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NTU wins grant for solar tech development

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National Taiwan University (NTU) has won a Global Research Partnership (GRP) award worth more than NT\$150 million (US\$5 million) from a Saudi Arabian university with a visionary solar building technology research project, the school said on Thursday.

NTU is the only Asian university to have received the award created by the Saudi government last year with the aim of helping its King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) become a top-notch research institution, the spokesman said.

The Saudi government made international headlines last year when it announced its plan to set up the KAUST in a coastal town along the Red Sea some 50km north of Jeddah at a cost of more than US\$10 billion. Construction began late last year and the university is scheduled to begin recruiting graduate students late next year.

Saudi authorities also set up the US\$1 billion GRP award to encourage outstanding academics and research institutions around the world to address challenging scientific and technological issues and develop new technologies that will benefit the public.

The Saudi government sent invitations to 60 universities worldwide last year, asking them to come up with trailblazing research projects to vie for the award.

“The NTU was the only university in Taiwan invited to present research blueprints,” the NTU spokesman said.

A research team headed by Huang Bin-juine (●●●), a professor at the university’s Department of Mechanical Engineering who is also in charge of its new energy laboratory, initiated a pioneering and forward-looking research project focusing on solar building technology development.

Huang said the project covers two main themes — solar-assisted cooling and heating for buildings and solar-powered lighting using light emitting diodes.

The project will first be conducted at NTU's new energy laboratory, with the research results later being transplanted to the KAUST. Huang's team is also required to help the Saudi university establish a solar energy research center.

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