

Singapore

Singtel, NTU, NRF to set up S\$42.4m lab to develop robotics, artificial intelligence



SINGAPORE: A S\$42.4 million research and development (R&D) laboratory is in the works under a five-year public-private partnership to boost Singapore's development of artificial intelligence (AI), data analytics, robotics and smart computing.

Called the Singtel Cognitive and Artificial Intelligence Lab for Enterprises (SCALE@NTU), the lab is a collaboration between telco Singtel, Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Singapore's National Research Foundation (NRF) aimed at boosting the country's Smart Nation drive.

The lab will allow researchers to develop applications for use in the areas of public safety, smart urban solutions, transportation, healthcare and manufacturing. It also aims to resolve challenges faced by cities in keeping their infrastructure facilities in "tip top running condition".

About 100 researchers from Singtel and NTU will work at the new lab while another 200 research engineers, graduate and undergraduate students will also be trained in the lab.

This comes as Singtel signed agreements with NTU and the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) on Monday (Dec 4) to increase R&D efforts in technologies that will support Singapore's transformation into a Smart Nation as well as boost the country's digital economy.



Speaking at the launch of the partnership, Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean, who is also chairman of the NRF, said the initiative will allow public researchers a better gauge of market demand for their research domains, while local enterprises can develop a good pipeline of products and services.

"In Singapore, the Government is working closely with our companies, unions and workers so that we can succeed in the digital age. At the national level, we are advancing our Smart Nation initiative. At the sectoral level, under the Industry Transformation Maps, each sector is developing its digitisation plan and coordinating efforts to upgrade the digital capabilities of our companies and workers," Mr Teo said.

One area of the lab's research includes the use of smart sensors embedded with AI to pinpoint when facilities such as lifts and escalators require maintenance – before breakdowns occur.

Maintenance work can then be deployed only when necessary to achieve optimal performance for these assets and help cut operating costs, according to joint news release issued by Singtel, NTU, A*STAR and NRF.



"As businesses face the rising threat of technological disruptions, companies are constantly seeking innovative ways to gain deeper insights through data analytics, better engage their customers and transform their operations through digitalisation," said Mr Bill Chang, Singtel's group enterprise CEO.

Singtel and A*STAR will also work together on other projects including smart building automation systems, robotics and Internet of Things (IoT) applications that could help boost operating efficiencies in various industries.

For example, robots can be deployed to handle biohazardous waste, allowing companies to deploy their employees to undertake higher value-added jobs.

A*STAR will set up a model factory to test these technologies on Singtel's NarrowBand-IoT and 5G mobile network next year.

"Public-private partnerships and open innovation pave the way for successful projects that could benefit the Singapore economy and lives of Singaporeans. In this age where disruptions are emerging rapidly, such joint collaborations are all the more valuable," said Professor Tan Sze Wee, executive director of the science and engineering research council at A*STAR.

Source: CNA/kc

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