

# S'pore R&D on right track: Top physicist

Republic well positioned for major breakthroughs with its focus on fields like nanotech, biotech

■ BY LIAW WY-CIN

SINGAPORE could be at the forefront of breakthroughs in fields like artificial intelligence and nanotechnology, a best-selling science author and television personality said yesterday.

Famed futurist and physicist Michio Kaku said the country is right to focus its research and development (R&D) efforts on these areas, along with biotechnology.

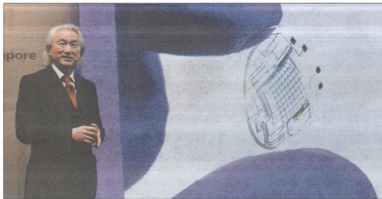
Professor Kaku, 61, called them key technologies for the future which could

revolutionise everything from medicine to shopping. "Singapore could be at the forefront of a new wave of technology, because of its investment in intellectual capitalism," he said.

Following a push from the Government, R&D spending hit a record \$6.33 billion last year, up by more than 25 per cent from 2006. The Republic has tabbed the sector as a key industry and invested in science hubs like Fusionopolis to attract top researchers from abroad.

Prof Kaku was the keynote speaker at the opening of a conference here called Futuropolis 2058, which looks at ways to use technology to create a sustainable world.

The Japanese-born American predicted that a networking revolution, where technology weaves itself into every aspect of life, would take place in countries such as the United States and those in Eu-



Popular science author and TV personality Michio Kaku (above) says Singapore could be at the forefront of a new technology wave. PHOTO: A\*STAR

rope after the dust settles from the global financial turmoil.

He also gave a glimpse of what the world could look like in 50 years. It included eye glasses that connect to the Internet, toilets that detect signs of cancer in urine, and cars that drive themselves with the help of the global positioning system and sensors.

Many of these innovations are already possible and will become mainstream

when microchips get smaller and cheaper, said Professor Chong Tow Chong, executive director of the Science and Engineering Research Council, under the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A\*Star).

The conference, which ends today, is part of the opening celebrations of Fusionopolis, the latest research complex under A\*Star.

Deputy Prime Minister S. Jayakumar,

the guest of honour at the opening, reiterated the Government's long-term commitment to R&D.

He said: "It is crucial to ensure that cities remain economically viable so that they will continue to attract talent, investors and businesses. At the same time, (they must) continue to create jobs for the population so that (people) can have opportunities for better lives."

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