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**THE CAREERS
MAGAZINE FOR
SCIENTISTS**

Singapore's national science administration resembles a Hollywood studio during the golden age of motion pictures: it has the money to launch big projects and the centralized authority to see them through. It also expects big returns on its investment and sometimes keeps its stars on a short lead.

As such, the Singapore science studio is once again unrolling the red carpet. Five years after debuting Biopolis, a life-sciences blockbuster cluster, the Singapore government is unveiling Fusionopolis, its physical-sciences sequel (see page 1144). The Biopolis box office results have been mixed; the S\$500-million (US\$340-million), seven-building complex signed star scientists, produced an avalanche of publications and attracted satellites from several multinational companies and world-class universities. But it has yet to generate sufficiently impressive technology-transfer returns. The twin-tower sequel — with its emphasis on microelectronics, materials, communications and computing research — is perhaps a safer bet. Basic life-science research often takes decades and hundreds of millions of dollars to yield a result, whereas materials and information technology tends to need just a few years and a few million dollars.

There are signs that the heads of the science studios are growing impatient with Biopolis' emphasis on basic research — or, at least, its relative lack of patents and products. The Biopolis advisory board recently increased investments in translational and clinical sciences. Fusionopolis seems intended to bypass basic research — or, at least, fast track research into the applied sciences. Some Fusionopolis projects will work well with those at Biopolis, such as cheaper, faster genome-sequencing technologies.

Contemporary Hollywood suggests that it is possible for big-budget and independent cinema to coexist. The neighbouring Biopolis and Fusionopolis complexes will test how well physics and biology, basic and applied science, and big and small budgets can work together. For now, hundreds of candidates are lining up for what should be a very exciting test screening.

Paul Smaglik moderates the *Naturejobs* Nature Network career-advice forum.

CONTACTS

Editor: Gene Russo

European Head Office, London

The Macmillan Building,
4 Crinan Street, London N1 9XW, UK
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7843 4961
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7843 4996
e-mail: naturejobs@nature.com

European Sales Manager:

Andy Douglas (4975)
e-mail: a.douglas@nature.com

Natureevents:

Ghizlaine Ababou (+44 (0) 20 7014 4015)
e-mail: g.ababou@nature.com

UK Corporate:

Nils Moeller (4953)

Southwest UK/RoW:

Alexander Ranken (4944)

Northeast UK/Ireland:

Matthew Ward (+44 (0) 20 7014 4059)

France/Switzerland/Belgium:

Muriel Lestringuez (4994)

Scandinavia/Spain/Portugal/Italy:

Evelina Rubio-Hakansson (4973)

North Germany/The Netherlands/Eastern

Europe: Reya Silao (4970)

South Germany/Austria:

Hildi Rowland (+44 (0) 20 7014 4084)

Advertising Production Manager:

Stephen Russell
To send materials use London address above.
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7843 4816
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7843 4996
e-mail: naturejobs@nature.com

Naturejobs web development: Tom Hancock

Naturejobs online production: Dennis Chu

US Head Office, New York

75 Varick Street, 9th Floor,
New York, NY 10013-1917
Tel: +1 800 989 7718

Fax: +1 800 989 7103

e-mail: naturejobs@natureny.com

US Sales Manager: Peter Bless

India

Vikas Chawla (+91 1242881057)
e-mail: v.chawla@nature.com

Japan Head Office, Tokyo

Chiyoda Building, 2-37 Ichigayatamachi,
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 162-0843
Tel: +81 3 3267 8751
Fax: +81 3 3267 8746

Asia-Pacific Sales Manager:

Ayako Watanabe (+81 3 3267 8765)
e-mail: a.watanabe@natureasia.com

Business Development Manager, Greater

China/Singapore:

Gloria To (+852 2811 7191)
e-mail: g.to@natureasia.com