

# BMW sets up joint research lab in S'pore

**Its first such facility in S-E Asia is a joint effort with NTU**

By **NG ZHUO YANG**

THE BMW Group is bringing in its research capabilities to Singapore through the establishment of a Future Mobility Research Lab here, the first of its kind in South-east Asia for the premium car manufacturer.

Launched officially yesterday, the research facility is a joint initiative with Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and will host five full-time scientists and six PhD researchers.

The mobility lab will be able to tap a joint investment of \$5.5 million from the BMW Group and NTU for its funding over the next three years.

The BMW-NTU lab will study and develop key areas of future transportation such as human-machine interface, as well as advanced battery materials and mobility concepts.

A key focus for BMW Group, which also has the Mini and Rolls-Royce brands under its mast, is how the lab's research outcomes can benefit the needs of the broader Asian market in terms of sustainability and efficiency.

Projects that have been lined up for the joint lab include researches on the possibilities of integrating brain control into cars, and the use of nano-structured materials to improve the cycle life, as well as energy and power densities of lithium-ion batteries, which are used to power electric vehicles.

Besides looking into the implementation of intelligent routing and parking search systems, BMW Group is also keen to introduce new mobility offerings for mega-cities by first analysing consumers' behaviours.

For instance, BMW Group's senior vice-president, Kay Segler, shared with *The Business Times* that the effect of varying habits and climates in this part of the world on the recharging of electric cars' batteries is a form of knowledge that could be better grasped through more in-depth research done at the BMW-NTU lab.

"There's a lot of questions still open and therefore Singapore is a very perfect testbed for all the big cities in the world," he said.

Dr Segler cited Singapore's densely populated and urbanised setup, coupled with its highly sophisti-

cated and tech-savvy population, as a reason that the city-state was a natural choice for the German global giant.

By collaborating with BMW Group to set up this joint lab, situated in its Research Techno Plaza, NTU joins seven other prestigious universities such as the Technical University of Munich (TUM), Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Tsinghua University as partners to the BMW Group.

"Needless to say, NTU is honoured to be BMW's choice partner," said NTU president Bertil Andersson.

Prof Andersson said that NTU's status as the fastest-rising university in the top 50 of the latest Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings could have been a mark of differentiation for NTU from the other local universities in the eyes of the BMW Group.

He also suggested that NTU's "Bavarian connection", which has been developed through its collaborations with TUM since 2005, could have stood it in good stead during BMW Group's search for a partner institution in Singapore.

"We are not a stranger to the Germans," said Prof Andersson.