

SIT has a role to play in future economy: PM

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Applied universities like the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) have a role to play in the future economy, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said yesterday.

And although some employers may value an SIT degree less than one from more established universities here, he is confident its graduates can hold their own against other local graduates.

"We have a happy problem. We have universities that have good reputations, so when we build a new university, it is hard for it to beat the reputation of existing universities straight away," he said.

"But if you work hard, you can establish yourself, and soon you will find yourself in demand," he added at a dialogue at SIT.

Mr Lee was replying to an engineering student who said some of her peers were thinking of transferring to the National University of Singapore (NUS) or Nanyang Technological University (NTU), as they felt employers valued those degrees more. He cited how Singapore Management University had the same problems when it started, but its students have since done "very well".

SIT was established in 2009 and is Singapore's fifth and newest autonomous university.

A faculty member asked Mr Lee why SIT was not getting as much research funding as NTU or NUS.

Mr Lee said SIT's role was to prepare students for jobs of today as well as tomorrow, and there was a role for universities like SIT to have such specialised functions within the education system.

He added that its close links with industry, through programmes like the Integrated Work Study Programme (IWSP) where students spend a year on internship – will help SIT judge what skills employers want from their students.

In his speech before the dialogue, Mr Lee noted how SIT was also giving students "different pathways" to develop themselves.

He cited occupational therapist Adelene Teck, 43, who was back in school to upgrade her skills after working for 20 years.

He also cited engineering student Tengku Muhammad Khalaf who is on the IWSP with transport operator SMRT, and helping the company study train faults. Said



Occupational therapist Adelene Teck is upgrading her skills at SIT after working for 20 years, and SIT engineering student Tengku Muhammad Khalaf is on a year-long internship with SMRT. ST PHOTO: LIM SIN THAI

the 27-year-old: "I am hoping to do well, leave a lasting impression and hopefully get a job with SMRT."

Mr Lee added that SIT's training will help graduates find good jobs in such fields as cyber security, engineering and health sciences.

Its students are also getting opportunities abroad, he said, citing a Sunday Times report that featured four SIT graduates on a one-year attachment at software security company Kaspersky Lab's global HQ in Moscow, Russia. "It's an example of how we are creating opportuni-

ties, exposing you to the world, developing your resilience," he said.

And the Government is continuing to invest in SIT, whose new campus in Punggol will be "integrated" with the surrounding industrial space and public park, which will "enhance the applied learning curriculum of the university".

"SIT Punggol will strengthen your identity, give you a mother-ship, to learn new skills, or to contribute and give back," he added.

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