



An artist's impression of the Technology Centre for Offshore and Marine Singapore facility at the National University of Singapore, which is due to be completed in 2019. The Government will invest close to \$107 million into infrastructure at the centre. PHOTO: TECHNOLOGY CENTRE FOR OFFSHORE AND MARINE, SINGAPORE

# R&D centre for marine and offshore sector opens in S'pore

**Jacqueline Woo**

The opening of Singapore's first national research and development centre for the marine and offshore engineering industry yesterday comes at a time of severe stress for the struggling sector.

The collapse in crude price has hit several local firms hard, including oil services firm Swiber Holdings, whose application for judicial management was approved last month, while others, such as Swissco Holdings, Marco Polo Marine and Ezra Holdings, are restructuring their debts.

The sector's plight has prompted the Government to look into measures to help companies, said

Minister for Trade and Industry (Industry) S. Iswaran at the launch of the new centre. "The Government is studying, in consultation with the marine and offshore engineering industry and financial institutions, the need for measures for the sector," he said.

Mr Iswaran did not outline the measures but noted that firms can tap on schemes already in place, like the SME Working Capital Loan to help small and medium-sized businesses deal with cash-flow concerns and financing needs.

"However, while the Government will endeavour to render assistance where appropriate, it cannot be a panacea," he added. "It is critical that companies and financial institutions take appropriate

measures in their own long-term interests – to ensure that good businesses survive, respond to the industry's challenges and build capabilities for future growth."

Mr Iswaran said the industry should also continue to build capabilities for the long term and "be ready for the next up-cycle".

The Government will invest close to \$107 million into infrastructure at the new Technology Centre for Offshore and Marine Singapore opened yesterday.

The centre set up by the Agency for Science, Technology and Research and the National University of Singapore aims to enable the local marine and offshore engineering industry to undertake higher-value activities through global

partnerships with industry, research institutions and academia.

A key feature will be a next-generation Deepwater Ocean Basin that comes with simulation capabilities, including smart sensing and data analytics.

The facility, slated to be completed in 2019, will be equipped with wave and current generation systems that can simulate harsh ocean environments, including those in ultra-deep waters. This will help develop innovative concepts like intelligent floating platforms and ships, autonomous systems, marine robotics and subsea systems, said the two organisations in a joint statement.

The new centre announced eight memorandums of understanding with various industry players yesterday – including Singapore's Keppel Offshore & Marine and Sembcorp Marine – to explore research collaborations in marine and offshore engineering technologies.

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