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MIT and Collaborators Launch Global AI Challenge Inspired by Viral Sensation Moodeng the Hippo

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — The MIT Media Lab, in collaboration with the Zoological Park Organization of Thailand, ViaLink, Sea Limited, True Digital Park, Techsauce, and The Standard, today announced the launch of the Moodeng AI Challenge, a groundbreaking competition aimed at revolutionizing human-animal interaction through artificial intelligence. The challenge, inspired by the globally beloved baby pygmy hippopotamus Moodeng, invites innovators worldwide to develop AI solutions that bridge the gap between humans and wildlife.

The challenge features three primary tracks focusing on critical areas of animal-human interaction:

1. AI for Decoding Animal Communication: Developing multi-modal AI systems to interpret animal behaviors, vocalizations, and expressions
2. AI for Promoting Human-Animal Interaction & Appreciation: Creating innovative interfaces for meaningful human-animal connections
3. AI for Augmenting Zoo Keepers: Designing AI solutions that streamline administrative tasks and enhance animal care

The challenge emphasizes sustainable AI development, with a bonus track dedicated to creating resource-efficient solutions that minimize environmental impact. Participants can choose to focus their projects on Moodeng, elephants, or other species of their choice, working with extensive datasets and cutting-edge AI tools.

Winners will receive:

- Grand Prize: \$3,000 and an exclusive meeting with Moodeng
- Track Winners: \$500 per track
- All winners receive complimentary flights (supported by ViaLink) to attend the special event with Moodeng

The challenge will be judged by a distinguished panel including experts from MIT Media Lab, ViaLink, and the Zoological Park Organization of Thailand. The competition is open for submissions from January 21 to May 1, 2025, with winners to be announced on June 1, 2025.

The Moodeng AI Challenge builds on recent breakthroughs in animal communication research, including discoveries of name-like calls in African elephants and phonetic structures in sperm whale vocalizations. All projects must be open-source, promoting collaboration and advancement in the field of animal-AI interaction.

For more information and to submit entries, visit: <https://moodeng.media.mit.edu/>

