The mass media

The Mass Media 1. Functions i. Information Function ii. Surveillance Function iii. The Social Function - Entertainment - Socialisation iv. Commercial Function v. Political function 2. Key types i. Traditional Media - Print (newspapers, magazines, billboards, books) - Electronic Media (radio, television, film) ii. New Media - web-based and mobile technologies (the Internet, social media, etc) 3. Characteristics of New Media/ Social Media i. Reach - equally capable of reaching a global audience, more decentralized in dissemination ii. Accessibility - at little or no cost iii. Democratic — anyone can be involved in social media production iv. Immediacy v. Permanence — content is often there and can be edited after production 4. Mass Media Theories i. Hypothermic needle theory ii. Cultivation theory iii. Agenda setting theory 5. Media Trends i. Media Convergence - the merging of mass communication outlets ii. Rise of global media companies, e. g. Viacom, News Corporation, Time Warner iii. New tools for reporting and distribution of news and/or content — Facebook, Twitter, YouTube iv. Press Freedom and Democracy: Crackdown was the word of the year in 2011. Never has freedom of information been so closely associated with democracy. While Tunisia (up to 134 from 164) and Libya (160 to 154) fared well, Egypt dropped from 127 to 166 after a wave of detentions by the army in the wake of the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak. America falls from 20th to 47th after heavy-handed approach to Occupy demonstrators. (For press freedom index, refer to http://www. dailymail. co. uk/news/article-2092173/World-Press-Freedom-Index-2011-U-S-U-K-drop. html#ixzz2EGEFQUlf and the 2 attached documents on press freedom. 6. Implications of trends i. Cultural dilution vs Cultural Imperialism ii. Knowledge acquisition vs Information overload/

inaccuracy iii. Empowerment/ discernment vs Propaganda iv. Media hegemony vs Voice of the minority v. Desensitisation vs Empathy vi. News vs Opinion vii. Journalism vs Entertainment viii. Self expression vs Voyeurism and exhibitionism ix. Social Orthodoxy vs Political Correctness x. Plugged in/Wired 24/7 vs Slowing down xi. New Media: promise vs limits 7. Vocabulary i. Yellow journalism: a derogatory term describing the jargon used by journalists which is exaggerated and/or hackneyed. ii. Gutter press: newspapers or magazines which concentrate on gossip and scandal than serious, objective reporting. iii. Propaganda: information (often biased) disseminated systematically to propagate a particular idea, practice, political party, etc. iv. Cultural imperialism: the way in which countries are insidiously influenced by continual exposure to Western (particularly American) radio, television and film material which subverts and distorts their indigenous cultures. v. Global village: communication technologies have made different countries and cultures more closely linked so that pockets of humanity can no longer either remain ignorant of or isolated from one another. vi. Fourth estate: another term for the press. vii. Tabloid: a general term referring to widely circulated newspapers read by people from all levels. Such newspapers are not regarded as ' high brow' and often give more emphasis to entertainment than intellectual content. viii. Copyright: exclusive legal right to print, publish, perform, film or record literary, artistic, or musical material ix. Free press: a social and political situation in which newspapers and other media are permitted to present whatever they wish to the public. In practice, however, such a situation usually does not perfectly exist due to various constraints. x. Hypothermic Needle Theory: The theory implied that

