Welcome remarks by Professor Tan Eng Chye, NUS President
NUS120 Distinguished Speaker Series – Shaping the Future of AI Innovations
Sunday 27 April 2025, 9 am, UCC Theatre

A very good Sunday morning to everyone and welcome to the NUS Kent Ridge Campus. I think it's wonderful to see a full house here. We have audiences in our overflow rooms and many are joining us over livestream as well.

First, I would like to extend a warm welcome to Professor Yann LeCun, who joins us all the way from New York. We are grateful to Yann for accepting our invitation to speak at the NUS120 Distinguished Speaker Series.

Our focus today is on the timely topic of AI innovations. We are standing before a very exciting chapter in the story of innovation. In fact, AI has "supercharged" and "supersized" innovation. New ideas, technologies and applications are emerging at a very much accelerated pace, and with unprecedented reach. It is revolutionising every industry and is present in nearly every aspect of our lives. Smart features have reached a whole new level.

At NUS, we encourage researchers to experiment with and leverage the use of AI, in order to unpack its potential. We've established the NUS AI Institute, which is led by Professor Mohan Kankanhalli. This is a university-wide platform where core AI researchers can interact with disciplinary researchers to create interdisciplinary impact. AI + X, with X being any domain, opens many new opportunities to solving complex problems. When applied thoughtfully, AI can help resolve some of our biggest challenges – from managing the healthcare needs of Singapore's rapidly ageing population to optimising our urban systems for efficiency, sustainability and resilience, and many more.

While AI is fascinating and taking the world by storm, the question remains – how will AI continue to innovate? Will AI development reach a peak? Has AI achieved human intelligence?

This brings to mind a simple yet striking quote by Yann, and I'd like to quote: "An elephant or a four-year-old child is way smarter than any Large Language Model." In four years, a child would have seen fifty times more data than the biggest LLMs today. Human intelligence,

which is built from our interactions, senses and experiences, definitely goes far beyond text or language.

This morning, we are privileged to have with us Professor Yann LeCun, who is a deep learning specialist at the forefront of AI developments, to speak about this topic. We look forward to gaining insights from Professor Yann LeCun's talk. I wish everyone a fruitful and productive session. Thank you.