

Our Future

9. First, party political films

- a. Presently totally banned
 - i. Politics is a serious matter
 - ii. Voters should consider issues rationally and coolly, and make considered decisions on their future
 - iii. Concern that films are an emotive medium
 - (1) Impact of watching a film is different from reading something in cold print
 - (2) It can stir up passions and cause people to get carried away
- b. Concern still valid, but an outright ban is no longer sensible
 - i. This is how people communicate on the web, and in daily life
 - ii. Many make videos, e.g. the clips you saw earlier
 - iii. Even my NDR has become a multi-media event
 - (1) The speech itself
 - (2) After the speech, many video and blog responses
 - iv. Anyone can do this, anytime, anywhere
 - (1) Let me show you
 - (a) I have a handphone here
 - (b) It has a software loaded called "Qik"
 - (c) Let me run the programme
 - (d) Turn on the video camera
 - (e) Now I am recording a video of you "live"
 - (f) Stream this onto the PMO website

(g) After a short delay, you will see yourself on the net

(h) Wave – you're on candid camera!

(2) Just like that, I have made our first (non-political) video

c. So we must allow political videos, but with some safeguards

i. Some things are obviously alright – factual footage, documentaries, recordings of live events

ii. But some things should still be off limits – political commercials, partisan material, footage distorted to create a slanted impression

iii. In between there will be some grey areas

(1) But we can deal with this

(2) e.g. for non-political films, censorship and classification standards rely on subjective judgment, yet we have worked out a workable system

iv. Overriding consideration – preserve integrity and quality of our political discourse

10. Second, rules for political material on the internet during elections

a. Current rules settled before last GE

i. e.g. podcasts and videocasts are not allowed

ii. Most people cannot post election materials – only limited to political parties, candidates and their agents

b. By next GE, 5 years will have passed

i. Cyber years are like dog years, so 5 years in cyberspace, is like 35 years in the real world!

c. We must update these rules

i. Liberalise and allow people to participate more actively and flexibly, e.g.

(1) Allow podcasts and videocasts

- (2) Allow others to post election materials too
 - ii. But maintain accountability and responsibility
- 11. Have sketched out my views broadly
 - a. Advisory Council on the Impact of New Media on Society (AIMS) led by Cheong Yip Seng is studying these issues in detail
 - b. Look forward to their recommendations
- 12. Beyond cyberspace, politics is about people's lives in the real world
 - a. Have to get a direct feel for the person – Can he be trusted? Does he care for people? Is he capable?
 - b. Have to talk, argue, persuade, and work together for what we believe in
 - c. Cannot do this purely online
 - d. We do this all the time
 - i. At grassroots sessions, dialogues, meetings etc
 - ii. Small society – possible for us to interact and get to know one another in real life
 - e. A few restraints – cannot afford to take chances with race and religion
 - f. Even then, Singaporeans are free to do nearly everything
- 13. One remaining restriction – outdoor demonstrations
 - a. Still not allowed
 - i. Concern is law and order, and security
 - ii. One incident could undermine our racial harmony, and confidence in Singapore
 - b. Concern is still valid, but total ban is too rigid
 - i. We should find ways to allow people to express themselves safely

- ii. Speakers' Corner at Hong Lim Park is a model
 - iii. Well defined location, accessible, safe
 - iv. Not many speak there, but anyone can who wants to
 - c. We should allow outdoor public demonstrations, also at the Speakers' Corner
 - i. Still subject to basic rules of law and order
 - ii. Still stay away from race, language or religion
 - iii. We will manage with a light touch
 - (1) No need for Police to be involved
 - (2) NParks has agreed to be in charge of Speakers' Corner
14. Overall thrust of all these changes
- a. To liberalise, widen the space for expression and participation
 - b. Encourage more citizens to engage in debate, to participate in building our shared future
 - c. We will progressively open up our system
 - i. Much more open today compared to ten or even five years ago
 - ii. Will continue to feel our way forward
 - iii. Cannot progress just by copying others
 - iv. Must think through our problems ourselves and find the right path for Singapore
15. But please remember that even in the cyber-age, some things do not change
- a. In 50 years' time, Singapore will still be a little red dot
 - b. To thrive as a nation, we will still need the cohesion to stay united, the ability to outperform others, and the will to survive and excel, and occasionally win medals
 - c. That means:

- i. A hardworking and well-educated population
- ii. A capable and effective government
- iii. Outstanding people at all levels, totally committed to Singapore
- d. Then however the world changes, our children will still have a bright future

16. Before I leave this section on new media, I have one more demonstration

- a. Hello, Team Singapore
- b. [Eng Liang will give an update]
- c. Thank you. All of us here in Singapore are behind the team and cheering you on from home. We salute the men and women of Team Singapore, especially our paddlers Jiawei, Tianwei and Yuegu. All of you have done us proud and carried our flag high