the mass media had a direct, immediate and powerful effect on its audiences. xi. Cultivation Theory: The theory explains how people's conceptions of reality are influenced according to according to exposure to television. xii. Agenda Setting Theory: The theory states that the news media have a large influence on audiences, in terms of what stories to consider newsworthy and how much prominence and space to be given to them 8. Essay Questions Media and Society i. ' Our perception rules us.' How far do you agree with this statement? ii. The mass media should always cater to the tastes of the masses. Discuss. iii. ' The mass media has been the greatest influence in shaping the attitudes and behaviour of the young today.' Do you agree? iv. In the digital age, do newspapers still have a role in your society? (Nov 2011) v. Can the media ever be relied upon to convey the truth? (Nov 2003) Comparison between media types i. ' The printed word is superior to all other media.' Do you agree? ii. Television tends to give people what they want, not what they need. Do you agree? iii. Consider the value of reality television programmes and game shows. iv. To what extent do the newspapers and magazines that you read deal with what is trivial, rather than what is important? (Nov 2006) 9. Reading materials: The Straits Times www. straitstimes. com Media and politics in the spotlight Published on Jul 05, 2012 . . By Ang Yiying . Journalists spoke candidly to students of Temasek Junior College about working in the media, and how they dealt with constraints on July 4 at the fourth of six talks by Straits Times correspondents. As part of its junior college outreach leading up to The Straits Times-Ministry of Education National Current Affairs Quiz, the broadsheet's deputy political editor Lydia Lim spoke to them about the

elections and the democratic process, sharing her experiences of covering politics. Then senior writer Clarissa Oon walked the students through censorship and regulations on the arts and the media, with examples of censored films and plays. During the ensuing question-and-answer segment, they fielded questions on the topics of politics, media and the arts. They also compared Singapore's media model with the American one, as well as the more stringently censored China model. Replying to student Zheng Yafei, 18, who asked if The Straits Times had been restricted by the Government in any way, Ms Lim said: 'It is not the case that somebody from the Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts is sitting in The Straits Times newsroom reading stuff before it's published. But I would agree that the government has a fair amount of influence over what you would read in The Straits Times.' Ms Lim noted that laws, like the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act, allow the Government to have some say over the board of a newspaper company; it also licenses the newspaper. Muhammad Haziq Mohammed Shahrin, 17, then asked: 'Does it mean that the news you report seeks to appease the Government and you only report favourable news of the Government?' Ms Lim replied by reflecting on the balance between the Government wanting to see stories that make it look good - 'every government wants that from their media' - and The Straits Times' need to stay credible in order to be read and sell copies of newspapers. Ms Oon added that her personal philosophy is to 'keep it real', and represent what a wide range of people are thinking and what is happening on the ground. She said: 'When I write my columns, I'm not going to criticise the Government just for the sake of criticising the Government. 'But if there's something to be

said, if it's something wrong with a particular policy, there's a particular group that's affected in a bad way by policy, then it's my responsibility as a journalist to reflect that.' Students said they were satisfied with the responses they received, with Muhammad Haziq saying: 'I appreciate the fact that Straits Times takes care of news as whole, because they have to think about readership.' He found the session enlightening, clearing up some of his misconceptions. 'Previously, I had the opinion that The Straits Times was more controlled by the Government, that everything published has been passed by someone in the ministry, but this has been clarified.' Luo Wanyue, 18, said she now had different points of views on censorship and the media. 'It was good to hear the experiences from the journalists, their thoughts.' BACKGROUND STORY On changes in media controls In response to a question about how to loosen media controls on the media, Ms Lim said: 'Parliament is where laws are passed and where laws are changed. Many things in our society are the way they are partly because of the laws that are in place. 'In a democratic society... the route to change is through the democratic and political process. If you disagree with the government in power, what you are supposed to do as a citizen is either set up a political party or support an existing political party that has the ideology or stands for the change that you want to see in society. 'You support that political party and that party is supposed to fight elections so as to gain political power, so that they get into parliament, that is where they bring about change: by changing the laws.' Wednesday's talk was part of The Straits Times' efforts to engage pre-university institutions in discussion on their burning questions. At the same time, the broadsheet is running a series of primers on current

