



Enhancing regulatory oversight:

The partnership aims to develop mathematical research that can be used to safeguard gaming integrity at the two IRs

FILE PHOTO

Casino watchdog ties up with NUS

By **GRACE LEONG**

THE Casino Regulatory Authority is partnering with the National University of Singapore to develop mathematical research that can be used to safeguard gaming integrity at the two casinos, officials announced yesterday.

Speaking to government officials, academia and industry participants yesterday, CRA chief executive T Raja Kumar said the memorandum of understanding signed with the NUS Department of Mathematics and Department of Statistics and Applied Probability will take their ongoing collaboration to a new level and help enhance regulatory oversight of Singapore's casinos.

"Over the past few years, CRA has had a few engagements with NUS' Department of Mathematics, precisely to consult on technical matters that require the specialist expertise and knowledge of these professors, before CRA could establish policies and process-

es on the regulation of gaming technology," he said.

Professor Chong Chi Tat, head of the NUS Department of Mathematics, said NUS isn't likely to deal with gaming companies directly, but he doesn't rule out that possibility for the future.

"Our job is to make sure there is conformity of such rules and guidelines with regard to equipment and electronic devices that are used in Singapore. In that sense, I don't think there is any intention or need to deal with the industry directly," he said. "But if something comes up that's due to a technical deficiency, then we may raise those issues with CRA and other relevant organisations."

The partnership also opens up opportunities for students at NUS's math, statistics and applied probability departments to be attached to the CRA, said Professor Andrew Wee, Dean of the NUS Faculty of Science.

Some of the joint re-

search projects may involve "coming up with ways to ensure that slot machines and other devices casinos acquire meet requirements and standards set by the industry and CRA", Prof Chong said.

"For example, in terms of methods used to generate random numbers that can be mapped into slot machines, we look at how reliable it is. It is important to make sure these are mathematically sound and fair, and not biased," he said.

Representatives of slot manufacturer International Game Technology said at yesterday's event that they are "very encouraged" to hear that server-based systems and technologies are an area "actively explored" in Singapore.

Bringing server-based gaming, which IGT says enhances player experience and brings efficiencies for casino operators, to the slots floor is at the forefront of the Nevada equipment maker's strategy.

IGT has at least 600 ma-

chines at the two Singapore casinos.

"Server-based standards are currently being released by CRA, so this will provide IGT the opportunity for sbX (IGT's server-based gaming platform) to be approved and placed at the IRs," said Angela Houslay, IGT's systems director.

Tina Kilmer of Bally Technologies sees the collaboration between CRA and NUS as a development that could help expedite the gaming equipment maker's submissions for technical reviews.

"Infusing their technical abilities and expanding their resources help move our submissions for technical reviews quicker, and that strengthens our partnership with the CRA," she said.

Bally currently has 206 machines at Resorts World Sentosa and 293 at Marina Bay Sands.

Asked about the potential of the Asian gaming market for IGT, Steve Kast-

ner, the company's executive director, said he is especially impressed with Singapore's growth potential.

"Asia is expanding in all areas of business, and gaming is obviously part of that as well. It was big news a few years ago when Macau eclipsed the Las Vegas Strip and some people in Las Vegas were a little bit nervous about what's going on. But Macau is growing every year and has continued to grow," he said. "Singapore is also doing well. It's not even one full year in, but the numbers are exceeding expectations and showing a lot of potential."

He is heartened by what he said is "a further use of slot machines and a strong commitment to updating slot machines and content on a regular basis".

"We enjoy doing business in Singapore because it is regulated and a legal market. There's gaming in other countries but it's not so well defined. Singapore is more structured, and sustainable as far as growth is concerned," he said.