

NTU's high-tech lab to benefit IDM sector

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ALMOST eight years after Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong first identified it as a growth industry in his 2006 National Rally speech, the interactive digital media (IDM) sector is still gaining ground.

With monetary support from the Media Development Authority (MDA), the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) has established a \$7 million research laboratory called NTU Future Studios Research Lab (NTU FSR Lab).

Located at NTU's Multi-platform Game Innovation Centre (MAGIC), a digital games hub, the lab aims to help design artists, producers of animation and games and institutional industry players lower their costs of production, shorten the time to market and carry out cross-border work more effectively.

Said Seah Hock Soon, director of MAGIC: "The technology and expertise available in the laboratory will not only benefit NTU faculty, researchers and students, but also create new opportunities for commercial partnerships with our industry friends in the fields of animation and gaming."

With the support of industry collaborators, Hewlett-Packett and NVIDIA, the lab is equipped with a new and incredibly fast graphics processing farm.

This technology allows for high-end productions to be produced with a moderate budget in a short time.

A local studio, Richmanclub Studios, is utilising the farm in the production of a science-fiction adventure feature film, *The Boy and His Robot*.

By adopting the technology, the film's production costs and team size is estimated to reduce by up to 80 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively, compared with a traditional production team.

"In the past . . . (we) had to struggle as our vision was hampered by the cost and time restrictions from traditional technology in film making," said Rich Ho, director and producer of *The Boy and His Robot*. "Now . . . things might just change for the better."