affairs topics every Friday. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education is providing teaching resources on these topics that General Paper (GP) teachers can use in classroom discussions. The talks, articles and lessons address current events issues - including sports, education, politics and science - and will culminate in the Straits Times-MOE National Current Affairs Quiz - or The Big Quiz - in July and August. Competing teams will face off in a general knowledge showdown. Teams from 23 pre-university institutions - including Millennia Institute, Anglo-Chinese School (Independent), School of the Arts, and NUS High School of Mathematics and Science - are expected to participate. Social media growing in US politics: study Published on Oct 20, 2012 . US President Barack Obama speaks as Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg (R) looks on during a town hall meeting at Facebook headquarters in Palo Alto, California in 2011. Nearly two out of five US adults use social media to get involved in politics, with the younger crowd and the ideologically committed especially active, a study showed Friday. -- AFP/File Nearly two out of five US adults use social media to get involved in politics, with the younger crowd and the ideologically committed especially active, a study showed Friday. The Pew Research Center study showed that 60 percent of adults use social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter and that two-thirds of these -- 39 percent of all US adults -- use social media for civic or political activity. Social media users who talk about politics on a regular basis or who have firm ideological ties are the most likely to be active on the sites, the study found. And those aged 18-29 are " notably more likely than older users to have posted their own comments, as are those who have at least some college experience," Pew said. " Now that

more than half of adults use social media, these technologies have worked their way into the rhythms of people's lives at many levels," said Lee Rainie, director of the Pew Internet & American Life Project. " At the height of the campaign season, it is clear that most social media users, especially those who care about politics, are using the tools to debate others, stay in touch with candidates, flag political news stories and analysis that are important to them, and press their friends into action. We'll see the fruits of this neo-activism on Election Day." Around 35 percent of social media users have used the tools to encourage people to vote, the study showed, with Democrats (42 percent) holding an edge over Republicans (36 percent) and independents (31 percent). Around a third post their own comments or thoughts, or repost content from someone else. About 21 percent of those using Twitter or other social media belong to a group on a networking site that is involved in political or social issues, or working to advance a cause. Obama and Romney's social media face-off Published on Oct 15, 2012 . Democrat Barack Obama and his Republican challenger Mitt Romney may be neck and neck in the polls as the November 6 election draws close, but on social networks, the US president is the clear winner. - Facebook: More than 30. 8 million people " like" Barack Obama's page, while more than 9. 3 million are fans of Mitt Romney. " If you're on Team Obama, let him know," says one post on the president's page shared more than 159, 000 times. First Lady Michelle Obama, meanwhile, has 8. 5 million Facebook fans -- ahead of Romney's wife Ann (381, 000). But in the VP race, Joe Biden trails far behind his Republican rival Paul Ryan. - Twitter: @BarackObama has more than 20. 8 million followers. Present on the social network since March

2007, his team often posts comments on his behalf. His own tweets are followed by the initials 'bo.' Obama's account is the 6th most followed in the world, according to Twopcharts, which tracks the most influential active Twitter users. But the president still trails far behind the world's most followed 'Tweep' -- Lady Gaga -- and her 30 million followers. @MittRomney arrived on Twitter two years after his rival and lags behind, with more than 1. 4 million followers. His is the 925th most followed account in the world. @JoeBiden, meanwhile, once again trails behind @PaulRyanVP. - Google+: Barack Obama has more than 2. 2 million fans on Google's social network, almost twice as many as Romney's nearly 978, 000 followers. - YouTube: Barack Obama has just under 240, 000 followers of his YouTube channel, which integrates campaign ads and filmed messages of support for the Obama team. Beyonce, for instance, appears in a video praising the First Lady. Mitt Romney, meanwhile, has a little less than 23, 700 fans. His page also includes campaign ads and other videos, including one depicting his " love story" with wife Ann. - Pinterest: The latest social media phenomenon -- which allows users to post and share photos put together by theme -- is the more " intimate" of all the networks. On his page (more than 34, 600 followers), Obama's team has posted light-hearted snaps, such as photos of the president stroking his dog Bo under the heading " Pet Lovers for Obama." Romney is on Pinterest with a mere 1, 700 followers, but his wife Ann has drawn a following of more than 12, 400. She has posted photos of herself cooking M&M cookies with her grandchildren or of a meatloaf cake -- " one of Mitt's favorites." Michelle Obama is also on Pinterest, with just under 43, 000 followers. Her page includes gardening snaps taken around the White House.

