

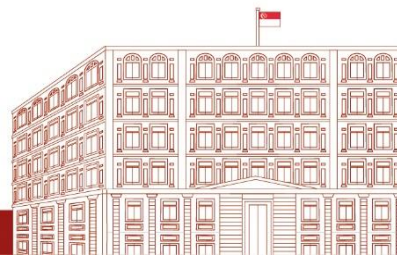
**Opening Address by Mr Tan Kiat How,
Senior Minister of State for Communications and Information,
at the SGTech Global Future Series: Digital Trust Forum (31 Oct 2023)**

Mr Wong Wai Meng, Chair of SGTech,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. A very good morning to all of you. It is my pleasure to join you today at the “Digital Trust Forum”.
2. I spoke at this forum last year and launched the Centre of Excellence for Digital Trust. The COE’s purpose is to serve as a trusted hub of knowledge, innovation and collaboration to empower organisations and individuals in navigating the digital world with confidence. Since then, the topic of digital trust has gained even more prominence.
3. This is because our daily lives, at work and at home, have become even more intertwined with digital technologies. Without a foundation of trust that enables our people and businesses to transact securely and confidently in the digital space, our interconnected world faces grave risks.
 - a. This was echoed most recently by Senior Minister Teo Chee Hean at the Singapore International Cyber Week that was held here just a week ago. He emphasised that it was “imperative for trust to be built in the digital domain, so that the world can continue to enjoy the dividends from digitalisation”.
 - b. We are also keenly aware of the ever-present issue of scams. It is evident that scams continue to be a persistent challenge even in the face of a whole suite of measures being implemented by both the Government and ecosystem partners. According to data released by the police, there were about 22,000 scam cases reported from January to June 2023, a 64.5 per cent increase from the 13,000 cases during the same period last year.
4. Such instances of data breaches, cyberattacks, and online fraud not only jeopardize the privacy and security of individuals but also threaten the integrity of critical infrastructure, financial systems, and global trade.
5. The consequences of failing to address this issue are far-reaching, including loss of personal data, erosion of confidence in digital services, economic disruptions, and even national security vulnerabilities. Further, if the public’s trust in the digital domain is lost, users and businesses may be reluctant to perform online transactions or use digital services. This can reverse efficiency gains and limit access to new opportunities, affecting Singapore’s overall competitiveness.



6. It is therefore important that we continue to confront the challenges to digital trust head-on, and implement robust strategies, policies, and regulations to foster greater trust in our digital ecosystem.

Government will continue to work with industry to safeguard digital trust

7. The Government has been working together with the industry to ensure that trust is maintained in our digital space.

8. First, digital trust is underpinned by guidelines and regulations that **protect our citizens from online threats, such as misinformation, data misuse, and privacy breaches**.

a. For instance, the Personal Data Protection Act provides a baseline standard of protection for personal data in Singapore. It complements sector-specific legislation and regulators, such as the Banking Act and Insurance Act.

b. New emerging technology, like AI, also have the capacity to undermine trust in the digital space. We therefore need to ensure that AI is developed and deployed in a responsible manner. Models and algorithms should not discriminate, while governance frameworks should preserve space for innovation.

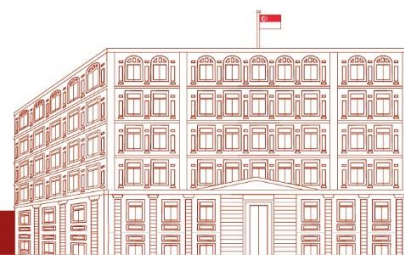
i. To this end, we released our Model AI Governance Framework in 2019 that provides detailed and readily implementable guidance to private sector organizations to address key ethical and governance issues when deploying AI solutions. In 2022, we also launched an international pilot, AI Verify. This is an AI governance testing framework and software toolkit to help organisations objectively demonstrate responsible AI through standardised tests.

