

## UPPING THE ANTE

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# Alibaba sets up AI research centre in Singapore

### Singapore

CHINESE e-commerce giant Alibaba on Wednesday opened an artificial intelligence (AI) research institute in Singapore in partnership with a local university, as the battle to develop AI technology intensifies.

The institute, a tie-up with Nanyang Technological University (NTU), is Alibaba's first joint research centre outside mainland China. It aims to develop cutting-edge AI technologies in areas such as elderly care and urban transport.

The institute will carry out research on AI technologies for an initial five years, starting with a pool of 50 researchers from both organisations, according to a joint press statement.

Alibaba chief technology officer Jeff Zhang said the Singapore venture was part of research and development efforts by Alibaba's DAMO Academy, which was launched last year.

A focus of the institute will be on technologies to help in caring for the elderly, including developing robot

companions to stay with them at home and sensors to help detect problems.

"Using AI technologies, we can address fundamental societal challenges such as an ageing population," said NTU president Subra Suresh.

Singapore has a rapidly ageing population which is causing problems such as labour shortages.

There is intense competition among leading companies in the area of AI, with Google, Microsoft and Amazon scrambling to develop new software and technologies. AFP