

France, S'pore have much to share: Iswaran

Singapore and France have much to learn from each other as they deepen collaboration in areas such as financial technology and smart cities, Minister for Trade and Industry (Industry) S. Iswaran said yesterday.

"In terms of French capabilities – research and engineering capabilities – there are many areas with deep strengths," he told a briefing, noting also that Singapore can learn from France's "considerable experience" in the Industrial Internet of Things.

Singapore's development of payment systems, new areas of fintech and cyber security presents another opportunity for collaboration.

"France is looking at this as part of the European ecosystem and this is something we can work together on," said Mr Iswaran, who was speaking after lunch with French Minister for Higher Education, Research and Innovation Frederique Vidal, who is in town to launch the France-Singapore Year of Innovation.

The initiative aims to deepen collaboration in fields such as advanced manufacturing and start-ups.

A range of partner events will be used as platforms for networking and collaboration, such as global innovation festival Viva Technology in France in May and the Smart Nation Innovations Week here in June.

The DataCity programme, which launched here last November, will allow start-ups to come up with innovative solutions to problems defined by participating companies. Ms Vidal and Dr Janil Puthucherry, Singapore Senior Minister of State for Communications and Information and Education, will kick off the initiative with a roundtable at the National University of Singapore today. Representatives from industry, academia and government from both countries will attend it.

Ms Vidal will sign four agreements during her visit, which ends today. These will renew two joint laboratories and allow research collaboration in autonomous vehicle safety and on smart cities.

Mr Iswaran said: "Singapore and France are like-minded in our emphasis on innovation as a key platform for economic development and growth, and we can see a lot of value in the development of innovation in our countries and in partnership."

Ms Vidal said: "France has a long and successful history of collaboration with Singapore in the research and science sectors and we very much look forward to creating further interactions between our two innovation ecosystems."

The partnership was announced last March during a state visit here by then French President Francois Hollande. Last year, the Monetary Authority of Singapore signed deals with the French authorities to share data about emerging fintech trends, potential joint innovation projects and regulatory issues. France is Singapore's second-largest trading partner in the European Union, with total trade close to \$17 billion.



Singapore Minister for Trade and Industry (Industry) S. Iswaran with French Minister for Higher Education, Research and Innovation Frederique Vidal. PHOTO: MTI