

Singaporeans awarded Commonwealth scholarships to further research in robotics, health and leadership in the UK



Dr Ma Jun (left), from the National University of Singapore, and Dr Dinesh Visva Gunasekaran of the Ministry of Health Holdings. They were awarded the Singapore Commonwealth Fellowship in Innovation by British High Commissioner to Singapore Scott Wightman on July 31, 2018. ST PHOTO: KHALID BABA

PUBLISHED JUL 31, 2018, 11:53 PM SGT



Adrian Lim Transport Correspondent

SINGAPORE - While humans may have difficulties locating survivors in the rubble of a collapsed building, robots designed in the shape of a snake that can move like one could go into tight spaces and assist in such search-and-rescue operations.

The potential of "snake robots", which are being developed by research institutions around the world, has piqued the interest of National University of Singapore (NUS) research fellow, Dr Ma Jun.

The 27-year-old Singaporean wants to further the field by developing control algorithms for these robots, allowing them to move autonomously and to avoid obstacles.

As part of a global Commonwealth Scholarship programme, Dr Ma will get to spend three months at the University College London (UCL) next year (2019) to collaborate with researchers there on the development of snake robots.

Dr Ma told The Straits Times: "The research group I am going to join in UCL has rich experience in the field of control, automation and robotics.

"Therefore, it is a good chance to study from them, enrich my research experience and improve my research capability in the field of robotics," he added.

On Tuesday (July 31), Dr Ma and two other Singaporeans were awarded the Singapore Commonwealth Fellowship in Innovation by British High Commissioner to Singapore Scott Wightman during an event held at his official residence at the Eden Hall in Nassim Road.

The other awardees are Dr Dinesh Visva Gunasekaran, who will work with Moorfields Eye Hospital in London on the use of computer games and virtual reality in diagnosing eye diseases, and Ms Isabel Vadivu Govind, a leadership trainer who will be studying ways of developing leadership skills at Emerson College in Sussex.

During the event, three other Singaporeans - Mr Stefan Tan from the Maritime Port Authority of Singapore, Ms Jasmine Ang of JTC Corporation, and Mr Christopher Chok from River Valley High School - were awarded the Chevening Scholarship.

Chevening Scholarships have been offered around the world for more than 35 years, and Singaporeans who win the prestigious award get to study on postgraduate courses in the UK.

Paralympian Dr William Tan was given the Commonwealth Points of Light award - which recognises an inspiring volunteer from each Commonwealth country - for his charity fund raising work.