

NTU, maritime body to set up facility to test alternative fuels

By DAVID EE

SHIP operators looking for alternative fuel sources amid rising bunker fuel costs may find the answers through a maritime energy test-bed facility to be established in Singapore by 2015.

To be set up by Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and the Singapore Maritime Institute (SMI), the facility, the first of its kind in South-east Asia, will enable the shipping industry to research and test alternative fuels such as biodiesel and liquefied natural gas.

Companies will also be able to explore new technologies in the areas of emissions control and fuel additives, for example.

The establishment of the \$8.1 million facility, to be located on NTU's premises, was announced yesterday by SMI chairman Teo Siong Seng at the institute's annual forum.

Speaking after the event, NTU Energy Research Institute co-director Chan Siew Hwa said the research carried out at the facility would benefit



Ship operators are under pressure due to rising fuel costs, says NTU's Professor Chan Siew Hwa. The facility will also help companies explore new technologies. ST FILE PHOTO

maritime players. "Ship operators are under intense pressure because of rising fuel costs," said Professor Chan.

Cargo ships run on bunker fuel, which can account for more than 70 per cent of an operator's voyage expenses. As of last month, bunker fuel cost US\$597 (\$\$740) per tonne, which was four times that at the end of 2008.

The facility will welcome scientists and engineers from around the world to conduct research there, and also aims to train maritime doctorate students.

At least 12 ship operators and equipment suppliers are already lined up to use it, said Prof Chan.

Mr Teo said that the facility could be a boost for the maritime sector here, which contributes about 7 per cent of Singapore's annual gross domestic product.

SMI executive director Lam Yen Chin agreed, saying the facility would "attract more business to the whole maritime value chain, ranging from local suppliers to shipyards and ports".

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