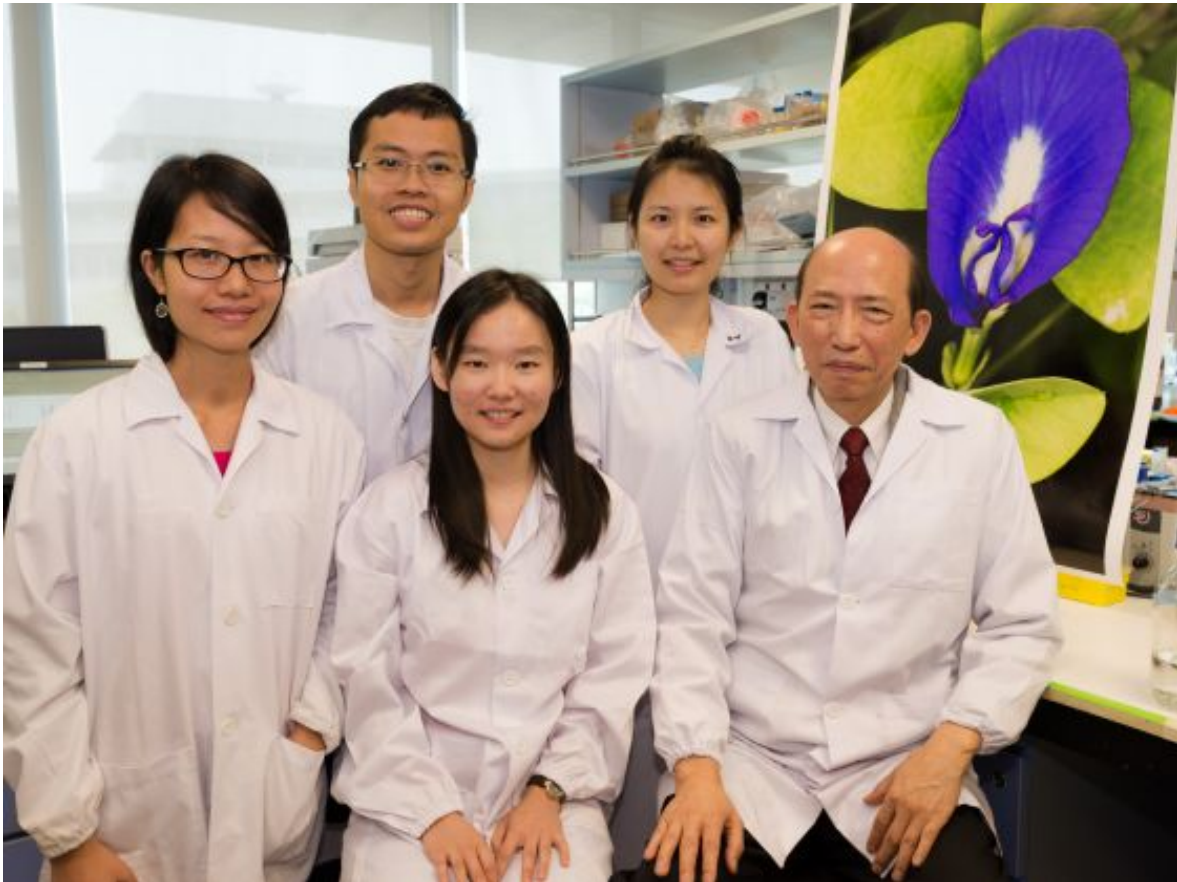


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Local herb could aid in new drugs' development: NTU



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The Blue Butterfly Pea, known locally as Bunga Telang (or blue pea flower in Malay), is said to contain a molecule that can hold together chains of amino acids. Only three other known molecules are able to perform this function, an important process in the development of new drugs, NTU scientists said. Professor James Tam from NTU's School of Biological Sciences, the lead scientist of this project, added that Bunga Telang's molecule, named Butelase-1, is able to do the same process 10,000 times

faster and “cleanly” without leaving any residue.

“While we already have the tools to cut peptides easily, joining them together is much harder, as the most commonly used ligase usually leaves residues behind, which may affect the efficacy of the final product,” said Prof Tam, director of NTU’s Drug Discovery Centre. “The ability to cut and join bits and pieces of peptides fast, easily and cleanly will speed up our search for novel drugs and treatments.”

Bunga Telang is scientifically known as *Clitoria ternatea*. Its blue flowers are commonly used to make food colouring. The plant is also used as a traditional herb to enhance memory, and as an anti-depressant and anti-stress agent.

The discovery of Butelase-1 is part of a larger research programme which received a S\$10 million grant under the National Research Foundation’s (NRF) Competitive Research Programme (CRP) in 2012.

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