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NTU, Laos uni set up environment centre in Vientiane

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THE Nanyang Technological University (NTU) will be setting up a new Centre of Excellence for Environmental Management in Vientiane, Laos, in partnership with the National University of Laos (NUOL).

BT understands that the total investment amounts to S\$120,000 and is to be funded by the Nanyang Environmental and Water Research Institute (NEWRI) and Lien Foundation.

The collaboration agreement was inked last week in Vientiane.

The integrated research and teaching facility is expected to be ready by early 2014 and will serve 2,600 environmental science undergraduates from NUOL, a leading university in the country known to provide skilled manpower and resources to support Laos' economy.

The partnership, the first between NTU and a Laotian university, will allow joint research projects on wastewater treatment, water quality management, and health and sanitation, as well as student and staff exchanges between the universities.

NEWRI will leverage on NTU's expertise in environmental engineering to support NUOL to develop an environmental management curriculum for undergraduates and a research programme for post-graduate students.

In addition, NEWRI is leading a community effort supported by the Lien Foundation, to train NUOL faculty and staff on methodologies for measurement of water quality as well as in setting up a food waste digester at the NUOL dormitories.

Professor Ng Wun Jern, executive director of NEWRI, told BT: "As Laos has a sizeable eco-tourism industry, it is essential to protect its water bodies from pollution as part of caring for the environment. The Centre of Excellence for Environmental Management will have the capability to provide and train the expertise needed for managing the environment well in the face of growing urbanisation and an expanding tourism industry."