

Water technology R&D centre to open next week

GE partners NUS to develop safe drinking water systems across Asia

By **LEE U-WEN**

A \$150 million research and development centre that aims to develop safe drinking water systems across Asia will open here next Monday.

The opening of NUS-GE Singapore Water Technology Centre – within the school of engineering at the National University of Singapore – coincides with the start of the second annual Singapore International Water Week, on June 22-26.

Already, the first scientists, engineers and researchers have started work at the centre, with all equipment and facilities expected to be in place by the first quarter of next year.

GE has hired 37 people and there are plans to ramp up manpower to about 100, Kevin Cassidy, general manager (Asia-Pacific) of GE Water & Process Technologies, said yesterday.

Mr Cassidy and other senior GE Water and NUS staff were speaking to re-

porters during a tour of the 2,700 square metre centre, which occupies a building at the engineering faculty and some space in the Temasek Engineering Building.

The centre will be officially opened by National Research Foundation chairman Tony Tan, NUS president Tan Chorh Chuan and GE Water & Process Technologies chief executive and president Heiner Markhoff.

GE's partnership with NUS is its first with a university in the Asia-Pacific.

Michael Saunders, director of the NUS Environmental Research Institute, said that the centre would go a long way towards supporting Singapore's strategy of becoming a global water technology hub.

Mr Cassidy said that the centre would actively engage government agencies as part of an inclusive working relationship. "The Public Utilities Board is a customer of ours, and what we can offer is a place for them to test some new technologies."

On the reason for basing the centre here, he said that Singapore was "one of the most progressive countries in addressing water issues".



LIM WUI LIANG/THE STRAITS TIMES

Water works: NUS-GE Singapore Water Technology Centre will officially open next Monday, coinciding with the start of Singapore International Water Week

The opening of the centre could not have come at a more opportune time.

Worldwide demand for water last year came to 313 billion cubic metres – a figure that is expected to surge to 870 billion cubic metres by 2030.

Today, the World Health Organization estimates that about 1.1 billion people lack access to safe drinking water.

And by 2025, some 2.8 billion people will be living in water scarce areas.

Recent studies have shown that about 95 per cent of the world's cities still dump raw sewage into their water, underscoring the need for more modern treatment systems in industrialised and developing countries.