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Agency for
Science, Technology
and Research

Singapore's Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR)

SINGAPORE: A*STAR signed a Master Research Collaboration Agreement (MCRA) on Wednesday (Oct 15) with Fujitsu and the Singapore Management University. A follow-up to the MOU signed between Fujitsu and A*STAR in 2013, the parties will invest a total of S\$54 million in an Urban Computing and Engineering Centre of Excellence (CoE).

The centre aims to develop solutions for sustainable urban operations and will focus on two projects addressing crowd management, and improving port operations by managing incoming and outgoing shipments.

Under the deal, A*STAR will contribute data visualisation and analytic capabilities, while SMU will apply its expertise in behavioural economics and computational social science. Fujitsu will leverage its high-performance computing to contribute to the centre's research themes. Research will be conducted across all three organisations, with Singapore acting as a test-bed for solutions. A*STAR said it hopes to implement solutions to urban challenges faced in Singapore, and work with Fujitsu in commercialising the technology internationally.

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A*STAR's Managing Director Dr Raj Thampuran said this collaboration "pushes the leading edge of public-private partnerships to solve major urban challenges confronting Singapore and many other modern cities today". Such issues are complex and dynamic, so a "strongly multidisciplinary, multi-organisation approach is imperative", he noted.

Dr Tan Geok Leong, executive director of the Science and Engineering Research Council at A*STAR, said that the collaboration would leverage on the unique strengths of each organisation. "One of the particular aspects of this piece of research is this area which we talk about human dynamics," he said. "It is not the hard side, a bit on the soft side. This is an area in which SMU has particular strength, and we are collaborating with them and we are going to bring that capability into this project. For people like Fujitsu, they specialise in very hard technology, they make very good computing systems - so by bringing together this capability, we can bring new tools to address the problem."

Fujitsu's head of global marketing, Mr Tango Matsumoto, said that the centre was a valuable opportunity for the company: "The Urban Computing and Engineering Centre of Excellence offers a valuable and unique opportunity for us to engage in cutting-edge research and development by utilizing Singapore's living big data to the maximum, which synchronizes with Fujitsu's approach of human-centric innovation."

The centre is supported by the Urban Computing and Engineering Corporate Lab @ SMU and funded by the NRF as the fourth laboratory to be established under the NRF Corp Lab@University Scheme. The scheme supports Singapore's autonomous universities in their conduct of industry-relevant research with companies as partners.