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Ministry of Education
SINGAPORE

Address by Ms Gan Siow Huang, Minister of State, Ministry of Education at the Skillsfuture Festival X Singapore Management University (SMU)

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Distinguished guests.

Ladies and gentlemen.

1.   Good afternoon. I'm glad to be here at this annual event to showcase the efforts of our IHLs, who are crucial partners in the SkillsFuture movement.

Impact of AI

2.   This year's event is themed, 'AI Unleashed: Transforming Skillsets for the Future.' The subject itself may not be new, and we've been hearing a lot about it in recent years. But, I hope that every time we have interaction of this kind, more people will be inspired, and more individuals and companies will get started on this journey.

3.   Today, AI is already impacting many sectors such as healthcare, manufacturing, and education. Recent studies show that AI-driven automation will disrupt the workforce at a very fast pace; a pace that we may not have seen before.

   a.   A recent report by the International Monetary Fund estimated that 40% of the jobs in the world are exposed to AI. And in advanced economies, such as Singapore, this can go up to 60%.

   b.   Some of the jobs exposed to AI will be negatively affected, while the remaining could see higher productivity with the adoption of AI.

Staying Ahead of Developments in AI

4.   Given the broad impact that AI will have, it is important for us to stay ahead of developments. In 2019, we developed our first National AI Strategy to set out how we will deepen the use of AI to transform our economy in Singapore.

5.   Last year, we launched version 2.0 of our National AI Strategy. And as part of this strategy, we must build a strong pipeline of AI talent, including AI creators – those who generate cutting-edge AI research; AI practitioners – such as data or machine-learning scientists and engineers; as well as AI users, who need to be proficient and confident in the use of AI in our work.

6.   AI users must be equipped to use AI-powered products and services to improve processes, raise productivity, and create greater value in the products and services that they offer.

Enabling our workforce to be AI-ready through SkillsFuture

7.   The SkillsFuture movement is key to developing an AI-ready workforce.

8.   Our IHLs are responding to this national strategy, developing programmes that will meet the needs of different groups of learners.

9.   For many of us who are aspiring AI users, the key is to acquire foundational AI knowledge, understand what various AI tools are available in our sectors and apply them to work.

   a.   To support such learning needs, our IHLs offer shorter foundational courses that can be completed in a few days.

   b.   These programmes are subsidised by SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) and learners can further offset the out-of-pocket cost using the base tier of their SkillsFuture Credit.

10.   Take for example, the Professional Certification on Industry Applications of Generative AI jointly offered by SUSS and SUTD.

   a.   This is a short four-day programme that equips professionals to use Generative AI for job innovation, productivity and optimisation across industries.

   b.   The programme combines SUSS' specialisation in social sciences and adult learning with SUTD's focus on design.

   c.   It is encouraging to see such collaboration between our institutions. Because AI is developing so quickly, it is important that our IHLs work as one ecosystem and leverage each other's distinctive strengths to meet evolving industry needs.

11.   In addition to growing strong foundational AI capabilities, we must also **build a talent pipeline of AI practitioners who can develop and translate AI solutions**.

12.   **Professionals who are interested to reskill as AI practitioners and pivot to AI-related job roles** can consider the suite of SkillsFuture Career Transition Programmes (SCTPs) offered by our IHLs.

   a.   These are train-and-place programmes that facilitate career transition into sectors with good hiring opportunities.

   b.   Apart from providing the knowledge and skills necessary to enter the sector, the training institutions will also offer employment facilitation between learners and companies. And this is something that is very important. Besides equipping the learners with knowledge and skills, it is also important to help bridge the job opportunities to the industry.

   c.   For example, SMU has introduced two new SCTPs, with advanced specialisation in Gen AI, for business analysts and digital marketing specialists.

13.   **Professionals who are looking for more substantive upskilling and reskilling** can consider pursuing part-time full qualification programmes that are offered by the IHLs.

   a.   And to make it easier for professionals to upgrade to a higher qualification, the IHLs deliver their part-time full qualifications mostly through bite-sized micro-credentials.

   b.   Each micro-credential is a discrete packet of learning with assessment that certifies the learner has met the required skills and competencies.

   c.   On completion, the learner can stack micro-credentials to a full qualification at his own learning pace.

14.   Take for example, the new Specialist Diploma in Applied Gen AI offered by Republic Polytechnic.

   a.   It is delivered through two Post-Diploma Certificates, each covering three Gen AI modules. And each of the Post-Diploma Certificate is delivered over a six-month semester.

   b.   If learners take the micro-credentials in two consecutive semesters, they can complete the specialist diploma in one year. And if they require more flexibility, they can take 1.5 years or longer to do so.

15.   Earlier this year, we announced the SkillsFuture Level-Up Programme for Singaporeans aged 40 and above who wish to pursue a substantial skills reboot.

   a.   Since May 2024, eligible Singaporeans would have received a $4,000 SkillsFuture Credit top-up.

   b.   The SkillsFuture Career Transition Programme, IHL full qualifications and micro-credentials that I mentioned will qualify for this $4,000 top-up.

c. SSG's subsidies and the $4,000 SkillsFuture Credit top-up will fully offset the out-of-pocket course fees for many of these programmes that serve to boost one's employability.

d. I urge all learners to take a look at the new programmes that the IHLs are exhibiting. The full list of programmes eligible for the $4,000 SkillsFuture Credit can be found on MySkillsFuture portal.

Supporting Businesses in Adopting AI Solutions

16.   Apart from contributing to the national AI training strategies, I am also heartened to see that our institutions are supporting companies to adopt AI solutions.

a. Last month, Nanyang Polytechnic partnered the Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (ASMEs) to support SMEs in leveraging AI and digitalisation within their business processes.

    i. Under this partnership, NYP has curated a list of programmes that are targeted at equipping SMEs with the knowledge and skills for digital transformation.

    ii. NYP has also launched a new Applied AI programme where eligible SMEs can work directly with NYP to develop customised AI solutions, tapping on subsidies from Enterprise Singapore.

b. Similarly, SP has introduced an AI Lead programme which exposes participants from companies, especially SMEs, to applied AI and analytics. Companies, such as Phyto Core Pte Ltd, have undertaken Enterprise Transformation Projects with SP after the course to integrate AI technologies into their services.

17.   The collaborations between our IHLs and companies have led to many positive outcomes.

a. SMU collaborated with uParcel, a logistics company to develop a sophisticated AI tool that improved its efficiency by 20% and cut delivery time by 500 hours.

b. RP also helped Tetsuyu Healthcare Holdings, a Singapore-based start-up specialising in developing community care management solutions, to incorporate AI for enhanced diagnostics and early detection of foot complications in diabetic patients.

Conclusion

18.   Let me take this opportunity to thank our IHLs, faculty and staff for stepping up in so many different ways consistently, and for all the collaboration.

19.   To individuals who are looking to acquire and deepen their AI skills and proficiencies, do consider the array of quality AI-related programmes that our institutions are offering under the SkillsFuture framework.

20.   To companies, I ask that you consider the potential that AI can offer to improve your business competitiveness. In adopting AI solutions, you provide the confidence and motivation for your workers to upskill and reskill.

21.   With industry, individuals, and our institutions – the three 'I's coming together, we will be able to realise the vision that we have set out for ourselves in our national AI strategy – and to thrive in an AI-powered world.

22.   All the best to everyone here. Thank you.

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