9. Second, it is important to ensure that we have skilled individuals to secure our digital space. To ensure a steady pipeline of such talent, **we have been working closely with our partners to train and build up our digital trust workforce**.

10. Traditionally, digital trust has been seen as largely an IT issue, with a focus on cybersecurity, risk management and data governance.

11. While these areas remain important, the pervasiveness of digital means that those working to secure trust in the digital space will increasingly also require non-tech skillsets. These include competencies relating to intellectual property, legal, compliance, HR and trust policies.

a. To better understand the types of skills the digital trust workforce would need, SGTech has commissioned a study titled “Digital Trust Workforce Survey”, to better understand the skills gaps and identify strategies that companies can adopt to train and grow competent digital trust professionals and teams to secure their digital services.



- b. I am looking forward to some of the initial findings which will be shared later today. The full report is expected to be released early next year. The Government will study its results and recommendations, and work with relevant partners, including SGTech, to strengthen our digital trust workforce.

12. **Third, the Government will work closely with industry to strengthen our digital trust ecosystem.** It is essential that we hear the views of industry experts and professionals who bring with them valuable insights and deep domain knowledge, allowing us to make informed decisions that shape the future of digital trust.

13. Such a consultative approach not only enhances our ability to address digital trust issues effectively and collectively, but also ensures that our approach is forward-leaning, agile and adaptable, amidst the ever-changing tech landscape.

14. **[Announcement]** As part of its continuing efforts to build and ensure digital trust, I am happy to announce that **the Digital Trust Centre of Excellence will be establishing an advisory panel to provide expert guidance and thought leadership in this field.** The panel will contribute to the development and implementation of best practices, frameworks, and strategies, and also advise on emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities related to digital trust. This will enable the Centre to stay at the forefront of industry developments in three key ways

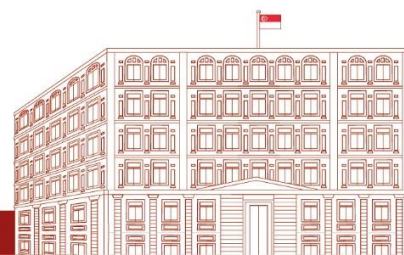
- a. **First, by fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange** among industry, government, and academia, the various stakeholders will be able to collectively address digital trust issues and promote a culture of trust in the digital ecosystem;
- b. **Second, by supporting the development and dissemination** of educational resources, training programs, and awareness campaigns, this will empower individuals and organisations to navigate the digital landscape securely;
- c. **Third, the advisory panel will also provide expert insights and recommendations to government stakeholders on digital trust policies and regulations,** ensuring that digital trust challenges are holistically addressed.

15. The panel will include representatives from a variety of sectors, including from finance, tech and IT solutions, and also academia. Such representation from various sectors will ensure that they provide views from a wide spectrum of the digital economy.

16. I look forward to engaging with the panel and hearing their insights on how we can better ensure trust in our digital space.

Conclusion

17. In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that upholding trust in the digital space is essential for the functioning of our society and economy. This will require a concerted effort by Government and industry to address emerging challenges. Our joint efforts in closing the skills gap in our digital trust workforce, and the formation of the advisory panel in the Centre of Excellence are important



steps as we continue to build a trusted digital space, where people and businesses can transact securely and confidently, and benefit from the opportunities that digital brings.

18. Digital trust is an important area for Singapore. As a small nation, an open economy with scarce natural resources, trust is one of the most invaluable competitive advantages that Singapore has. The trust that we build between the government and people, between people and different communities in Singapore, and the international stakeholders.

19. In the digital ecosystem in the fast-moving tech space, this trust needs to build on new foundations, new ways of doing things, and new playbooks. I look forward to working closely with friends in the audience: industry stakeholders and partners, both in Singapore and outside Singapore, in business, academia, and research, to work together in building trust as a competitive advantage for the digital economy.

20. I wish you a fruitful forum ahead. Thank you.

-End-

