



SPEECH

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SPEECH BY SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE MR HENG CHEE HOW FOR BRAINHACK 2021

Hello everyone.

Welcome to BrainHack 2021.

It has been two years since I spoke at the inaugural BrainHack. In that time, the world has seen much change and disruption – in no small part due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. It has certainly been a challenging and difficult period, so I am glad that events such as BrainHack are still going strong. In fact, about 4000 of you have signed up for this virtual learning festival organised by Singapore’s Defence Science and Technology Agency (DSTA). Now in its third run, BrainHack immerses students in the latest digital technologies through hackathons, workshops, competitions and virtual tech showcases. This year’s BrainHack further expands into the exciting field of Extended Reality.

Technology has always been an important tool to tackle society’s evolving challenges. This pandemic is no exception. Due to the pandemic, we were forced to physically distance ourselves from each other. But because of that, we saw greater digital adoption for people to connect with each other in virtual space. This connectivity is also important in the domain of national defence. Hence the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) and the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) have been pursuing the goal of being “digital to the core”. A major effort involves the rolling out of a new cloud system to leverage cloud computing technologies while ensuring robust cybersecurity.

MINDEF, the SAF and DSTA have also worked together to establish the “Digital Factory”, a collaborative space for experimentation and scaling-up of digital solutions. Since its establishment in September last year, the “Digital Factory” has already developed six digital prototypes. Through close collaboration with commercial partners like IBM, Amazon Web Services, NCS and NTT, the Digital Factory will help DSTA keep up with industry best practices and keep at the forefront of technology.

MINDEF Communications Organisation

Public Communications Directorate

MINDEF Building, 303 Gombak Drive, #01-26 Singapore 669645 Tel: 9228 6190 Fax: 6769 5139



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Beyond defence, our engineers have also contributed their science and technology expertise in Singapore's fight against COVID-19. They have developed, amongst others, health monitoring apps and built a network analysis tool to support contact-tracing operations. I hope that seeing how various institutions and organisations rose to today's challenges using digital technologies will help fuel your passion in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, machine learning and in other fields.

Finally, I want to thank the participating schools, our technology partners and the organising team for putting this year's event together. Thank you for making BrainHack2021 possible. And to all our participants, I wish you a most fruitful and enjoyable experience at BrainHack 2021.

Thank you.

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