Indian tech billionaire donates $4m to boost research at NTU

Indian technology billionaire Senapathy “Kris” Gopalakrishnan is donating $4 million to Nanyang Technological University (NTU) to attract top young scientists from across the globe to conduct research there.

The gift, the largest by an Indian national to NTU, promises to benefit both Singapore and India in their smart-city aspirations.

Half of the endowment will go towards the Gopalakrishnan-NTU Presidential Postdoctoral Fellowship, which will fund up to two post-doctoral fellowships a year for five years at NTU, starting from this academic year.

The other $2 million will enable students from the Indian Institute of Technology Madras and the Indian Institute of Science in Bengaluru to either pursue a joint PhD or enter a PhD-level collaboration with NTU.

The donation was formalised during a signing ceremony at the NTU auditorium yesterday. It was witnessed by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is on a visit to Singapore, and Education Minister Ong Ye Kung.

Mr Gopalakrishnan, 63, is a co-founder of Indian IT giant Infosys and chairman of start-up accelerator and seed fund Axilor Ventures. He told The Straits Times on Thursday: “The philosophy of my support to research has been that if I can connect research in India with research happening elsewhere, more people will work on the problem.”

“They will not reinvent the wheel, they will actually build on the research that is happening elsewhere,” he added on the sidelines of an Indian High Commission event at Marina Bay Sands Expo and Convention Centre.

The first two recipients of the fellowships will probably be announced in the next month or so, said NTU president Subra Suresh.

NTU yesterday recognised Mr Gopalakrishnan as a Nanyang Professor of the Practice, an honour allowing a highly accomplished but non-academic person to teach students.

Arvind Jyaram