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A Momentous Step in the Asian Disability Sports Scene
Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Disability Classification and Research Centre (DCRC) sign agreement to spearhead research and development in sports technology

10 November 2007 – To add a new dimension to the Asian disability sports scene, Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Disability Classification and Research Centre (DCRC) will be signing a historic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formalise and spearhead joint research and development in disability sports technology, and to grow the pool of sports engineering researchers in Singapore and the region.

To be witnessed by Guest-of-Honour Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports, the MOU will be signed by the Dean of NTU’s College of Engineering, Professor Pan Tso-Chien and DCRC Chairman Mr Frankie Thanapal Sinniah.

The MOU will create opportunities for exchange of ideas and scientific interactions through joint meetings, research collaborations, short term research attachments and conducting related research seminars.

Currently, disabled athletes are only classified as and when they participate in international competitions. In a bid to raise awareness on disability sports and make it more accessible, Singapore Disability Sports Council proposed the setting up of DCRC which has garnered the support of key industry stakeholders such as the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and the Asia Paralympic Committee (APC).

Singapore was selected as the site for DCRC because of its geographical location and its technical and telecommunication advantages. DCRC will conduct training and classification programmes, certify professional classifiers under IPC’s standards, conduct research and become the resource centre for Asian National Paralympic Committees.

“NTU, through the Sports Engineering Research Team under the School of Chemical and Biomedical Engineering, is committed in producing outstanding researchers that anticipate and meet the needs of the sporting community,” says NTU Associate Professor Franz Konstantin Fuss, who is leading the collaborative efforts. “This tie-up is significant as we bridge the gap between disabled and able-bodied athletes and give more recognition to disabled sports people.”

Prof Dr Fuss, who is also the editor-in-chief of Sports Technology, an international journal, believes that by delving into the areas of sports science, engineering and biomedical research, the research will not only be confined to the niche market of disability sport, but will inject new ideas into able-bodied sports technology as well.
Mr Sinniah, who is to sign the MOU adds, “NTU has a luminary track record in the field of bio-engineering and has come up with several groundbreaking projects.” The recent projects include the world’s first fully instrumented climbing wall built with sensors, as well as a bowling ball that can measure the force during the approach (swing).

According to both parties, this agreement is also a reflection of the growing interest towards disability research and the larger research community in the academia. “I hope to see researchers from NTU cultivate synergistic research collaborations and experiments with our athletics with disabilities,” says Mr Sinniah.

“Through research and other sports programs, DCRC would enhance Singapore’s position as a Sports Hub and complement the other institutions such as the Singapore Sports School,” states Mr Sinniah. “Together with NTU, we can capitalise on each other’s strengths to deepen our capabilities, generate knowledge and exchange ideas.”

As part of the sponsorship, global financial firm UBS AG will help support disability sports research at DCRC. “UBS is delighted to be sponsoring DCRC, advocating the need to provide timely classification to athletes with disabilities in Singapore and Asia as well as provide a centre for the research in sports equipment and prosthetics for disability sports. The sponsorship is an extension of UBS’s continued support of capacity building initiatives for persons with disabilities,” says Ms Christine Ong, Country Head and Champion for Community Affairs for UBS in Singapore.

"We hope that DCRC’s collaboration with NTU will go a long way to ensure that many young, aspiring and capable athletes gain maximum value and advantage in competitions through more innovative sports equipment and will no longer be marginalised by the lack of timely classifications," she adds.

Whether it’s developing cost-effective racing wheelchairs, prosthetic arms for archery or a bowling ball with retractable handles, this partnership will be a boon for the region’s Paralympic athletes. When it comes to sports equipment for the Asia’s leading disabled athletes, one can honestly say that they are not at a disadvantage.

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