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**SPEECH BY DR JANIL PUTHUCHEARY, SENIOR MINISTER OF
STATE, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & MINISTRY OF
SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT AT THE LAUNCH OF
SMU RESILIENT WORKFORCES INSTITUTE
ON TUESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2026, 9.50 A.M. – 11 A.M.**

Professor Lily Kong, President, Singapore Management University

Professor Alan Chan, Provost, Singapore Management University

Mr Tan Kok Yam, Chief Executive Officer, SkillsFuture Singapore

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

1. Good morning. I am very happy to join you today at the launch of the Singapore Management University's Resilient Workforces Institute, or SMU ResWORK for short.
2. Let me begin by congratulating SMU on this milestone.
3. Last year, I was here for the Resilient Workforces Symposium, where the focus was on the future of learning and work in the age of Artificial Intelligence (AI).
4. I am heartened to see that SMU has built on these important conversations, and established this institute to advance the body of knowledge and translate research into real-world applications that will benefit society.

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Building A Resilient Workforce In A Changing World of Work

5. Across many sectors, jobs and the nature of work have already changed due to technology. This will only continue.
 - a. Automation and technological innovations like remote collaboration tools have enabled the fractionalisation of work tasks and more flexible work structures, allowing organisations to structure themselves differently.
 - b. Artificial intelligence, and now generative AI, have great potential to further transform the nature of work and how it is structured. At the same time, it is prompting a more fundamental rethink of how organisations and humans create value and what the role of domain experts is.
6. Even though technology and AI have brought immense benefits, these changes are taking place rapidly and we must learn to harness them well. As a small nation with no natural resources, our success depends on our people's ability to continuously adapt and keep pace with change. This is why we launched the SkillsFuture movement more than ten years ago, with the mission of supporting Singaporeans in their lifelong learning journey.

A Whole-of-Society Partnership

7. All of us have a part to play in building an ecosystem and culture of lifelong learning, so that we can equip every Singaporean to maximise their potential and thrive amidst these changes.

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- a. **For individuals**, this means continuing to build greater adaptability and career resilience as jobs evolve. In our journey of continual learning, each of us must go beyond developing deep domain knowledge, to being able to harness digital tools, AI and machines effectively in our domains of work. Beyond simply learning *how* to use such tools, we will also need to think more deeply about applying such technology and integrating it in our work environments to complement our knowledge and skills.
- b. **Employers** will need to redesign jobs and processes to deploy both talent and technology effectively. This could involve the integration of technological systems into workflows and business processes, to enable workers to be more productive in their work.
 - i. Harnessing the true benefits of such AI thus requires changes not just in systems, but in mindsets as well.
 - ii. For such transformation efforts to be effective, institutional adaptability is key. Employers will need to continue investing in their workers in order to fully reap the benefits of new technology and processes.
- c. **Finally, education institutions** like SMU play a crucial role in this process, not just in providing training but also as centres of knowledge creation and evidence-based practice.
 - i. For instance, the impact of AI spans various dimensions including technology, economics, organisational behaviour, and society. We need to take a more inter-disciplinary approach to examining the issues and challenges arising

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from such technological advancements, in order to come up with impactful research.

- ii. I am therefore glad to note that the SMU's Resilient Workforces Institute will bring together economics, management, behavioural science and technology in its research, and involve research academics, industry partners and public agencies. This will allow us to foster technological, organisational, social and andragogical innovations that shape the future of work and learning, and contribute to the national effort to build a resilient workforce.
- iii. Already, ResWORK has initiated nine seed-funded research projects, on various aspects of the future of work and learning. For example, one of these projects investigates how generative AI can personalise adult learning to sustain motivation among mid-career learners balancing work, study and life demands. This is an example of how such research can be organised around real-world challenges and contribute to the collective know-how necessary to navigate workforce transformation.

8. MOE and SkillsFuture Singapore will continue to work closely with and support our universities. I am happy to hear that one of the early partnerships that will be established through the institute is between SMU and SSG. SMU and SSG will be signing a two-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to drive strategic research on how artificial intelligence and digital technologies are reshaping jobs, skills, and learning pathways, and to translate these insights into policies that sustain employability and inclusive growth.

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- a. Such research is an important precursor to help identify what works, and what does not, when it comes to the adoption of new technologies, such as robotics and AI.

Conclusion

- 9. Building resilient workforces is a long-term endeavour and it requires each of us to play our part – individuals, industry and organisations, and education and training providers, with the government continuing to be an active enabler of these efforts.
- 10. I wish the Institute every success in its work ahead, and I look forward to the contributions it will make.
- 11. Thank you.

Speech Length: ~8 mins (896 words @120 words/min)