

Impact of tech wave on Asia studied

SINGAPORE INSTITUTE TO EXAMINE TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION'S AFFECT ON URBAN SOCIETIES

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A NEW institute will be set up in Singapore's Nanyang Technological University (NTU) to study the impact of technology on society.

The NTU Institute of Science and Technology for Humanity, to be set up "in the next few months", will focus on the impact of the technological revolution on urban Asia, said the university's president, Prof Subra Suresh.

He was speaking to 2,000 people at his inauguration ceremony in NTU's Nanyang Auditorium.

He began his term as the fourth president of the university on January 1.

"While the technological revolu-

tion we are witnessing today will reshape the 21st-century human condition in many ways, there is also understandable nervousness about its potential downsides," he said.

The new institute will focus on the ethical implications of innovations, governance in this technological age, and how technology is affecting the lives of people in Asia - the world's most populous continent.

"We have already identified and confirmed several members of the inaugural governing board of the institute, and will be announcing the full group of advisers to the institute within the next few months," said Suresh, adding that the global team will include several members from Singapore.

At the event, Suresh received a

certificate of appointment from Education Minister (Higher Education and Skills) Ong Ye Kung.

He was also conferred the title of distinguished university professor, NTU's highest academic appointment.

Suresh outlined his aims in his speech, which include upholding NTU's position as a test bed for innovation in support of Singapore's efforts to become a Smart Nation, and cultivating the university as a global leader in dealing with social changes arising from technological changes.

In his inauguration address, he spoke about his own education journey in India where neither of his parents could attend university.

He also shared how his studies in the United States were made possi-

ble through sacrifices by his family, and scholarships awarded based on merit regardless of personal background.

"My journey over the past several decades has revealed to me how the policies and practices of institutions and governments can have a profound effect on the lives and careers of individual citizens," he said.

Presidential fellowship

Suresh also announced the launch of the Presidential Postdoctoral Fellowship that will start this year, to attract researchers to the university to begin their careers in academia. It will fund 12 people each year.

Targeted at PhD holders with no

more than five years of full-time postdoctoral experience, it will include a two-year tenure with an S\$80,000 (US\$60,000) annual salary, a S\$100,000 yearly research grant, and a housing and relocation grant.

The university will also be launching an NTU Digital Arts Prize this year to "recognise global artists and technologists with extraordinary creativity".

It will be awarded once every two years and will be open to global competition, with the winner selected by a panel of judges from around the world.

There will be prize money to the tune of "tens of thousands of dollars", according to Suresh.

Explaining the emphasis on the arts, he said: "One cannot be a complete human without an appreciation of the arts. And I'm speaking as an engineer."