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20 S'pore scientists in top minds list

BY CAROLYN KHEW

SINGAPORE has had its best showing yet in a report which names the world's most influential scientists – those who have published the highest number of widely-cited research papers.

In a sign that the Republic's research and development (R&D) efforts are paying off, 20 Singapore scientists made it to a list of 3,000 researchers mentioned in The World's Most Influential Scientific Minds 2015 report.

The report released yesterday by the Intellectual Property (IP) and Science arm of Thomson Reuters, a media and information firm, assessed more than 120,000 papers published from 2003 to 2013.

Eleven of the Singapore scientists were from the National University of Singapore (NUS) and eight from the Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

They hail from fields ranging from ecology to engineering.

A scientist from the Genome Institute of Singapore, under the Agency of Science, Technology and Research, rounds off the 20.

The latest figure tops the previous high of 13 Singapore researchers in the 2014 report.

The United States and Britain have the most number of scientists listed in the report, with nearly half of the scientists affiliated with US-based institutions.

Two NTU researchers – David Lou and Zhang Hua, who are permanent residents here – also made it to the report's list of 19 "hot" researchers, for producing at least 14 widely cited papers from 2012 to 2014.

Professor Lou and Professor Zhang, ranked 8th and 12th respectively, were the only scientists from Asia in a list dominated by experts from Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology of the US.

Thomson Reuters said the 3,000 researchers are among the world's top 1 per cent most highly cited researchers.

It estimates that there are about nine million researchers in the world, who produce more than two million reports each year.

Vin Caraher, president of Thomson Reuters IP & Science, said citations are "strong and reliable indicators of the work scientists judge to be most critical to ongoing global research".

This makes "the highly-cited researchers and hottest researchers a true reflection of the individuals, institutions and nations that are driving the pace of scientific discovery", he added.

Ho Teck Hua, NUS deputy president (research and technology), was pleased with how Singapore and NUS fared.

"Overall, this is a very encouraging development and it is the result of Singapore's strong and sustained investment in R&D over more than two decades," he said.

NTU provost Freddy Boey said the report shows that it is home to world-class scientists doing cutting-edge research.

Three of the NTU scientists named in the report worked in two speciality areas, showing the impact of their work in multi-disciplinary areas.

"To solve the problems of the 21st century, we need scientists who are able to think out of the box, combine solutions from different disciplines, and are good in working and leading a diverse group of researchers," he added.

Singapore's sterling showing comes after the Government announced a record $19 billion last week for research and development over the next five years (2016-20) under its Research, Innovation and Enterprise Plan 2020.

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