NTU, Fraunhofer Set Up Research Center To Boost Singapore's IDM Industry

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Singapore's capabilities in Interactive Digital Media (IDM) research will be boosted with the setting up of the Fraunhofer IDM Centre@NTU by Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft (Fraunhofer) - Europe's largest institution for applied research. The centre will focus on the promotion of applied research as well as the commercialisation of IDM innovations.

Facilitated by the multi-agency Interactive Digital Media R&D Programme Office at Media Development Authority (MDA) and funded by the National Research Foundation, the centre forms a part of the international network of IDM R&D institutions that Singapore is establishing. Other organisations in this network include the Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab, the China-Singapore Institute of Digital Media and Keio-NUS Connective Ubiquitous Technology for Embodiments (CUTE) Centre.

Fraunhofer@@NTU will receive funding of S$14m from MDA, NTU and Fraunhofer. Furthermore, the collaboration includes a license agreement with Fraunhofer which secures the use of the protected Fraunhofer brand and processes from inception, thus representing an estimated total investment of S$25m.

"We are attracting the best talents and institutions around the world, making Singapore a preferred place for Interactive Digital Media R&D. The Fraunhofer IDM Centre@NTU is expected to attract the best of IDM R&D from Europe. It will also help to enhance the international network of world class research capacity in Singapore. We hope that the research development resulting from these institutions will be adopted by our IDM industry and give us a competitive edge in this exciting sector," said Mr Michael Yap, Executive Director, Interactive Digital Media R&D Programme Office.

"By implementing the unique Fraunhofer model, connecting academic research and industry, the involved parties made the right decision for the future," said Professor Dr. Annette Schavan, German Federal Minister of Education and Research, who is in Singapore to witness the agreement signing ceremony. "The long-standing collaboration between NTU and Fraunhofer IGD in Singapore has created a basis that allows a sustainably positive development of research in interactive digital media," she added.

The centre's emphasis on applied research in interactive and digital media complements the current university focus on basic research. In other locations within the network of Fraunhofer's Institute for Computer Graphics Research (Fraunhofer IGD), this combination of Fraunhofer's applied research with basic research at universities has made significant scientific and economic impact. In

Singapore, the link with NTU will be the cornerstone for the research centre.

"The IDM sector is poised for tremendous growth, fuelled largely by the technological advancements in computing, broadband and mobile telephone and in combination with soft sciences from the media and art sector. NTU is excited to partner with Fraunhofer to develop the next generation of IDM-based interdisciplinary technologies which can be used in various applications such as bio-sciences and engineering, education, culture and many more," said NTU Provost Professor Bertil Andersson.

Experts at the Fraunhofer IDM@NTU will be working together with Fraunhofer IGD, the world's leading institute for applied research in Visual Computing. Visual Computing is image- and model-based information technology.

One of the key projects is to create a three-dimensional visualisation of proteins at an atomic level in immersive virtual environments. This will allow scientists to better study the mystery of protein folding and the interplay of protein structures. With this technology, the team hopes to provide insights and create inspirations for new biology and biomedical research, including the discovery of new drugs. The team also hopes that this visually stunning technology will serve a valuable tool for teaching complicated biological systems.

Other flagship projects that NTU and Fraunhofer have developed at its current joint research facility - Centre for Advanced Media Technology - include the interactive virtual and augmented Peranakan Museum, an augmented reality Chinese language learning game, as well as a virtual Kallang-Paya Lebar Expressway (KPE) Tunnel.

The agreement to set up Fraunhofer IDM Centre@NTU was signed this evening by Professor Bertil Andersson, Dr Georg Rosenfeld, Division Director, Corporate Development, Fraunhofer, Professor Dr Dieter Fellner, Director of Fraunhofer IGD Darmstadt and Mr Michael Yap. The signing ceremony was held at the residence of His Excellency Mr Jörg Ranau, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Singapore. Professor Dr. Annette Schavan, together with Dr Ng Eng Hen, Minister for Education, Singapore, witnessed the event.

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