

# NUS, Keio University open \$20m research centre here

FEEL an urge to hug your children while at work? If they are wearing “huggy pyjamas”, you can do just that through a Web-connected device that triggers inflatable airbags in the pyjamas to give the wearer warm cuddly squeezes.

The invention is the brainchild of researchers at the Keio-NUS Cute (Connective Ubiquitous Technology for Embodiments) Centre.

And more such futuristic ideas are expected to be spawned from the \$20 million interactive digital media (IDM) research centre, officially opened yesterday at the National University of Singapore (NUS) by President SR Nathan.

Funded by a grant from the National Research Foundation, the joint research centre between NUS and Japan’s Keio University aims to “connect millions of children and families” through the radical use of interactive media and technologies.

“We want to make an impact – by solving the important problems in society,” said co-director of the centre Adrian David Cheok, an associate professor of electrical and computer engineering at NUS. The centre’s other co-director is Masa Inakage, renowned for his special effects work on the Hollywood movie

*Spawn*, and dean and professor of the Graduate School of Media Design at Keio University.

Some 51 researchers at NUS are now connected via high-speed links and high-definition video-conferencing tools with 36 counterparts at Keio University’s Hiyoshi Campus to work on various projects.

The centre will initially focus on three broad areas: developing children and family communication systems; building an engine to spot online digital activity trends; and building a state-of-the-art studio to link researchers in NUS, Keio University and other partner locations.