

Singtel partners NTU, A*STAR to develop AI, data analytics, robotics and IoT

By Chong Vin Nee | 2017-12-04



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Singtel today signed agreements with Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (NTU Singapore) and the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) to spearhead R&D efforts in emerging technologies that will support Singapore's transformation into Smart Nation and help enable the country's digital economy.

Under a five-year partnership, Singtel, NTU Singapore and the National Research Foundation Singapore (NRF Singapore) will establish a S\$42.4 million corporate lab, to be called Singtel Cognitive and Artificial Intelligence Lab for Enterprises (SCALE@NTU), to develop applications for use in the areas of public safety, smart urban solutions, transportation, healthcare and manufacturing. The partners, through their collective expertise and resources, aim to accelerate innovation in the fields of AI, advanced data analytics, robotics and smart computing.

Bill Chang, Chief Executive Officer, Group Enterprise at Singtel, said, "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 digitalization. To help companies address these challenges, we are stepping up our R&D efforts to develop deep capabilities in these focused areas."

The research by SCALE@NTU aims to resolve various challenges faced by cities in keeping their infrastructure facilities in tip top running condition. With the use of smart sensors embedded with AI, governments can analyze data from infrastructure facilities to decide when it is necessary to conduct maintenance works to achieve optimal performance for these assets. This could help cut operating costs for cities that currently spend significant amounts on routine maintenance, whilst not compromising on infrastructure quality and performance standards.

Professor Lam Khin Yong, NTU's Acting Provost, Chief of Staff and Vice President (Research) said, "For Singapore to achieve its Smart Nation vision, we have to keep pushing the frontiers of AI and develop innovative ways to process, analyze and utilize big data. This is how the collaborative effort between Singtel and NTU on cognitive computing will make a huge impact, improving productivity for businesses while making our cities smarter and more efficient."

Over the next five years, some 100 researchers from Singtel and NTU will work at SCALE@NTU, while another 200 research engineers, graduate and undergraduate students will also be trained in the lab. The collaboration builds on NTU's strong expertise in AI and data science, with the university ranked world No. 2 by Nikkei and Elsevier for having the most-cited research papers in these areas.

George Loh, NRF Singapore's Director (Programs), said, "The lab will provide a platform for researchers and engineers from both academia and industry to work together to translate cutting-edge research into digital solutions and offerings by our companies, while nurturing a pipeline of digital talent who can drive Singapore's Smart Nation journey."

Singtel and A*STAR will also work together on projects including smart building automation systems, robotics and Internet of Things (IoT) applications that could help boost operating efficiencies in various industries. Robots can be deployed to handle biohazardous waste, allowing companies to assign their employees to undertake higher value-added jobs. Such technologies can be tested in a model factory to be set up by A*STAR next year.

Professor Tan Sze Wee, Executive Director of the Science and Engineering Research Council at A*STAR, said, "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."

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