

(From left) Sea founder and group chief executive Forrest Li, Education Minister Lawrence Wong and National University of Singapore president Tan Eng Chye at yesterday's signing ceremony, where the university received a \$50 million donation – its largest corporate gift to date – from the local tech company that owns e-commerce platform Shopee and game developer Garena.
ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

IMPACTFUL GIFT

This gift will allow us to accelerate the impact that academic research can have on real-world challenges and create high-value jobs in emerging fields.



MR FORREST LI, founder and group chief executive of Sea. He noted that the contribution marks the deepening of a long-term partnership between Sea and NUS. Mr Li will join the NUS board of trustees on Thursday.



Home-grown Sea gives \$50m to NUS to support computing work

Funds will go towards developing talent, research and education in areas such as AI

Amelia Teng
Education Correspondent

Home-grown tech company Sea, which owns e-commerce platform Shopee and game developer Garena, has donated \$50 million to

the National University of Singapore (NUS) for research and education in the field of computing.

This is the largest corporate gift the university has received to date. The funds will go to NUS' School of Computing (NUS Computing), which has about 4,200 undergraduates and 1,020 PhD and

master's students.

NUS president Tan Eng Chye said yesterday at a signing ceremony that the donation will support the university's work in research and education in critical, fast-growing areas such as artificial intelligence (AI) and data science.

It will also be used for recruiting and grooming academic and research talent through scholarships, research fellowships, visiting professorships and professional development. Other initia-

tives that the gift will support include seed grants for enterprising projects and outreach programmes, said Professor Tan.

Mr Forrest Li, founder and group chief executive of Sea, said the contribution marks the deepening of a long-term partnership between Sea and NUS.

"Academia and industry make powerful partners. Together, we can turn deep knowledge and experimental research into practical and scalable solutions that can up-

lift entire societies.

"This gift will allow us to accelerate the impact that academic research can have on real-world challenges and create high-value jobs in emerging fields," said Mr Li, who will join the NUS board of trustees on Thursday.

At yesterday's event held at NUS' Kent Ridge campus, Education Minister Lawrence Wong said that Sea's contribution complements the Government's efforts and investments in technology.

The gift from Sea is important not just for economic reasons, he said. "Crisis has prompted all of us to reflect deeper on what's really important to us, and the kind of society we want Singapore to be.

"We want a fairer and more equal society, a greener and more sustainable nation, and an inclusive and more united Singapore. These objectives are achieved not just through government policies."

The private sector must also be involved, said Mr Wong, and businesses must do their part to be good corporate citizens.

Education is one key way of preparing Singaporeans for the new world, he added, as the pace of technological change continues to accelerate amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We're fundamentally rethinking existing structures and methods to better meet today's and tomorrow's demands... We're doing more to equip our students with a broader range of skills and core competencies," said Mr Wong.

Mr Li said that as one of the largest employers of local university graduates, Sea has "directly benefited from the high quality of talent produced". The group has close to 900 NUS alumni, both in Singapore and in its offices abroad. Among them are Sea's co-founder David Chen and Shopee's chief executive Chris Feng.

He added: "This gift is our way of giving back to NUS and the wider community, in thanks for all the support we received on our own journey, starting out as a small start-up just 12 years ago."

Sea started out in 2009 in a shop-house office in Maxwell Road as a game publisher called Garena, but has since transformed into a regional heavyweight with more than 3,000 employees here.

Its e-commerce platform Shopee was set up in 2015 and its digital financial services arm SeaMoney was established in 2014.

Prof Tan said that Sea has been a strong supporter of NUS Computing over the years – it has served on the school's industry advisory committee since 2017 and provides its students with internships.

Thanking Sea for its contribution, Mr Wong said: "We're glad that you are taking the lead and showing us how companies in Singapore can do well and do good at the same time."

ateng@sph.com.sg