2 JC students try out lab work in German university

10-day trip part of joint effort with ST fund

By AMLIA TENG

THIS year’s June holiday was an annual one for 17-year-old Abigail Sim. She got a glimpse of what it took to discover cures for diseases, toured Munich, and stayed with a German host family – all on a trip that was fully paid for.

The second-year Victoria Junior College student spent three days this month in a lab at the Technical University of Munich, one of Germany’s leading science and engineering institutions. There, she helped a PhD student with research on new antiretroviral drugs, which fight antibiotic-resistant infections.

For seven hours each day, she tried her hand at lab techniques, from preparing chemical compounds to working with machines.

At first, she was worried that she would not be studying for the A-level exams like her friends, but she said her mother told her this was “once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.” “It was very exciting as I’ve never had the chance to use the labs in universities in Singapore,” said Abigail, who hopes to study medicine at the National University of Singapore and then at the German University in Dublin.

She was one of five students – the other was Tao Pin Sern, 19, from Temasek JC student Alexandra Teh, 17, who spent 10 days on the trip exploring the German university’s three campuses in Munich, Garching and Freising, both located in Bavaria.

The trip is the second batch of students taking part in an initiative by the school’s Singapore-based Temasek-TUM Asia, and The Straits Times School Project under FNP. The scheme allows the final-year beneficiaries to visit TUM’s campus in Germany. The programme was launched in 2012 in a joint venture with Munich’s first architectural building in Bayreuth. The trip, which costs $8000, is partially paid for by TUM and TUM Asia, besides learning about lab work, both students – who were each given an allowance of $2400 ($3400) – also got to tour places such as the Dachau Museum, which has science and technology exhibits, and Allianz Arena, home of Bayern Munich football club.

Jilina, whose father is a technicien and mother is unskilled, said: “I never had time for such a long flight and to go to the United States and then travel to Singapore.” The father of four children, who hopes to study economics, said: “Spending time in the lab gave me a glimpse of what could expect in university in the future.”

Abigail was on a discount water.

Abigail, the middle of three children, said: “I heard that discovery of new things takes time and perseverance.” For her mother is an accountant clerk and father is a self-employed. She hopes to one day go to developing country to help children who suffer from malnutrition. Her mother shared with us newspaper stories about how they are people in other countries who have no access to medical technology, so we want to help them.”

Tao Pin Sern, 19, commented.