

# THE STRAITS TIMES INTERACTIVE

---

March 27, 2007

## Impact of new media: Members of panel named

By Keith Lin

A HIGH-LEVEL committee has been set up to look into the long-term impact of new media on society.

Headed by former editor-in-chief of Singapore Press Holdings' English and Malay Newspapers Division Cheong Yip Seng, it will study issues ranging from the convergence of traditional and new media, to the Internet's impact on the young.

'The big push the Government is giving to the new media sector to promote economic performance will mean the Internet will penetrate even more widely and deeply into our lives,' he said in an e-mail reply to questions on the panel's plans.

'The new media brings enormous benefits: It is a rich source of information, provides a growing array of entertainment options and improves communications.'

Mr Cheong, who is now an editorial adviser to SPH, noted that it can also bring harm.

'Self-generated, unfiltered content can contain inflammatory material, spread radical, dangerous ideas, or lower the quality of public discourse.'

It is important to bear in mind that Singapore is a multiracial and multi-religious country, he said.

The 13-member panel will study these and other issues, consult the public and offer ideas on how certain issues can be managed, he said.

Plans to have an advisory panel were first announced in Parliament earlier this month.

Interactive and digital media is an area the Government has earmarked as a key growth sector.

Some \$500 million has been allocated over the next five years for a strategic research programme to be developed for the sector.

Assisting Mr Cheong as deputy chairman is National University of Singapore law faculty dean Tan Cheng Han.

Professor Tan said it will be useful to have a panel examine areas such as the new media's effects on society, particularly on how people interact in future, and the impact on the young.

Other committee members include MediaCorp chief executive officer Lucas Chow, SPH executive vice-president Robin Hu, Singapore Exchange assistant vice-president Koh Su Haw, SingTel (Singapore) chief executive officer Allen Lew, Sinda chief executive Manogaran Suppiah and Straits Times political editor Zuraidah Ibrahim.

The panel, which has its first meeting this week, will make recommendations to the Government on how

various issues should be managed.

It also plans to hold public forums and reach out to interest groups, such as bloggers, parents and media scholars, to gather views.