

# Soon, long-distance hugs will become a possibility

SOON, you can give a hug to your loved ones in Singapore, even when you are overseas.

The Huggy Pajama, created in 2007, is a felt jacket with built-in pockets of air that contract to simulate the “hugging” of its wearer. All you need to do is to press a remote control.

The remote control can work from anywhere in the world via an Internet connection that carries signals to the jacket. The product is expected to be available commercially by next year.

National University of Singapore doctorate student James

Keng, 28, who helms the team of 10 researchers that designed the jacket, said: “This project bridges the physical communication gap over long distances.”

It was inspired by a similar project – Poultry.Internet, developed in 2005 – that allowed humans to interact with pet chickens by remote control.

Both projects were created by researchers of the Keio-NUS Connective Ubiquitous Technology for Embodiments Centre, which was officially opened yesterday by President S R Nathan.

The \$20 million centre, a collaboration between NUS and Japan’s Keio University, was set up to invent multi-sensory communication devices to better



**REMOTE PET:** Mr James Keng demonstrating Poultry.Internet, a system that allows humans to “pet” a chicken remotely. (PHOTO: JAMIE KOH)

connect children with their families, said its co-director, Professor Adrian Cheok.

The centre also displayed inventions like Age Invaders – a platform that allows elderly people and children to shoot virtual

arrows at one another by stepping on illuminated squares – and AmbiKraf, a fabric whose colour and pattern change with a wearer’s emotions.