

## **“YOUTH IN INTERNET”**

**SPEECH BY RT HON DATUK SERI HJ MOHD ALI BIN MOHD RUSTAM,  
CHIEF MINISTER OF MELAKA AND  
PRESIDENT OF THE WORLD ASSEMBLY OF YOUTH,  
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Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my great pleasure to deliver this keynote address at the APEC Youth Plaza, an important gathering of young people from APEC member countries and beyond.

This forum will enable young people to interact and exchange views, therefore strengthen the bonds between young people in Asia and the Pacific region.

The theme that has been selected for this APEC Youth Plaza is of importance and relevance to young people. The Internet and the Cyber World are fast developing to influence all aspects of our economic, political, social and cultural life. The Internet has powerfully extended our ability to find, manage, and share information. A new culture is emerging, known as the Web Culture, of the E-Culture, which governs the interaction of people through the Internet and other forms of Information and Communication Technologies.

### **Global Internet Usage Statistics**

According to the International Telecommunications Union, there are currently 950 million Internet users in the world, roughly 15 percent of world population. In Asia there are 330 million users, and in the Pacific there are 17 millions users. This makes the combined figures for the Asia Pacific region a total of 347 million. This excludes Canada and the United States, who have a combined total of 225 million Internet users. Research indicates that there are more than 900 million web pages on the Internet, offering a wide variety of information and services.

The average global Internet user spends 11 hours and 24 minutes online per month, according to Nielsen NetRatings. The average user in the United States spends more than twice that amount of time online: on average, 25 hours and 25 minutes at home and 74 hours and 26 minutes at work.

The main components of the Internet are email and the World Wide Web. These are now essential tools for government, business and civil society.

### **Globalisation and the Internet**

The Internet revolution is closely related to the phenomenon of globalisation. Globalisation is the inevitable result of technological advancements, including the Internet.

Globalisation refers to the multiplicity of linkages and interconnections between the states and societies which make up the present world system. It describes the process by which events, decisions and activities in one part of the world can have significant consequences for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe.

Globalisation is a process which is making the world smaller. Decisions taken by a people on one side of the globe can affect millions on the other side. Globalisation results in the whole world being indisputably one global village.

The Internet has therefore accelerated the pace of globalisation by making it easier and faster for people to communicate, exchange information and interact.

### **Advantages of the Internet**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The advantages of using the Internet are quite obvious. The internet makes communication easier and cheaper. It is no longer necessary to write physical letters

and to post them in a process which takes weeks for the recipient to receive it. Now, documents can be transmitted by email and they will reach the recipient within seconds. Email is also far much cheaper than post as the costs of Internet access are cheaper than making a local telephone call, irrespective of which part of the world a recipient is based in. The Internet also enables organisations to create virtual international networks that allow information to be exchanged in real time. Live internet chats, internet conferences, internet discussions are all common these days. One person can be in Korea and the other in Jamaica, and the Internet allows communication to take place as if they are in one place.

The Internet has also created numerous opportunities for youth employment. Many young people have become rich due to the opportunities presented by the Internet. We have cases such as Yahoo!, Amazon, Google and eBay, which are now successful global enterprises. These are all companies started by young people, and they have grown into multi-billion corporations that are listed on major stock exchanges. In many parts of the world, youth are creating jobs by using the potential of information technologies.

There are several example of a positive use of the Internet for the benefit of youths. One is a Cambodian project called Digital Divide Data. This project that involves disadvantaged youth in Cambodia in an integrated educational, vocational training and work program. The idea behind the project is to connect young people, who are struggling to survive in one of the world's least developed nations, with the global economy. This is done by creating non-profit data entry outsourcing centres that only hire individuals under 25 who are orphans, physically disabled or trafficked women.

The project's operations are completely Internet based. Input is received in the form of digital images. The employees convert these to computer files, create databases and web pages, and then email the output to clients around the world. The centre has 50 computers and each employee spends most of his time working on the Internet.

Digital Divide Data's underlying philosophy is that the world must do more than build Internet lines and give computers. There is an added responsibility to connect the people to these resources in an empowering way that results in a tangible benefit in their everyday life. Since its inception in Phnom Penh two years ago, the project has benefited more than 80 disadvantaged youths.

