

New committee to lead systemic AI integration in schools

By SIDDHARTH PILLAI

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SIDDHARTH PILLAI

A new committee that will guide the next stage of artificial intelligence (AI) use and adoption across Singapore's higher-education sector was unveiled by Education Minister Desmond Lee on April 1.

This overarching committee will steer the strategic integration of AI across all institutes of higher learning (IHL).

Chaired by Mr Lee, the committee will include Senior Minister of State for Education Janil Puthuchery, as well as the presidents, principals and chief executives of Singapore's universities, polytechnics, and the Institute of Technical Education (ITE).

The announcement was made at The Straits Times Education Forum 2026, which was co-hosted with the Singapore Management University (SMU) at the Yong Pung How School of Law.

Addressing the audience of 500 members of the public, Minister Lee highlighted that students must never use AI as a lazy solution.

"If we treat AI as a shortcut to simply bypass thinking, we will diminish the very purpose of education," he noted. "But if we treat AI as a catalyst tool, a powerful tool to sharpen what truly matters in education, it can strengthen our



Education Minister Desmond Lee (with hand raised) with panellists during the The Straits Times Education Forum 2026. PHOTO: SINGAPORE MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY

IHLs and our people."

While individual campuses have pioneered bespoke AI initiatives, isolated efforts are no longer sufficient. The rapid metamorphosis of AI now necessitates a systemic approach, Mr Lee added.

The new committee will synchronise best practices and fortify inter-institutional collaboration. This strategy aligns

with the overarching vision of the Prime Minister-led National Artificial Intelligence Council.

The Ministry of Education will fund collaborative AI research via its Tertiary Education Research Fund, transforming classrooms into dynamic hubs for active, collaborative problem-solving.

Noting that classroom pedagogy is al-

ready shifting, Minister Lee highlighted that students must wield deep, domain-specific expertise to harness AI tools effectively. Consequently, exposure will begin gradually. Foundational AI concepts will be introduced at the Primary 4 level under strict supervision.

The event also included a panel discussion on the topic: "AI in Higher Education: Hype or Hope?", moderated by Professor Lim Sun Sun.

The panel which comprised Minister Lee, Raghav Gupta, head of education for Asia-Pacific at OpenAI, and SMU provost Alan Chan, dissected AI's profound academic impact and the need to shift from broad knowledge acquisition to deeper, more applied expertise.

Regarding sovereign AI models – systems built, trained, and hosted within a single nation – Mr Gupta noted that they should be approached holistically. He emphasised focusing on the application layers, noting that significant work remains before society at large can truly benefit.

Championing lifelong agility, Minister Lee announced that higher learning institutes will offer alumni substantial AI module rebates from late 2026, ensuring Singapore's workforce remains exceptionally competitive globally.

➔ siddharth@sph.com.sg