SINGAPORE - ExxonMobil will contribute US$10 million over five years as the first founding industry partner for the new Singapore Energy Centre.

It will be energy giant's first such research and development partnership outside the United States.

The investment was announced on Wednesday (Oct 31) on the sidelines of Singapore International Energy Week 2018 and around a year after ExxonMobil agreed to become a founding member of the research centre.
The Singapore Energy Centre was officially launched, also on Wednesday, by Nanyang Technological University and the National University of Singapore. Initially the joint research centre will focus on researching new forms of energy production, innovations in energy efficiency, energy conversion and storage, improving energy and water efficiency.

ExxonMobil vice-president of research and development Vijay Swarup said: "The Singapore Energy Centre will serve as a focal point for close collaboration between universities and industry in exploring solutions for addressing the dual challenge of meeting society’s growing energy needs while addressing the risks of climate change."

Dr Swarup said that if people doubted ExxonMobil's motives, they should look at its history of initiatives like improved fuel quality and developing lightweight plastics.

"Now we need different technologies to meet the demands of the growing middle class in society while mitigating the risks of climate change. From a science standpoint we need to work on the technology for that.

"And I think the proof of our motives will be that we’re going to develop the solutions and roll them out."

In October ExxonMobil said it was assessing a multi-billion project in its Singapore integrated manufacturing facility.

When asked how this sum compared with the US$10 million dedicated to the Singapore Energy Centre, Dr Swarup said that investments in downstream programmes such as upgrading facilities cost much more than those in the initial research phase.

"If we're talking about US$10 million we think that is a sufficient amount to begin research. And as projects and technologies mature and you go from research to development and then to deployment ... That is where your big capital injection is."

Mr Gan Seow Kee, chairman and managing director of ExxonMobil Asia Pacific, said: "ExxonMobil's participation ... enhances our technological capabilities in the country and complements our already strong manufacturing and commercial presence."

NTU’s vice-president for research, Professor Lam Khin Yong, said: "This joint centre will take ideas nurtured at the lab into industry, and also study the environmental impact of innovations, as well as business and economic models for its research projects."

Professor Chen Tsuhan, NUS deputy president for research and technology, added: "This strategic partnership will enable consortium members to identify issues of common interest to the industry and co-develop solutions with the two universities.

"This approach will bridge the gap between early stage research and economic-centric applied research, both of which are needed for development of long-term sustainable energy solutions."

Additional reporting by Jose Hong