Straits Times: S'pore students to get taste of German skills training

Nanyang Poly signs MOU with leading German vocational school

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GERMAN vocational schools have long had a reputation for tie-ups with major companies like BMW and Airbus subsidiary EADS EFW, as well as graduates who excel in highly-skilled jobs.

Soon, students at Singapore's Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) will get a taste of similar training.

Yesterday, the polytechnic signed an agreement with one of Germany’s leading institutions, the Gustav Anton Zeuner centre for technology, paving the way for its students to work on joint projects and go on attachments at the vocational school.

The signing of the memorandum of understanding was witnessed by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, who also toured the school and visited EADS EFW.

Earlier in the day, Mr Lee met Minister-President of Saxony Stanislaw Tillich, and discussed prospects for more collaboration in vocational training and other areas.

Singapore, Mr Lee said at a joint media conference with Mr Tillich, was very interested in the German approach towards technical education. It involves apprenticeships and close coordination between schools and industry, areas Singapore is looking to strengthen as part of its efforts under the SkillsFuture Council to strengthen lifelong learning.

Mr Lee, who is on the second day of a four-day visit to Germany, said Singapore could not just transport the system, "but we can learn from what they are doing and adapt our system to pick up some of the more valuable points”.

The vocational school’s principal Hans-Georg Clemens said the tie-up would help both sides train students with flexibility and creativity, as well as build friendships across borders.

Mr David Wong, NYP’s deputy director for aerospace and precision engineering, said: "Our students can benefit from the exchange of ideas, work ethic, technical and life skills and the exposure to the best in class in German manufacturing."

PM Lee and Mr Tillich also witnessed the signing of three other MOUs. Nanyang Technological University (NTU) signed an agreement with Dresden University of Technology (TU Dresden) to strengthen collaboration and student exchange in a range of sectors, from biomedicine to environmental life sciences engineering.

Acting dean of NTU’s interdisciplinary graduate school Bo Liedberg said both schools hope to step up student and staff exchanges, and launch a joint or dual PhD programme.

TU Dresden rector Hans Muller-Steinhagen said: "Both universities have climbed up the international rankings in recent years, and it makes sense to cooperate and discuss areas we can develop together."

Singapore’s vTrium Energy signed an MOU with German solar film company Heliatek on 28 October 2017.
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Singapore's vTrium Energy signed an MOU with German solar film company Heliatek, to develop solar films for use in buildings in tropical climates.

Similarly, high-tech manufacturers Composite Cluster Singapore and Leichtbau-Zentrum-Sachsen agreed to work together on developing carbon composite pressure vessels that can be used for fuel tanks for unmanned aerial vehicles and emergency response equipment, among others.

Mr Tillich said Saxony was keen to learn how Singapore was among the top scorers for innovation, and how ideas could be translated into reality quickly.

Both leaders said they could work together in other countries, with Singapore at the heart of a vibrant Asean market and Saxony being close to Eastern Europe.

Said Mr Lee: "This enables us to work with one another not just bilaterally, but to reach out to our different hinterlands and follow up on these opportunities."

Mr Lee was asked how businesses viewed the recent anti-immigrant demonstrations in Dresden by right-wing group Pegida that have drawn thousands but were condemned by German leaders. He said he had discussed the issue with Mr Tillich, and saw that "these are sentiments of people who are feeling angst over changes in the world, uncomfortable about their positions and unable to have their wishes fully articulated through the usual, traditional political process".

"We will watch and see how things develop, but I believe overall that in Dresden and Saxony, there are many good opportunities."

Mr Lee was hosted to a state dinner by Mr Tillich yesterday, before leaving for Berlin.

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