

# New green role at NUS for chief of National Research Foundation

He will helm sustainability drive to bring together nation's climate efforts after leaving current post

**Cheryl Tan**

The National Research Foundation's (NRF) chief executive Low Teck Seng is stepping down from his post after a decade and will be helming a new sustainability initiative to bring together the nation's wide-ranging efforts on climate change.

The initiative at the National University of Singapore (NUS) looks to establish synergies and facilitate collaboration between the different research institutes on key fronts like sea-level rise and clean energy transition which, in turn, can help to catalyse new ideas and innovations, said Professor Low.

The 67-year-old will take on the role of the university's senior vice-president of sustainability and resilience from next Monday.

The sustainability initiative will

also look at developing a strategy to infuse climate consciousness into the university's curriculum without compromising academic rigour, Prof Low said in an exclusive interview with *The Straits Times*.

"For example, in the field of medicine, the changing climate could bring about more emerging diseases, which would be a key consideration (for future doctors) when it comes to developing resilient, healthy cities of tomorrow," he added.

Prof Low, who has a degree in electrical and electronic engineering, started his career in 1983 as an academic staff member at the NUS department of electrical engineering.

He became dean of the school's Faculty of Engineering in 1998.

Prof Low joined NRF, which sets the national direction for research and development, in 2012.

He was instrumental in driving three national research, innovation and enterprise plans, which had budgets ranging from \$16 billion to \$25 billion.

NRF said he steered the development of many national strategies for science and technology initia-



Professor Low Teck Seng says the National University of Singapore initiative looks to establish synergies and facilitate collaboration between research institutes on key fronts like clean energy transition, which can help to catalyse new ideas and innovations. ST PHOTO: JASON QUAH

tives in areas like quantum and synthetic biology.

He will continue working with NRF as an adviser and provide guidance on issues relating to science, technology and research, the foundation added.

At NUS, Prof Low hopes to work with his colleagues to create a net-zero campus, which could serve as a test bed for leading technologies, in areas such as cooling, the use of electric vehicles and novel grid technologies, he said.

The culture of environmental consciousness, however, goes beyond campus infrastructure.

Prof Low hopes to raise public awareness – through seminars, workshops and conferences – of the expertise available on campus that can be tapped.

Above all, he aims to apply newly

gleaned insights and technologies that Singapore has developed in a way that would bring resilience to the country.

He gave the example of Singapore's water supply, saying: "After having developed our water technologies in our educational institutes and built an industrial sector around it, we can now at least tell ourselves that in a situation of water stress, we will be able to ensure that our water supply is sufficient."

He hopes that resilience could also be ensured in other aspects of daily life – in food and energy, as well as against climate extremes like sea-level rise.

This can be achieved by capitalising on past research investments and new research programmes that NUS will establish,

Prof Low said.

NUS president Tan Eng Chye said the university is committed to advancing sustainable development and contributing to the global fight against climate change.

Professor Tan said: "As a university at the forefront of scientific research, we are at a great vantage point to drive change and test cutting-edge practices and solutions by serving as living laboratories for experimentation."

"Green research is an exciting new frontier offering opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration."

Mr Beh Kian Teik, 49, current deputy CEO of NRF, will be appointed chief executive from Saturday.

tansuwen@sph.com.sg