The World Assembly of Youth and the World Youth Foundation have assisted young people to set up Internet cafes in Indonesia and in Zimbabwe. In Indonesia, a microcredit facility was provided to enable youths to establish Wartels, which offer Internet and telecommunication services to the general public. In Zimbabwe, a joint-venture project was launched with the Government of Zimbabwe in 2003, which has established Infokiosks in all 57 districts of Zimbabwe. These Infokiosks are run by young people as employment-creation projects.

### **Other Uses of the Internet**

Shopping online has also become a huge success and is considered a great advantage of the Internet. No matter what people are shopping for, it can be found on the Internet. People do not even have to leave their homes. Just by a click of the mouse, anyone can make a purchase on the internet, and the product is delivered to their front door. There are even online supermarkets where ordinary groceries can be purchased. A good example is the American online supermarket Safeway.com

The most common thing the Internet is used for is research. Children and students are among the top people who use the Internet for research. Today, it is almost required that students use the Internet for research. Thirty percent of teachers give assignments requiring research from the Internet. In the classroom, sixty-six percent of teachers use the Internet to teach. The Internet has become one of the biggest sources for research. Almost everyday, research on medical issues becomes easier to locate. Web sites have become available for people to research diseases and talk to doctors online. During 1998 over 20 million people reported going online to retrieve health information.

Entertainment is another popular reason why many people surf the Internet. Downloading games, going into chat rooms, or just surfing the Web are some of the uses people have discovered. There are numerous games that may be downloaded from the Internet at no charge. Chat rooms are popular because users can meet new and interesting people. In fact, the Internet has been used by people to find life long partners, and many dating and marriage websites can be found on the Internet. Other forms of entertainment available are music, hobbies, news and magazines.

Another popular thing to do on the Internet is to check out the news. Almost all local and international news can be obtained through the Internet. Sports scores are updated on the Internet as soon as the game ends, and information on the weather is readily available. The Internet therefore offers advantages that can benefit all areas of life.

### **Disadvantages and Problems caused by the Internet**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

There are several problems and challenges presented by the Internet, despite its many advantages. One of the major problems is that criminals are able to use the Internet to lure unsuspecting users. There is now a growing trend of cybercrime, and sometimes it manifests into physical crime.

Pornography is one of the major problems in the Internet. There are millions of pornographic sites, and they also happen to be the most advertised sites. Even children end up having access to pornographic material on the Internet. This erodes moral values and results in increases in rape, abuse, immorality, infidelity and other social problems.

The Internet also makes piracy easier, as musical and literary works can be duplicated and disseminated all over the world, thereby prejudicing the writers of the income they would get if these people had bought original items. File-sharing services, such as Napster, provide copyrighted songs to all Internet users. There are now hundreds of such file-sharing services that it has become impossible to control all of them.

Another major disadvantage of the Internet is the lack of privacy and high potential for espionage and loss of sensitive information. Electronic messages sent over the Internet can be easily hijacked and tracked, revealing who is talking to whom and what they are talking about. As people surf the Internet, they are constantly giving information to web sites. The collection, selling, or sharing of the information online increases the chances that information will fall into the wrong hands. Consequently, many people have become victims of identity theft. Credit card fraud is one such result.

Today, not only are humans getting viruses, but computers are also. Computers are mainly getting these viruses from the Internet. Some of these dangerous viruses destroy the computer's entire hard drive, meaning that the user can no longer access the computer.

Although email has made communication more efficient, it has also made it easier for bulk mailers and fraudsters to communicate. More than eighty percent of email, for instance, is made up of spam - unsolicited advertising by everyone from loan sharks to porn merchants. Microsoft owner, Bill Gates, reports personally receiving four million pieces of spam every day.

However, despite all these disadvantages, it is clear that the Internet has many advantages if people use it professionally and ethically.

## **Conclusion**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In conclusion, young people need to make a conscious decision to utilise the Internet for positive and healthy pursuits. The Internet can be beneficial to personal and organizational development if it is used well. Young people should influence each other to use the Internet in a productive manner that does not breach social values, ethics and professional practice.

It is my hope that during the APEC Youth Plaza, you shall deliberate on such issues and identify how young people can make a positive use of the Internet for the benefit of all mankind.

I would like to congratulate the National Council of Youth Organizations in Korea (NCYOK) for organising this event, the National Youth Commission, Korea, for hosting this event, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade for sponsoring the meeting, and the Asian Youth Council and the International Workcamp Organisation who, along with the World Assembly of Youth, are part of the preparatory committee.

I thank you.

ENDS.