SINGAPORE and France signed several agreements yesterday to further bilateral cooperation in various fields, including education, nuclear safety, renewable energy and cyber security.

The signings were witnessed by President Tony Tan Keng Yam and his French counterpart, President Francois Hollande, on the second day of Dr Tan's seven-day state visit to France.

Among the pacts inked was a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Singapore's newly formed Cyber Security Agency (CSA) and France's Network and Information Security Agency, which will pave the way for the two to share information and best practices in cyber security.

The MOU is CSA's first international agreement.

Communications and Information Minister Yaacob Ibrahim, accompanying Dr Tan on his visit, told reporters the pact gives Singapore a chance to learn from the French and to share its own experience. "To have the French wanting to have this MOU given their vast experience shows the respect they have for our agencies and our capabilities."

Meanwhile, the National University of Singapore (NUS) signed agreements with France's Institute for Radioprotection and Nuclear Safety.

These will allow the Singapore Nuclear Research and Safety Initiative, launched by the National Research Foundation last year and hosted at NUS, to work with the French agency in research and training programmes in nuclear safety.

France, which has over 50 nuclear reactors, uses nuclear energy to produce the bulk of its electricity. While Singapore has said existing nuclear energy technologies are not currently suitable for the country, it continues to take part in global and regional talks on nuclear safety.

NUS and the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) also signed MOUs to deepen collaboration and research with the institutions under France's elite mega-university, Universite Paris-Sarclay.

NTU also signed an agreement to offer a joint PhD programme with the Sorbonne Universities, the second-largest group of universities and research organisations in France. This programme will focus on humanities, engineering and science.
Universities, the second-largest group of universities and research organisations in France. This programme will focus on humanities, engineering and science.

In addition, NTU will work to set up a network on renewable energies with France’s National Centre for Scientific Research.

Separately, the Economic Development Board signed a letter of intent with France’s National Centre for Space Studies to help develop Singapore’s satellite industry.

It was a busy day yesterday for Dr Tan, who also met the president of the French Senate, Mr Gerard Larcher, and attended a banquet held in his honour by Mr Hollande at the Elysee Palace.

On Sunday night, Dr Tan visited the Citadines Suites Arc de Triomphe, which is operated by Singapore serviced apartment group The Ascott. The group announced yesterday that it will double its units in Europe to 10,000 by 2020.

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New Eiffel Tower, Merlion stamps

FRANCE’S Eiffel Tower and Singapore’s Merlion have received a street art makeover in a joint stamp issue by the two countries.

President Tony Tan Keng Yam and France’s President Francois Hollande yesterday unveiled two new stamps of these icons to celebrate the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties between Singapore and France.

Dr Tan is currently in Paris on a seven-day state visit that began on Sunday.

Yesterday’s stamps were issued as part of the Singapore in France festival, a three-month-long showcase of Singapore’s contemporary art and culture in seven cities around France.

One of the stamps is designed by French artist Sophie Beaujard and features the image of the Eiffel Tower against a graffiti-scarred wall. The other is created by Singapore designer Ivory Seah, showing the Merlion with sunglasses.

Ms Seah, 43, told The Straits Times she spent a month working on her design.

Although she and Ms Beaujard come from different backgrounds and have never met, "together we were able to complete and create a harmonious stamp design by adapting to each other’s style”, she added.
The stamp issue marks the second collaboration between Singapore Post and French mail service La Poste. The first, in 2013, showcased the fashion styles of both countries.

The new stamps and related products will be available at all post offices and the Singapore Philatelic Museum from June 5. They will also be made available online at www.stampdelight.com

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