- Instagram: On this photo-sharing social network, some 1. 5 million people follow Barack Obama's campaign shots. Far behind, Mitt Romney is " followed" by 30 times less people. Newspapers to disappear by 2040: WIPO chief Published on Oct 3, 2011 GENEVA (AFP) - Newspapers will disappear and be replaced by digital versions by 2040, the United Nations intellectual property agency's chief said in an interview published on Monday. Francis Gurry, who heads the World Intellectual Property Organisation told the daily La Tribune de Geneve that 'in a few years, there will no longer be printed newspapers as we know it today.' 'It's an evolution. There's no good or bad about it. There are studies showing that they will disappear by 2040. In the United States, it will end in 2017,' he said. Mr Gurry noted that in the United States there are already more digital copies sold than paper copies of newspapers. In cities, there are also fewer bookshops. A key problem is the revenue system. 'How can editors find revenues to pay those who write these articles?' asked Mr Gurry, noting that 'the copyright system must be safeguarded as a mechanism to pay these writers.' Copyright © 2011 Singapore Press Holdings. All rights reserved. Cyber wellness projects to focus on social media, roping in parents Published on Nov 01, 2012 . By Derrick Ho THE Government is hoping to help young people understand the risks and consequences of posting false truths or risque photos on social media platforms as well as to rope in parents for cyber wellness programmes in schools. A call for proposal for projects, which placed an emphasis on gracious and considerate use of social media and mobile technologies among young people, was issued today. Successful projects will receive financial aid from the government. Interested parties have until Dec 18 to

submit their proposals. The call comes in the wake of several high-profile cyber-related incidents this year - one involved racist remarks, while another involved children posting risque photos and revealing their contact details on a social media platform. "(Our young) need to understand that once information is posted online, it is often beyond their ability to control how it spreads," the Inter-Ministry Cyber Wellness Steering Committee (ICSC) in a statement. This is the fourth time, the multi-agency taskforce, including the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Home Affairs and Media Development Authority of Singapore, is calling for proposals for cyber wellness projects. This year, the ICSC is also placing an emphasis on projects that include parent involvement. It hopes these programmes will help parents understand how they can positively influence their children's online behavior and understand the Internet needs of children as young as pre-schoolers. Existing and new projects which are impactful may be considered for sustained funding, the ICSC said. Social media helps out as Hurricane Sandy approaches Published on Oct 29, 2012 WASHINGTON (AFP) - Locating the nearest emergency shelter or chatting live with forecasters - social networks were abuzz with the latest news, tips and reassurance on Sunday as Americans hunkered down for Hurricane Sandy. The massive storm, which has already killed at least 66 people in the Caribbean, is expected to pummel large swathes of the US East Coast, leading authorities to order evacuations and halt public transport in some areas. On Twitter, #Sandy was one of the top trending topics in cities and areas on the predicted pathway of the storm as nervous residents looked for the latest news and posted links to useful websites on how to stay safe. Google set up an interactive map that tracks

the path of the storm, provides real-time precipitation figures in areas already hit by the outer edges of Sandy and locates the user's nearest active emergency shelter. The map also enables people to locate webcams already set up in affected areas to watch as the storm unfolds, as well as videos posted on YouTube showing the situation in various locations, including images of choppy seas or flooding. AccuWeather. com, the weather forecast website, set up a Google+ Hangout - a group video chat - inviting netizens to join and get their questions about the hurricane answered in real time by their meteorologists. The New York Times and the Wall Street Journal, meanwhile, took down their paywalls to enable people to get storm updates for free. " Run riot! Read everything!", one Twitter user joked, although the Wall Street Journal still had its paywall up for other stories not related to the storm. One netizen on Twitter posted a link to the website of animal welfare group ASPCA, which told concerned pet owners how to prepare their animals for the upcoming storm. Smartphone users were also able to download applications to help them keep informed about the storm. The American Red Cross, for instance, provided an app giving the latest storm information, a check-list of things to have stored in the house, and even a quiz on hurricanes to while away the hours. On Facebook, meanwhile, a community page set up for the hurricane, which includes graphics illustrating Sandy's wind speed or " threat index", had already garnered thousands of 'likes.' But for all the concern on social networks, many netizens also lightened the atmosphere with some humour and funny pictures. On Tumblr, the blogging platform, one person posted a picture of a bottle of red wine with the legend " Might as well post up for Sandy #sandy #hurricane #letsdrink." Students

