

**Opening Remarks
by Professor Lily Kong, SMU President
At SMU Visionary Series
Held on 20 November 2025**

Mr Narayana Murthy, Founder of Infosys

Mrs Pooja Tillu, Deputy High Commissioner, High Commission of India to Singapore

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

1. Good evening, and thank you for joining us at the SMU Visionary Series. This evening's gathering holds special meaning for us, as it marks one of the highlights in SMU's 25th anniversary year.

2. Throughout the year, we have celebrated milestones, as well as taken the time to reaffirm who we are as a university and what we aspire to be. To guide our next phase of development, we launched our **refreshed Vision and Mission** at the start of this year, reaffirming our commitment to shaping purposeful, resilient and responsible leaders and generating knowledge that makes meaningful academic and societal impact. We followed up with the launch of our **next five-year strategic plan, SMU2030**, which is anchored on a clear and purposeful impact agenda – seeking to make meaningful impact in Human Capital Development, Knowledge Creation, Economic Development and Social & Community Life, in ways that are vital to national and regional advancement.

3. This evening's event is part of our tapestry of efforts to inspire young people (but also older ones) about what making impact entails, how vision, imagination, innovation, tenacity and resilience can result in impact on many lives. We are **honoured to host Mr Narayana Murthy**, whose entrepreneurial journey and values have shaped one of India's most respected technology companies, Infosys Limited. His reflections tonight will remind us that leadership is as much about character as it is about achievement.
4. In myriad other ways, we encourage and support young people to strive to be the next Narayana Murthy. Take the **Lee Kuan Yew Global Business Plan Competition** as an example. We hosted the 12th edition this year, involving over 160 students in various roles that allowed the competition to run as smoothly as energetically as it did. In the process, they were exposed to visionary ideas big and small – and bore witness to how ideas get translated into actionable plans. These students have been able to soak in the energy and imagination of well over 1,500 applications from over 1,200 universities across 91 countries, eventually absorbing the spirit of innovation and optimism that the 60 finalists brought to Singapore. In the process, they have also been inspired by serial entrepreneurs, seasoned venture capitalists and others who were part of the Competition ecosystem.
5. This evening continues in that same spirit, with someone larger than life here to share with us his journey. *Fortune* has identified Mr Murthy as among the 12 greatest entrepreneurs of our time, while *Time* styled him the “father of the Indian IT sector”. We are honoured indeed to have him here.

6. This evening, we will also launch the **2026 Singapore-India Hackathon**, particularly meaningful as both our countries mark 60 years of diplomatic relations. It cultivates and strengthens a similar spirit of creative problem-solving and solutioning. And fittingly, this Visionary Series coincides with the **SMU Asia Summit**, a biennial gathering of our Board of Trustees and International Advisory Council members from across the region, visionaries in their own right, here to share ideas on the forces shaping Asia's future.
7. In exciting ways, some of our **graduates are already evidencing what it means to walk in these paths**, who display the sorts of vision, inspiration, entrepreneurial spirit, and sense of purpose that we would want our students to be exposed to. Take for example, **Lin Fengru**, CEO and Founder of TurtleTree, who has pioneered animal-free milk protein; and **Aaron Tan, Aditya Lesmana**, and **Kelvin Chng**, Co-Founders of Carro, Southeast Asia's largest car marketplace. Of course, we are extremely proud to call **Charles Chen Yidan**, Core Founder of Chinese multinational technology conglomerate Tencent and Founder of the Yidan Prize Foundation, an alum of SMU too. Like Mr Murthy, Dr Chen has spoken at this Visionary Series.
8. Collectively, the Visionary Series, the Lee Kuan Yew Global Business Plan Competition, the Singapore-India Hackathon, the SMU Asia Summit, and our alumni entrepreneurs reflect the spirit and ethos of SMU, displaying the most inspiring of visions, the energising spirit of innovation and entrepreneurialism, and the power of purpose. These, together, create impact within and beyond Singapore.

SMU's growing engagement with India

9. With the honour of Mr Narayana Murthy here with us, it behoves me to say something about our efforts to open the eyes and minds of our students to the rich history and culture, and vast potential of India. At SMU, we believe that preparing our students for the future means giving them the skills and sensibilities to thrive in a dynamic, interconnected world — especially in Asia, where growth and opportunities abound. Global exposure is central to the SMU experience. Every one of our undergraduates participates in at least one overseas programme – learning not just about the world, but from it. India is one key focus in this endeavour.
10. Our students have joined **Business Study Missions to Mumbai**, immersing themselves in the cities' business landscape and gaining insights into digitalisation and sustainability. They have led **community service projects in Bengaluru**, empowering women entrepreneurs to scale and sustain their home-based businesses. They have also **interned in major Indian cities** such as Bengaluru, Chennai and Pune, gaining first-hand exposure to India's dynamic innovation landscape.
11. Our collaborations go beyond student experiences. Earlier this year, **SMU and the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad signed a Memorandum of Understanding** to develop and offer joint fintech courses aimed at enhancing the skills of working professionals. Over **60 MBA and EMBA students** from IIT Kharagpur and the Birla Institute of Technology and Science recently joined SMU for a week-long programme on business sustainability, design thinking and digital

marketing. And the **12th Lee Kuan Yew Global Business Plan Competition** which I mentioned earlier saw a space-tech startup from India's Veer Surendra Sai University of Technology, Burla, winning the People's Choice Award at the Grand Finals held in Singapore last month.

Deepening regional partnerships

12. Looking ahead, we will take these partnerships a step further. As part of our broader Asia partnership strategy, SMU will **augment our engagements in India and China**, while continuing to deepen our relationships in Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam, where we have already established overseas centres.

13. We will soon set up our **fourth overseas centre in Shenzhen, China**, and officially establish the **India International Advisory Council (IAC)**. I am happy to announce that it will be chaired by Mr Uday Kotak, Founder and Director, Kotak Mahindra Bank. This Council will join SMU's existing network of seven IACs — in China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. We are honoured that the Councils comprise distinguished industry leaders who lend their expertise and networks to support SMU's growth and strengthen our regional impact.

Commitment and Closing

14. As we look to the future, our commitment to India — and to Asia — remains steadfast. We will continue to build bridges not just between institutions, but between people, ideas and opportunities. We aim to create even more

opportunities for our students to immerse in India's rich and rapidly evolving landscape; for our faculty to collaborate on meaningful research; and for our partners to innovate together for the good of society.

15. In doing so, we prepare our community not only to succeed in a complex world, but to shape it with wisdom, empathy and courage.

16. Thank you, and I wish you an inspiring evening ahead.

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