

Prince Andrew witnesses inking of research deal

“FORGOTTEN” brain cells will be studied at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) following the signing of a deal with Britain’s Warwick University, witnessed by a member of its royal family.

Prince Andrew, the Duke of York, attended the event as part of a two-day whistlestop tour of Singapore, which began on Thursday when he visited the Marina Barrage and called on President S R Nathan and Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong at the Istana.

Prince Andrew, 49, was here to promote United Kingdom-Singapore business ties in his role as Special Representative for International Trade and Investment, which he took up in 2001 after leaving the Royal Navy.

NTU’s neuroscience programme marks the university’s first foray into the field and will tie in with the new medical school when it is launched, explained NTU provost Bertil Andersson.

The programme will look at glial cells – cells which link and protect the brain’s nerve cells, regulating the flow of information.

These cells have been relatively sidelined in previous research, making it a good area for NTU and Warwick to make their mark, said Prof Andersson.

The prince also spoke at NTU’s inaugural UK-Singapore Water Futures Forum, where he urged delegates to work together to figure out the “right amount of water” for the planet “for the greater good”. “The world in the past has been much more about competition. Today, we need to be more collaborative... We have seen, through a number of medical emergencies, we can’t go it alone,” he said.

Yesterday, the National University of Singapore (NUS) hosted the 50th anniversary reception of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP). Prince Andrew, who was the guest of honour, is a patron.

The CSFP’s aim is to provide a network of study opportunities throughout the Commonwealth. NUS president Tan Chorh Chuan also announced two graduate scholarships, under the CSFP, for PhD studies in integrated research programmes at the Graduate School for Integrative Sciences and Engineering.

He said: “In many ways, CSFP and NUS have parallel goals. Both have established global education networks, are committed to enriching communities through education and research, and nurturing leaders who can help advance societies.”

This is the first time a local university has offered scholarships under the plan.

Prince Andrew continues his visit of South-east Asia, taking in Vietnam and Thailand.