discuss racial harmony, social media's role at conference Published on Jul 28, 2012 By Maria Almenoar More than 800 students were part of the Harmonyworks conference on Saturday to discuss racial harmony and the role of social media. The students, who were from secondary schools, junior colleges, international schools and madrasahs were given the opportunity to pose questions to a four-member panel. The panel comprised Minister of Information, Communications and the Arts (Mica) Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, Member of Parliament (Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC) Zainudin Nordin, Nominated MP Eugene Tan and Mr Kelly Choo co-founder of online branding company Brandtology. Recently, there have been a number of cases involving online posts with rascist comments including the case of the overseas scholar who called Singaporean students " dogs". Among the questions raised by the students were: what to do when faced with rascist comments online and whether a Code of Conduct on the Internet was feasible. In response, Mr Choo, said that it was better not to add " fuel to fire" when one disagrees with a racially insensitive online post. " Do not re-tweet or re-post this comment even if you think it is funny because you don't know how it will affect other groups of people. " If you know the person who posted it personally, send them a personal message about it," he said. On the topic of a Code of conduct, Dr Yaacob said that it was not uncommon for some forums to have a code of conduct that users follow. He added that the code was not about enforcement but about a set of rules that users should abide by. PRESS FREEDOM IN 2010: SIGNS OF CHANGE AMID REPRESSION by Karin Deutsch Karlekar The proportion of the world's population that has access to a Free press declined to its lowest point in over a decade during 2010, as

repressive governments intensified their efforts to control traditional media and developed new techniques to limit the independence of rapidly expanding internet-based media. Among the countries to experience significant declines in press freedom were Egypt, Honduras, Hungary, Mexico, South Korea, Thailand, and Ukraine. And in the Middle East, a number of governments with long-standing records of hostility to the free flow of information took further steps to constrict press freedom by arresting journalists and bloggers and censoring reports on sensitive political issues. These developments constitute the principal findings of Freedom of the Press 2011: A Global Survey of Media Independence, the latest edition of an annual index published by Freedom House since 1980. The report found that only 15 percent of the global population–one in six people–live in countries where coverage of political news is robust, the safety of journalists is guaranteed, state intrusion in media affairs is minimal, and the press is not subject to onerous legal or economic pressures. At the same time, the global media environment, which has experienced a pattern of deterioration for the past eight years, showed some signs of stabilizing. For example, the declines in the Middle East and in crucial countries like Mexico and Thailand were partially offset by gains in sub-Saharan Africa and portions of the former Soviet Union. Prospects for a reversal of the negative trend were enhanced by the protest movements that emerged across the Middle East in the early months of 2011. While this report assesses developments in 2010–and thus does not take into account the potentially dramatic changes in Tunisia, Egypt, and other Arab countries–its findings are a vivid reminder of the central role that the denial of press freedom and freedom of expression has

