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Singapore announces initiatives on AI governance and ethics

BY: PRIYANKAR BHUNIA

GEOGRAPHY: **AUSTRALIA**   PUBLISHED: **JUNE 5, 2018**

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"Just in time implants" brings together the Australian Government, RMIT University, the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne and global medical technology firm Stryker.

Photo credit: Innovative Manufacturing Cooperative Research Centre

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On 5 June, at the Innovfest Unbound, Minister for Communication and Information Mr S. Iswaran delivered (https://www.gov.sg/~/sgpcmedia/media_releases/imda/press_release/P-20180605-1/attachment/Artificial%20Intelligence%20Governance%20and%20Ethics%20Initiative.PDF) his opening speech, announcing new initiatives on artificial intelligence (AI) governance and ethics.

In his opening speech, Minister said that as Singapore develops its digital economy, it is important to establish a trusted ecosystem where industries can benefit from innovations in technology while consumer confidence and understanding can be assured. As new business models and innovations rapidly develop in the emergent AI space, it is timely to proactively discuss and address ethical issues that may arise from the use of AI and data. Ethical issues surrounding AI include fairness, transparency and the ability to explain an AI's decision

To drive awareness of the benefits and understand the challenges of AI, Singapore's Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) is engaging key stakeholders including government, industry, consumers and academia to collaboratively shape the Government's plans for the AI ecosystem.

"Such discourse will inform the Government's ongoing plans to support Singapore as a hub for AI development and innovation, and help Singapore to effectively respond to global developments," said Minister.

According to the Minister, IMDA will engage relevant stakeholders through three new structured, interlinked initiatives. These initiatives complement IMDA's current suite of business and talent

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Opengov Secure-day

programmes to develop a vibrant AI ecosystem and position Singapore as a leading hub for AI.

The three new initiatives are:

(1) An Advisory Council on the Ethical Use of AI and Data

An Advisory Council on the Ethical Use of AI and Data will be appointed by the Minister for Communications and Information to advise and work with IMDA in the areas of responsible development and deployment of AI.

The Advisory Council will assist the Government to develop ethics standards and reference governance frameworks and publish advisory guidelines, practical guidance, and/or codes of practice for the voluntary adoption by the industry.

The Advisory Council will include private sector thought leaders in AI and Big Data from local and international companies as well as representatives for consumer interest. Former Attorney-General V.K. Rajah SC has been appointed the Advisory Council's inaugural Chairman.

The Advisory Council will assist IMDA in three ways:

First, to engage with relevant stakeholders such as ethics boards of commercial enterprises on ethical and related issues arising from private sector use of AI and data, and consumer advocates on consumer expectations and acceptance of such use.

Second, to engage the private capital community to increase awareness of the need to incorporate ethics considerations in their investment decisions into businesses which develop or adopt AI.

Third, to stablish a Legal and Technical Expert Panel to support the Advisory Council, as well as a Panel of International

ALL EVENTS
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Experts for global perspectives.

The full list of Advisory Council members will be made available at a later date.

(2)   A discussion paper released by Personal Data Protection Commission (PDPC) on responsible development and adoption of AI

The PDPC is putting forward a discussion paper on how a possible reference AI and Data governance framework for industries could look like, as well as what elements could be included. The discussion paper will be used to support the Advisory Council to frame its deliberations.

The discussion paper will create a baseline for discussion across stakeholders, encouraging common definitions and common frames for dialogue, and is intended as a living document.

The discussion paper recommends two key principles:

First, decisions made by or with the assistance of AI should be explainable, transparent and fair to consumers.

Second, AI systems, robots and decisions should be human-centric.

The discussion paper's four-stage reference governance framework illustrates how these principles can be put into practice by different stakeholders, such as identifying the objectives of an AI governance framework; selecting appropriate organisational governance measures; putting in place consumer relationship management processes; and building a decision-making and risk assessment framework.

The discussion paper was compiled in consultation with key government and industry stakeholders, to support collaborative discussions on the responsible development and adoption of AI. One of

the early and collaborators of the discussion paper is the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS). Its Fairness, Ethics, Accountability and Transparency (FEAT) Committee will use the discussion paper to help shape its ongoing discussion on the use of AI and data analytics in the financial industry.

The discussion paper is available online (https://www.pdpc.gov.sg/Resources/Discussion-Paper-on-AI-and-Personal-Data) at PDPC's website.

(3)   A research programme on the governance of AI and data use

The Minister also announced the launch of a research programme on the governance of AI and data use. The five-year Research Programme on the Governance of AI and Data Use will be set up at the Singapore Management University (SMU) to conduct scholarly research on policy, legal, regulatory, governance, ethics and other issues relating to AI and data use.

The Research Programme aims to conduct research on selected topics in AI and data use, organise engagement forums to engage stakeholders to generate and share knowledge and bring clarity to policy and regulatory issues and their impact, and publish and present research papers to showcase Singapore's thought leadership in the international AI and data research communities.

The programme will support the Advisory Council and inform the Government and industry discussion on AI challenges through its research and conferences. In addition, the Research Programme enables Singapore to continue to drive thought leadership and discourse with exemplary case studies, develop a body of AI knowledge, and be a knowledge exchange centre with international experts.

The call for proposal to set up the Research Programme was conducted jointly by IMDA and the National Research Foundation.

As part of the Digital Economy Framework for Action (https://www.opengovasia.com/articles/singapores-imda-introduces-digital-economy-framework-for-action-to-promote-collaboration), IMDA will support Singapore's AI development strategy by:

(1)   Help drive industry adoption and understanding of the benefits from implementing,

(2)   Build a vibrant core of AI developers and companies to foster an ecosystem of users and suppliers as well as build an AI-ready pool of talented researchers and engineers,

(3)   Address specific AI leadership areas to grow industry capabilities and develop R&D capabilities, and

(4)   Continue to provide clarity and review relevant regulations for a conducive AI business environment.

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