

Uni-industry tie-up mutually beneficial: Tony Tan

THERE are compelling reasons for academia and industry to get together to drive research as each party brings individual strengths to the table, National Research Foundation chairman Tony Tan said yesterday.

Speaking at the opening of the \$150 million National University of Singapore (NUS)-General Electric (GE) Singapore Water Technology Centre, which aims to provide water technology solutions to the world, Dr Tan said such industry-university collaborations can result in mutually beneficial partnerships.

"They provide access to a variety of skills, knowledge and facilities that a company alone could never accumulate or afford," he said. "The universities' researchers see across multiple sectors and can bring together existing technologies in unexplored combinations."

On the other hand, industrial partners understand exactly what their customers want, as well as the need to be "cost-effective, innovative, reliable and entrepreneurial" when delivering products and services to the marketplace, Dr Tan said. "They provide the challenge and satisfaction of contributing to the development of real products and services."

In the case of the partnership between NUS and GE, the centre – at the university's school of engineering – will allow researchers and academics to help develop and test technology in areas such as desalination, water re-use, the generation of ultra-pure water for the semiconductor industry, and chemical analysis of water and wastewater.

Heiner Markhoff, chief executive of GE Water & Process Technologies, said: "Working in partnership is the only way we can suc-

cessfully and expeditiously address the most pertinent water challenges, including alleviating the increasing water stress found in many parts of the world . . . and improving water quality for a variety of purposes. The work done at this centre will be truly life-changing for many."

The centre houses some 30 GE scientists and engineers, with plans to hire 40 more staff over the next three years, Mr Markhoff said.

NUS president Tan Chorh Chuan said the success of the research and development efforts at the centre will help improve the lives and health of people and support sustainable industrial growth.

"In this spirit, we challenge this alliance and its research teams to provide innovative solutions to the most important water issues in Singapore, Asia and the rest of the world," he said.



Centre's opening: Dr Tan (left) striking a gong to officially open the NUS-GE Singapore Water Technology Centre as Mr Markhoff (centre) and Prof Tan look on