played in the suppression of broader democratic rights in the Middle East and elsewhere. A principal complaint of the Middle East protesters has been the role of regime controlled media in circulating government propaganda and stifling opposition voices. While the fate of political reform in the region remains unclear, the demands for change could well have ripple effects in other parts of the world, including sub-Saharan Africa, the former Soviet Union, and even China. During 2010, however, many of these positive pressures remained below the surface. Indeed, authoritarian efforts to place restrictions on the press, new media, and other instruments of expression gained momentum in a number of strategically important countries, such as China, Iran, Russia, and Venezuela. These states were also notable for their attempts to restrict media freedom and influence the news agenda beyond their borders. Meanwhile, media in new and aspiring democracies proved vulnerable to a combination of hostile forces, including political leaders determined to mute critics, powerful business interests, drug traffickers, and armed insurgents or terrorists. Among the countries that experienced press freedom declines because of these forces were Bolivia, Ecuador, Honduras, Fiji, Iraq, Turkey, Ukraine, and Yemen. Backsliding was also seen in relatively open press environments, with South Korea falling into the Partly Free range and Hungary experiencing significant setbacks. The year's most impressive gains were brought about through major legal and regulatory reforms and a greater official willingness to allow media freedom and diversity in Guinea, Moldova, and Niger. Smaller improvements were noted in Colombia, PRESS FREEDOM IN 2010: SIGNS OF CHANGE AMID REPRESSION by Karin Deutsch Karlekar In 2010, only 1 in 6 people lived in countries with a Free press.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS 2011 Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan, as well as a number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including Kenya, Senegal, and Zimbabwe. Key Trends in 2010 - Misuse of licensing and regulatory frameworks has emerged as a key method of control in a number of semidemocratic and authoritarian settings. Authoritarian regimes have increasingly used bogus legalistic maneuvers to narrow the space for independent broadcasting, effectively countering an earlier trend of growth in the number of private radio and television outlets. In Russia, Venezuela, and a range of other countries, denial or suspension of broadcast licenses or closure of outlets on spurious grounds are preferred methods for suppressing unwelcome views. - Control over new means of news dissemination, particularly internet-based social media, has become a priority for authoritarian governments. As media delivery systems have expanded from traditional print formats and terrestrial broadcasting to satellite television, the internet, and mobile telephones, authoritarian governments have intensified efforts to exert control over the new means of communication as well as the news outlets that employ them. Blocking of satellite television transmissions was noted in Egypt and Iran, while the social networking website Facebook was blocked briefly in Pakistan and remained unavailable in China, Syria, and Vietnam. Some democratic and semidemocratic states also moved to implement additional controls over the internet, including South Korea and Thailand, which increased censorship of online content. - The role of nonstate forces in the suppression of press freedom is growing. In Mexico, violence associated with drug trafficking has led to a dramatic increase in attacks on journalists and rising levels of self-censorship and impunity. In 2010, the country's organized crime groups

moved more aggressively to control the news agenda; no longer satisfied with silencing the media, they have demanded specific coverage that suits their interests. Somewhat less intense pressure by drug trafficking groups drove continued declines in Guinea- Bissau, another burgeoning narcostate. - Worsening violence against the press and impunity for such crimes are forcing journalists into self-censorship or exile. The level of violence and physical harassment directed at the press by both official and nonstate actors remains a key concern in a number of countries. In media environments ranging from conflict zones to struggling democracies with a weak rule of law, the press is facing increased intimidation or outright attacks. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, some of the deadliest countries for journalists in 2010 were Honduras, Indonesia, Iraq, Mexico, and Pakistan. These attacks have a chilling effect on the profession, encouraging self-censorship or exile, and the failure to punish or even seriously investigate crimes against journalists has reached scandalous proportions. - Threats to media freedom remain a concern in established democracies. Various pressures impinge on press freedom in democratic countries as diverse as India, Israel, Italy, and South Africa. Increased censorship and attempts to exert official influence over the management of broadcast outlets led to a decline in South Korea's status, from Free to Partly Free. In Hungary, the conservative government of Prime Minister Viktor OrbÃ¡n pushed restrictive legislation through the parliament and seized control over media regulators and public broadcasters. What the Index Measures The Freedom of the Press index assesses the degree of print, broadcast, and internet freedom in every country in the world, analyzing the

