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NUS to set up artificial intelligence centre in Suzhou



File photo of the National University of Singapore.

SINGAPORE: The National University of Singapore (NUS) on Friday (Dec 15) announced it will jointly establish an artificial intelligence (AI) centre in Suzhou, China, to promote the "innovation, application and commercialisation" of the technology.

In its press release, NUS said the NUS Artificial Intelligence Innovation and Commercialisation Centre will be jointly established with the Suzhou Industrial Park Management Committee, and will be located within the NUS (Suzhou) Research Institute (NUSRI) in the Chinese city. It will be operational from January next year, it added.

The agreement involves a joint investment of almost RMB100 million (S\$20 million) in funding and manpower to support the development and operation of the centre and NUSRI, the press release added.

The AI centre will be led by Professor Ooi Beng Chin, who is a Distinguished Professor of Computer Science at the varsity, as its inaugural director. He will oversee a multidisciplinary research team drawn from across NUS faculties and research institutes to advance AI research, innovation, application and commercialisation across various areas including health care, financial technology and [smart city](#).

NUS added that the centre will also provide incubation support and solutions to start-ups and small businesses, by helping them solve problems with AI and in doing so accelerate the adoption of the technology. It aims to incubate 15 companies in its first five years, it said.

The centre will host to 10 lectures and symposiums over five years to connect science and technology experts and industry leaders in AI-related fields, it said.

Prof Ooi, who is also director of NUS Smart Systems Institute, said, "The advances in AI presents an opportunity to solve society's pressing problems in exciting new ways.

"NUSAIICC aims to be at the forefront of AI innovation, uncovering new insights and developing cutting-edge solutions for the world while at the same time fostering greater collaboration between industry and academia. I look forward to leading this new initiative and working with leading AI experts from Singapore and Suzhou," he said.

This new AI centre comes on the heels of a joint announcement by NUS School of Computing, the Singapore National Eye Centre and the Singapore Eye Research Institute that they have developed a [new, world's first AI system](#) to screen for diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration.

AI has been one of the tech buzzwords for 2017, and Singapore has been ramping up efforts to tap on the technology. In May, for example, the National Research Foundation said it will be investing up to [S\\$150 million into AI.SG](#), an initiative that will see Singapore-based research institutes partner AI start-ups and companies developing such products to grow knowledge in the space, create tools and develop talent to power the country's AI efforts.

Source: CNA/kk