania offers a glimpse into the exciting world of problem solving with computational logic. Reaching out to our international audience, the ACM ICPC competition is an opportunity for our young people to spar and hone their programming skills against their peers from abroad. Reinforcing the infocomm message further, the SoC Infocomm Camps offer junior college students a chance to experience the intrigue of adopting the computational approach to problem solving in a fun and personal way from our professors and teaching staff.

I am particularly pleased that in spreading the infocomm enthusiasm, the School of Computing has garnered the participation of industry partners and fellow educationists from schools, polytechnics and junior colleges, as well as like-minded peers from overseas institutions.

To our partners and supporters in the inaugural SoC Infocomm Fest, both at home and from abroad, our heartfelt thanks for your friendship and input.

NUS is also glad to have the support of the Ministry of Education in our efforts in reaching out to our young people. I would like to thank Rear Admiral Lui for taking time off his already busy schedule to be with us this evening.

It is now my pleasure to hand over the rostrum to Rear Admiral Lui Tuck Yew, Minister of State for Education, who will deliver the main address this evening.

Rear Admiral Lui please.