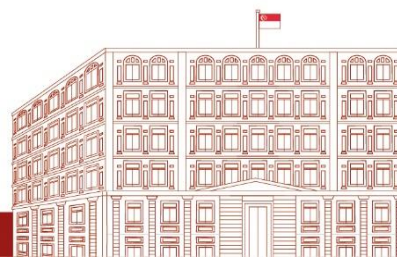


**Speech by SMS Tan Kiat How at the
Singapore Computer Society (SCS)' Splash Awards Ceremony on 31 October 2022**

Mr Sam Liew, President, SCS
Distinguished guests
Ladies & gentlemen

1. Good afternoon to all of you. Happy to join you at this year's Splash Awards ceremony, after the past few years of doing this virtually. This is one of the longest running infocomm and media competitions in Singapore, with a long heritage and a very good track record of nurturing young minds.
2. AI is one of the defining technologies for our digital future. It is going to be very pervasive. Today, we celebrate the young talents who have taken up the challenge to apply AI in creative ways to solve real world problems and to improve lives.
3. It wasn't so long ago that we used to think of AI as a futuristic concept. Some of us may recall movies such as Ironman in the Marvel Metaverse, or The Matrix, depending on your vintage. Now AI is no longer a thing of science fiction movies, but a practical reality with tremendous potential to transform lives.
4. AI is already changing the way we work, live and play. Companies are using AI to increase efficiency and save costs. Especially for labour-intensive processes, and in Singapore where our people is our most valuable resource. We haven't yet seen flying cars, but we have driverless cars that use AI to navigate and remove human error. An example is Google's Waymo project, a self-driving car that is almost entirely autonomous.
5. AI can even enhance our shopping experience. E-commerce engines curate personalised recommendations based on our preferences and shopping history, and recommend you goods and services that you might like. Our young talents here today have shown that the application of AI is not something that is out of reach to the everyday man. In fact, it is an accessible technology that we use every day, oftentimes without knowing that it is there. With some research and creativity, our students can learn and apply AI to solve real world problems.
6. Many of them are using it to help the people and causes they care about. For example, one of our finalist teams today from Hwa Chong Institution has invented "SearchLah!" a Singlish-based speech-to-text assistant. Users can speak to the assistant in a mixture of English, Mandarin & dialects, which will be transcribed into text format. The text will be translated into English or Mandarin, passed through a search engine, and a variety of search results will be returned to the user. It will be useful for our elderly to search for online resources.
7. Another finalist team from Republic Polytechnic is creating an app to encourage more people to grow edible plants at home. An AI-intelligent chatbot will guide users step-by-step, from purchasing the plant online to monitoring its health via IoT sensors. The goal is to increase sustainability by reducing the carbon footprint and addressing issues of food wastage and security. I would like to commend all the teams' projects I saw today.
8. The Government is taking steps to ensure that Singapore is well placed to surf the AI wave. We launched the National AI Strategy in 2019 for Singapore to seize new opportunities in three important ways – (i) Being an early adopter of AI so that we can better understand its capabilities and constraints, and harness its full potential; (ii) Being a trusted global node in AI development and use, and building an ecosystem of firms and services around it that creates good jobs for



Singaporeans; and (iii) Helping Singaporeans develop skills and capabilities to take on these job roles. We are making steady progress.

9. We have implemented impactful programmes across key sectors including healthcare, education, and finance. For example, we have **SELENA+**, an AI system that analyses eye scans to detect diabetes, which produces results in seconds and with accuracy levels of 90%. It is deployed in 20 clinics, improving healthcare access and outcomes for Singaporeans.

10. Not just industry – even government is leveraging AI to improve productivity and effectiveness of public service operations. For example, the AI-powered **OneService Chatbot** launched by GovTech and the Municipal Services Office (MSO). Residents can report municipal issues more easily through a single channel via WhatsApp and Telegram. The Chatbot then guides the resident to provide more information where necessary, and routes the feedback to the appropriate agency.

11. But even as we increasingly rely on AI, we need to ensure that AI systems are fair, explainable and safe. Singapore has been at the forefront of international discourse on AI ethics and governance. Our approach is a practical one, balancing innovation by enterprises while safeguarding consumer interests. We published the Model AI Governance Framework to guide industry in implementing trustworthy AI in 2019, and published the Implementation and Self-Assessment Guide for Organisations in 2020 to help industry align their internal processes with the Model Framework.

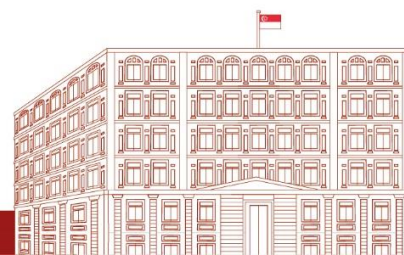
12. This year, we launched AI Verify, the world's first AI Governance Testing Framework and Toolkit which helps companies be more transparent about their AI, and to build greater trust with their stakeholders.

13. Thirdly, we are building our pool of skilled manpower talent to take on roles in the AI sector. We partner Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs) and industry to build the pipeline. IMDA's TechSkills Accelerator (TeSA) trained more than 160,000 individuals, and placed more than 12,000 Singaporeans in good tech jobs. Through **TeSA's Company-Led Training (CLT) programme**, companies like IBM and Singtel provide on-the-job training in emerging skills including AI. For example, Tern Poh was a CLT trainee under AI Singapore in 2018, and has taken on AI projects and roles since then. Most recently, he was Head of Product at AI2Labs, a tech start-up spun out of Yoozoo Games.

14. AI Singapore has programmes to uplift AI capabilities for all. For students, there are short workshops like **AI for Students** and **AI for Everyone**, with more than 70,000 total participants thus far. They complement events like today's Splash Awards for students to unleash the potential of AI. For businesses and professionals, we have **AI for Industry**, a fully online and self-paced course for industry practitioners and those of us who are working and want to understand what AI can do for our day to day jobs. For those who want to reskill and perhaps pivot and change careers to do something related to technology and AI, we have the **AI Apprenticeship Programme** where more than 200 Singaporeans are re-skilled and have transitioned to AI jobs.

15. Developing tech talent is a collective effort with organisations like SCS. SCS has made efforts to nurture young talents including Polytechnic and ITE graduates through **TeSA for ITE and Polytechnics Alliance (TIP Alliance)**, support professional development through **Career Compass**¹, and celebrate diversity through **SG Women in Tech**. I want to thank Sam Liew and his team, SCS members, and community and industry partners for invaluable support over the years.

¹ Career Compass is an SCS initiative that supports individuals in their career discovery journeys and helps them secure jobs in the ICT sector through mentoring sessions by experienced ICT career mentors and webinars that cover professional tips.



16. Let me conclude by summarising the key messages. AI is everywhere and can be used by everyone. For Singapore, it is crucial that we harness its potential so that our Little Red Dot will remain vibrant and competitive on the global stage. For our businesses, it is crucial that we explore this emerging technology so that we can enhance business efficiencies and unlock new business opportunities. For individuals, it is crucial that we be bold to seize new opportunities and to use AI to improve our daily lives, solve real problems and benefit our fellow Singaporeans.

17. To the Award participants, I hope you had fun and gained a different understanding of how to use technology, especially AI, to envision a better Singapore and a better home for Singaporeans for years to come. May your spirit of bold ambition and daring innovation continue to thrive, as you pursue your passions and unlock new possibilities. I am excited to see what the future holds, and hope that some of the ideas that you shared with us today can take root and come to reality in some form or other.

18. Thank you, and congratulations once again.

