



Prof Chua Tat Seng (right), head of NeXT, demonstrating a multimedia search to Dr Yaacob Ibrahim (centre) yesterday. NeXT has inked collaborations to study how analytics and customer profiling can be used to provide automatic customer sentiment, recommendation engines and medical technologies. PHOTO: DIOS VINCOY JR FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

New centre helps devices talk to each other

A NEW research centre has been set up at the National University of Singapore (NUS) to study how devices such as mobile phones, digital cameras and sensors can communicate with each other and with people.

The Sensor-enhanced Social Media Centre (SeSaMe) is a joint venture between NUS, Zhejiang University and the Media Development Authority (MDA).

Professor Mohan Kankanhalli of the Department of Computer Science at the NUS School of Computing, gave an example of how the SeSaMe technology can be used.

“If there’s a lost child, a description can be sent to computer systems that control surveillance cameras,” he said.

“When a camera spots the child, but is unsure because it can’t ‘see clearly’, it can alert the next camera which is in a better

position to zoom in and identify the child.

“Then this information can be automatically sent to the parent or the police.”

The MDA will fund SeSaMe to the tune of \$24 million over the next five years, and 40 to 50 researchers will eventually be hired.

SeSaMe’s research could lead to applications in areas such as medical devices, transport and robotic systems. Prof Kankanhalli and Professor Zhuang Yueting, dean of the College of Computer Science at Zhejiang University, will co-lead the centre.

SeSaMe has already set up its first industry partnership with NetEase, a China-based Internet company that will invest \$2 million to explore how mobile phones can be linked in a network to broadcast an event or monitor a location. The agreement for the partnership with NetEase was

signed yesterday.

Three other industry collaborations were also inked yesterday by the NUS-Tsinghua Extreme Search Centre (NeXT), which specialises in multimedia search, with partners Beijing Everlasting Health Information Technology and Brandtology.

StarHub, the other collaborator, had pre-signed the agreement because it was unable to send a representative yesterday.

These collaborations will explore how analytics and customer profiling can be used to provide automatic customer sentiment, recommendation engines and medical technologies.

Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts, witnessed the signing and later visited some of the research projects at a mini-exhibition at NUS.

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