events and developments of each calendar year. Ratings are determined through an examination of three broad categories: the legal environment in which media operate; political influences on reporting and access to information; and economic pressures on content and the dissemination of news. Under the legal category, the index assesses the laws and regulations that could influence media content as well as the extent to which the government uses these tools to restrict the media's ability to function. The political category encompasses a variety of issues, including editorial pressure by the government or other actors, censorship and self-censorship, the ability of reporters to cover the news, and the extralegal intimidation of and violence against journalists. Finally, under the economic category, the index examines issues such as the structure, transparency, and concentration of media ownership; costs of production and distribution; and the impact of advertising, subsidies, and bribery on content. Ratings reflect not just government actions and policies, but the behavior of the press itself in testing boundaries, even in more restrictive environments, as well as the impact of nonstate actors. Each country receives a numerical rating from 0 (the most free) to 100 (the least free), which serves as the basis for a press freedomstatus designation of Free, Partly Free, or Not Free. For the full report, please visit the following: http://www. freedomhouse. org/uploads/fop11/FOTP2011Booklet. pdf Focus: Real world impact of social media Gulf News put the question to its readers in a live debate: What has the real world impact of social media been? What has been the impact of social media in the real world? Mohammad Omar For sure social media has changed our world. The revolution in Egypt started basically through one

page on Facebook " We are all Khalid Said", a man who was killed in Egypt. The page was really popular before the revolution started and helped bring the whole revolution to the street. I have never tried to initiate an event or group before the January 25 revolution, but now I am actually the administrator for one of the groups that has more than 3, 500 members, and we created another group only for some charity purposes for the less fortunate people in Egypt. We have organised a couple of successful events, where we managed to gather so many Egyptians. If it were not for Facebook, none of this would have been possible. If you build your contacts based on your instant messenger or phonebook contacts, it wouldn't be enough. Rowena Penilla The impact is enormous because social media captures a lot of things and a lot of classes of society and gives information to anyone who is in search of it. It is not like earlier where if you didn't have access to the newspaper or the radio you wouldn't hear of what is going on in the rest of the world. Now it is totally different. Now, you can log on to various websites and the news keeps flashing, and often you can't ignore it. This gives the information to everyone, even a 10-year-old boy would know what is happening because of social media. Everyone is hooked and it educates people at the same time. As people, what we see, we copy; what we hear we repeat. It is like mimicking and mirroring, because if you don't follow these websites, you will fall behind in the world. So, no matter if you are a Facebook, Twitter or online messaging user, it does have a huge impact on everyone's personalities. Hamna Khan It is something that affects everyone, and I think it is good because it has changed everyone's perspectives. You have to share – the more open you are the more people will come to you. If

you look at music bands, for example, 20 years ago, they weren't as open as they are now. I am a fan of music and I get to know a lot about various artists and bands, how their lives are, you can talk to them. If you ask me about Facebook, it is safer for me than my own mobile phone when it comes to pictures. Even if I lose my phone, I can have all my photographs safe on Facebook, which I can customise or lock. You know you used to be told by elders – don't be friends with strangers, don't talk to people you don't know. I think that perception has changed now. People have started realising that they are not living in a small box. Social media is at least a window through which you can see the rest of the world, if you are not able to walk out of your box. I have been in touch with a lot of friends. The most important thing among human beings is to share – if you do not share, you will not move ahead. That is at least what I believe. If you share, your vistas open up. You will get encouragement and feedback, and you get positive, too. Mohammad Omar During the past year and a half, Facebook actually changed from being a means of contact with people to a source of information. Now, I don't go to a newspaper or TV channel's website for information. I have subscribed to their accounts on Facebook and Twitter. So, I don't have to go anywhere else. I have one tab on my computer with Facebook open on it and another tab with Twitter on it. And all the information I need is available there. Twitter, I believe, has a greater impact because it is almost instant and it gives you a lot of points of views – on who is for or against what is happening. It is like being there. Social media is helping people become more tolerant of opposing points of view. Mohammad Omar I can't form my own opinion properly if I don't listen to other people's opinions. Even if I

