



Associate Professor Souphab Khuangvichith (right) shakes hands with Professor Ng Wun Jern after the signing ceremony.

Environmental centre to train Lao students

Times Reporters

Singapore's research-intensive Nanyang Technological University (NTU) has agreed to work with the National University of Laos (NUOL) to establish a Centre of Excellence for Environmental Management in Vientiane.

NTU Nanyang Environment and Water Research Institute (NEWRI) Executive Director, Professor Ng Wun Jern, and NUOL Faculty of Environment Science Dean, Associate Professor Souphab Khuangvichith, signed a memorandum of understanding on the project yesterday in Vientiane.

The US\$220,000 centre, supported by the Lien Foundation, will serve as an integrated teaching and research facility for 2,600 environment science undergraduates from NUOL.

NUOL and NTU's partnership, which is the first of its kind, will allow joint research projects to be undertaken on wastewater treatment, water quality management and health and sanitation, as well as student and staff exchanges between both universities.

In addition, NEWRI is leading a community effort supported by the Lien Foundation to train NUOL

faculty staff on methodologies for water quality measurement as well as in setting up a wastewater digester at the NUOL dormitories.

A local water quality test had earlier found that water at NUOL is likely to be contaminated by inadequately treated wastewater. Such wastewater is also being discharged into the neighbouring wetland, threatening the supply of fresh water to nearby villages.

The pilot wastewater digester project is expected to improve the living conditions of 400 students living in two campus dormitories through better wastewater treatment and improved sanitation.

The digester will produce biogas that will be used as fuel for cooking in the dormitory kitchen, while leftover waste will be composted for use at the university's nursery as fertiliser for plants.

Professor Jern said a key aim of the collaboration with NUOL was to inspire the local community to take ownership and to lead efforts to improve their own local environment.

Known for admitting the best students in the country, NUOL offers comprehensive undergraduate and graduate curriculum and provides skilled manpower and resources to support the Lao economy.

NEWRI will use NTU's expertise in environment engineering to help NUOL develop an environmental management curriculum for undergraduates and a research programme for postgraduate students.

NTU President, Professor Bertil Anderson, said the collaboration would allow both universities to work together on research projects and to share knowledge and expertise in environmental engineering and management for sustainable development.

"As the world's largest engineering college and the fastest-rising university in the top 50 universities worldwide, NTU is well-known for its deep expertise in environmental and water technologies, and we are proud to share our knowledge and expertise with our partners at NUOL," he said.

"This collaboration demonstrates our shared goal of furthering research in environment science and engineering to harness its practical application for the benefit of society, extending beyond geographical boundaries."

Professor Anderson presided over yesterday's signing ceremony with NUOL Vice President, Associate Professor Dr Phetsamone Khounsavath.