

SPEECH BY DR YAACOB IBRAHIM, MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION, AT THE LAUNCH OF “DATA PROTECTION LAW IN SINGAPORE – PRIVACY AND SOVEREIGNTY IN AN INTERCONNECTED WORLD”, 26 MARCH 2014, 4.00PM, VIEWING GALLERY, LEVEL 8, SUPREME COURT BUILDING

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to join you today.

2 The launch of this book is timely as the Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA) comes fully into effect on the 2nd of July this year. As the Personal Data Protection Commission works to prepare organisations and the general public for the full implementation of the Act, it is also important to reflect upon the issues surrounding data protection, in order to fully appreciate the mechanics of the Act. This book offers insights into some of these issues, and will be a useful resource for anyone seeking a better understanding of data protection in Singapore.

3. The PDPA helps to entrench Singapore’s competitiveness and position as a trusted hub for businesses. This is as the PDPA provides the legal infrastructure to support personal data protection, bringing Singapore on par with the growing list of countries that have enacted data protection laws, and facilitates the transfer of data across jurisdictions. The PDPA also enables businesses to build trust among consumers because it seeks to give individuals greater control over the disclosure of their personal information, and promotes proper management of personal data in organisations. Organisations must make it a priority to proactively safeguard

personal data in their possession and prevent unauthorised disclosure. Where data has been compromised, it would be good practice for organisations to inform the affected consumers.

4. Since the enactment of the Act early last year, the Commission has embarked on a series of initiatives and programmes to educate individuals and businesses on their rights and obligations under the PDPA. These include working together with the industry to develop advisory guidelines to provide guidance on the manner in which the provisions of the Act will be interpreted. The Commission has also conducted a series of outreach programmes in partnership with various associations, and will continue to do so.

5 Even as the Commission continues its efforts to reach out to businesses and individuals, we also want to reiterate that the Commission takes a very serious view of any breaches against the Act. This is why several errant organisations have already been taken to task for failure to comply with the Do Not Call Registry provisions, which took effect on 2 January this year. We want to send a strong signal that we do not tolerate such actions and we will not hesitate to take action against those who breach the Act. The role of the public is equally important here as well – we hope they would respond positively should they be approached by the Commission for assistance into the investigations.

6. On this note, I would like to commend Professor Simon Chesterman and his team of contributors for bringing together diverse perspectives on data protection through this very important publication. The publication highlights that it is a

balancing act to recognise the needs of businesses and the rights of individuals. I hope the legal fraternity will continue to lend your support as we work together for the better protection of personal data here in Singapore.

7. Thank you.