don't agree with them, I should know what other people say or believe in. For example, I have a few friends who belong to the Muslim Brotherhood, and we go through long debates on various issues – they believe in whatever they believe in, and I continue believing what I believe in. All these debates are online and it helps me widen my perspective. On another note, social media has affected me at a very personal level as I lost contact with my wife for more than 10 years ago, and I couldn't get in touch with her in any way. Four years ago, I found one of her friends on Facebook and through her I was able to contact my wife and then we got married. Rowena Penilla It encourages people to be more creative and also allows them to be more friendly if it is used wisely. It is entirely up to the person how they take advantage of it. If there were a particular information available that I find interesting, I would definitely read it. But I would just read it, I may not accept the point of view. It is important for me to know what people believe, how they give feedback, because feedback helps you in so many ways, as it helps you modify your behaviour and deal with a problem or issue. You read, perceive it in the way you want to, but may not want to favour the point of view. It is still your preference. Hamna Khan Some people are very negative – those who might be furious about something. That I think is the problem. You shouldn't be angry and start attacking users. The first thing to do before you go on to social media platforms is to believe that you can accept other people's opinions. I may be correct, but I have to listen to other people as well, you just can't attack somebody because they think differently. However, I think people are more negative and critical than tolerant; it may be because people are not able to absorb all the information. They are not mature. There

is too much personal information available on social media websites, which is a disadvantage for users. Mohammad Omar I had been using my personal email for my account, and it actually caused me some trouble one of these days. I was a bit frustrated with my boss, and wrote something about it on my status. That message actually reached the person concerned and we had a bit of a confrontation. On the same day I actually went back on to Facebook and started reviewing my friends and privacy settings and eliminated all the people who I thought weren't that reliable, and later I changed the email account altogether. I actually use a different email account for my personal activities now. Privacy settings are extremely important on such platforms, for example on Facebook – whoever you are not too close to, put them on a ' limited profile'. Rowena Penilla By profession, I am in human resources and I do know how we sometimes use social media to research potential candidates. Also, if there are employers who reject a candidate based on something they might have seen on social media platforms, I don't think it is fair. If I see someone's profile with pictures of him or her partying, it shouldn't stop me from hiring a person. Please remember that this is a social media platform and people have the right to have fun and post a particular picture. As an employer, I have to have an open mind. Social media leads to chaos more than understanding. Rowena Penilla I would say that we cannot avoid the confusion that social media brings with it, because a lot of times too much information confuses everybody. But again, you have to choose what you really want to perceive and understand. If you really want to understand something, you will have to dig deeper. Mohammad Omar I couldn't agree more. I always believe that

truth is in the eyes of the beholder. If you get a piece of information, you should find out more about it. But very few people are keen to know the truth. Often people just see and believe. I have someone I used to know, one of the people who I have now deleted from my accounts. He always wanted to comment on my statuses in a very demeaning way, and liked to preach more than comment. I kept tolerating it for some time. But one day, he commented on my status with – I think – 20 lines in response. I carefully read his comment and literally wrote down every counter-argument, point by point. After that, I just burnt the page! I didn't want to reply to all the nonsense! Rowena Penilla I don't really indulge when someone puts up something like that. I think the mature way of treating such a situation is to send a personal message and tell the person that you find it inappropriate and it has to be stopped. You have different kind of audiences – some are mature, some aren't. If you know that a person will respond in an immature way, just respond to them personally. Whenever I post something, I choose my audiences. And I honestly just spread happy posts, because that is what I feel is what I want to spread. So I often don't get nasty comments. Hamna Khan I agree. There were a few friends of mine who kept posting sad comments on Facebook. I actually told them that this was just a selfish act. You are sad, so you want to spread sadness. May be they are in a more miserable condition than you are. So, stop being selfish. You can try to be happy and make someone else smile. Conclusion - Readers did not agree on whether social media has made people more tolerant. - Readers felt that social media can sometimes lead to chaos, but it helps people discover different points of view. - Readers felt that there was too much personal

information available on websites, and users need to be cautious of their privacy settings. http://gulfnews. com/opinions/speakyourmind/focus-real-world-impact-of-social-media-1. 947470 *Articles compiled extracted from the Straits Times Online http://www. straitstimes. com unless otherwise stated