

Govt earmarks \$48m for 100 research scholars

By JESSICA HIB

The government will set aside \$48 million to fund up to 100 National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University research scholars who will undertake research at the Singapore-MIT Alliance for Research and Technology (Smart).

"The funding will also provide for a research supplement for faculty from MIT, NUS or NTU who will co-supervise the scholars," said Education Minister Ng Eng Hen yesterday at the 10th Singapore-MIT Alliance (SMA) Symposium.

The scholars will be those doing their doctorates, and the funding by the education ministry will be used for the fellowship over the next five years," said SMA spokesman Ivanah Poo.

According to Dr Ng Suan and the new SMA research fellowship will "synergistically build on and reinforce the strong educational and research linkages between NUS, NTU and MIT".

Smart is a global research enterprise in Singapore established by MIT Massachusetts Institute of

Technology and the National Research Foundation (NRF).

Part of a \$1 billion project by NRF's Campus for Research Excellence and Technological Enterprise (Crute), the research centre was officially launched a year ago, and will be located in NUS's new University Town.

"Smart will be geared towards research projects with industry impact," Dr Ng said.

The Innovation Centre launched the first call for research project proposals last year. Grants will be pro-

vided, with the potential for licensing and commercialisation.

Three initial interdisciplinary research groups have already started work at the Smart centre.

Said NTU president Se Guanang: "Such global research networking will undoubtedly step up the exchange of knowledge and research collaboration between the universities."

Meanwhile, NUS, NTU and MIT yesterday linked a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the third phase of the SMA.

According to SMA co-di-

rector Hardy Chan, the first phase, or SMA-1, took off in July 1999 with five intakes of graduate students under five academic programmes.

"Following the success of SMA-1, we started SMA-2, the alliance's second phase, in July 2005. Under SMA-2, dual masters students are conferred master degrees by both MIT and NUS or NTU."

SMA-2 is also characterised by greater emphasis on PhD research and education, while increasing collaboration and engagement with industry and research institutes, he added.