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3 universities get S\$33m to collaborate with Chinese counterparts

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SINGAPORE — The family of property magnate Ng Teng Fong has donated 150 million yuan (S\$33 million) to a new agreement inked yesterday between three local universities and their counterparts in China to boost collaborations in research and education.

The National University of Singapore and Tsinghua University will carry out joint research and development in areas such as data science and data analytics, as well as look for opportunities to commercialise technology.

Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Peking University will establish a research institute to look into multi-modal big data analytics technologies for smart cities and human-centred technologies for healthy living and lifelong learning.

The institute will also work with the existing Rapid-Rich Object Search (ROSE) Lab — established by the two universities previously — that is working on next-generation visual and object search technologies, as well as the Research Centre of Excellence in Active Living for the Elderly, which develops digital solutions for the elderly.

As for the Singapore University of Technology and Design's partnership with Zhejiang University, the focus will be on design innovation in the countries in the areas of manufacturing, urbanisation and sustainability.

The donation will be split evenly among the three partnerships, which also marks the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Singapore and the People's Republic of China.

At the signing ceremony at Clifford Pier at The Fullerton Bay Hotel yesterday, Mr Ong Ye Kung, Acting Minister For Education (Higher Education And Skills), said the exchange of knowledge and wisdom has the most profound impact on, and most long-lasting benefits for societies and economies.

He cited the spread of Confucianism, which originated in the Zhou dynasty and spread to Vietnam, Korea, Japan and Southeast Asia over centuries.

"Universities today are ... the neural nodes of a global network for the exchange of knowledge and know-how. In addition, universities are bastions of the national life of countries, in understanding the language, history, geography and culture of the country and those around it," he said.

"They are seized with emerging social issues, such as demographic challenges in China and Singapore, with economic challenges such as raising productivity in Singapore or restructuring to a more consumption-based economy in China."