Swedish foundation donates $7.6m to NTU to start fellowship programme for AI

Nanyang Technological University president Subra Suresh (right) with Mr Marcus Wallenberg, vice-chairman of the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation. PHOTO: NTU

SINGAPORE - The Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation, the largest private financier of research in Sweden, is donating $7.6 million to Nanyang Technological University (NTU) for a post-doctoral fellowship that focuses on artificial intelligence (AI) and autonomous systems.
With matching by the Singapore government, the total endowment raised for the programme is S$11.4 million, which is the largest endowment gift from a foreign entity to NTU. It will enable promising post-doctoral candidates to do research at the university under the Wallenberg-NTU Presidential Postdoctoral Fellowship, NTU said on Tuesday (July 3).

An additional $5 million has been set aside by the Wallenberg Foundation, through its AI, Autonomous Systems and Software Programme, in support of the post-doctoral fellows. This means NTU will receive $16.4 million in total for the fellowship.

NTU president Subra Suresh said: "The Wallenberg name is synonymous with research excellence and innovation, and these new fellowships will carry on that legacy. They will attract to NTU highly trained and experienced researchers who will promote and encourage vital partnerships between academia and industry with potential benefits for Singapore and the rest of the world."

The candidates will spend a year in Sweden hosted by the Wallenberg AI, Autonomous Systems and Software Programme, which is the country’s largest research programme. Up to five Wallenberg-NTU Presidential Postdoctoral Fellowship awards will be given each year over five years.

Mr Marcus Wallenberg, vice-chairman of the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation, said: "The Wallenberg-NTU Presidential Postdoctoral Fellowships will provide valuable opportunities for early-career researchers to develop their specialised expertise and widen their global networks that will translate their ideas into real-world influence and impact in Singapore, Sweden and beyond."

The new fellowship is part of the NTU Presidential Postdoctoral Fellowship (PPF) announced by Professor Suresh during his inauguration as NTU president in February. The PPF has received about 540 applications from around the world for the 12 fellowship places at NTU.

The Wallenberg gift comes a month after the $2 million gift from Mr Kris Gopalakrishnan, chairman of Axilor Ventures and co-founder of Indian IT giant Infosys, to set up the Gopalakrishnan-NTU Presidential Postdoctoral Fellowship, which was unveiled during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s inaugural visit to the university.