Singapore DPM Shanmugaratnam to launch NTU Institute of Science and Technology for Humanity

NISTH was established by NTU to study the impact of technology on human society and to bring three major sectors together to enhance the use of technology.

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Reuters

Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam will launch NTU Institute of Science and Technology for Humanity (NISTH) on Monday at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University.

NTU, which is one of the most prestigious and top institutions in Asia, has established NISTH to study the impact of technology on human society, as well as to bring industry, government and academics together to find opportunities to enhance the use of technology for the betterment of humanity.

DPM Shanmugaratnam, who is also the Coordinating Minister for Economic and Social Policies will visit NTU on Monday and deliver a keynote address on the impact of technology on society.

Singapore's DPM Tharman Shanmugaratnam (R) with Ashton Carter (L) attend the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland January 22, 2016. Reuters

Prior to the launch of NISTH, NTU President, Professor Subra Suresh said that "The global society will continue to undergo rapid changes over the coming decades in response to the accelerating pace of technological progress catalysed by the Fourth Industrial Revolution. While many of these changes will have positive outcomes for individual citizens, organisations, governments, and society, there are also potential concerns, challenges and questions surrounding ethical dilemmas, inequality, workforce retraining, policies, regulations, sustainability, and the impact of technology on the lives and livelihoods of people."

He also believes that a human-centric and ethical approach to science and technology is very important in this era.

"NTU community of highly talented people is well-positioned to play a leading role in fostering activities that bring together global thinkers to identify ways to maximise the benefits of technologies while minimising technology's possible negative effects and unintended consequences for individuals and societies," Prof Suresh added.

As per a news release, published by NTU, Prof Suresh also mentioned that the NISTH will tap into NTU's multidisciplinary strengths to nurture the research on the impact of science and technology on humanity.

In addition to that, he also stated that the launch of NISTH is required as the country has set a focus the Smart Nation initiative in its next phase of development, which

means the technology will play a key role to empower people to lead a meaningful and satisfactory life.

"As one of the world's top universities, NTU is well positioned to not only create new science and technologies but also pathways to roll out those technologies for the benefit of Singapore, the region and the world, with a particular focus on implications for humanity," he further added.

Professor Vanessa Evers will be managing NISTH. She is presently the Professor of Computer Science at the University of Twente's Human Media Interaction group in Netherlands but on August 1, 2019, she is expected to join NTU.

NISTH main objectives:
- **Responsible Innovation:** This theme will seek to address ethical implications of innovations – such as nanotechnology, personalised medicine, unmanned ground and aerial vehicles, and bioengineering – that will have a wide impact on society.
- **Governance and Leadership in the Era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution**: This theme will look at issues of governance of technology use, the kind of leadership that is required to steer the world safely through this period of transformative change, and how new technologies, such as big data, impact leadership and policy decisions. The speed and influence of technological change have a significant impact on society, and there is a critical need to examine how they can be properly managed and regulated in the interest of human well-being.
- **New Urban Asia:** This theme looks at the impact of technology and how it is transforming the urban landscape in Asia, and how it is affecting the lives of people in the world's most populous continent.

Earlier, NTU had organised the inaugural NISTH Ideas Challenge. It was a competition that aimed to involve the University's campus community to understand the fundamental issues and principles that would help guide the development of AI for the benefit of society and humanity.

An educational development specialist and facilitator of team-based learning at NTU's Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, Emmanuel Tan clinched the top prize at the competition for his proposal on an online mediation system for AI to resolve conflict in AI-related disputes, such as human-robot conflict, while School of

Computer Science and Engineering and School of Physical and Mathematical Sciences students Bisakha Das, Mohit Prashant and Poorvi Ashok took the second position as they raised the issue of discriminatory profiling with AI.

The third prize was given to Humanities research fellow Dr Kadek Ratih Dwi Oktarini and Dr I Made Riko, the senior research fellow at the Asian School of the Environment, as they proposed an idea of intelligent Internet chatbot system (AI Companion) that interconnects with various medical facilities.

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