

An autonomous electric safety vehicle equipped with 5G-enabled cameras (right) that can spot people who flout social distancing measures, as well as an aerial drone (far right) that can inspect buildings for cracks and send high-resolution videos back to inspectors via 5G. Both are part of the research being done at the new 5G and Artificial Intelligence of Things Centre at Singapore Polytechnic. ST PHOTOS: GIN TAY



3,000 Singaporeans equipped with 5G skills in national drive

Pace of training faster than expected, with 5G signals set to cover island by end-2025

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More than 3,000 Singaporeans have been trained in 5G mobile technology skills in the last year – faster than expected – under a national effort to grow expertise in a field important to the country's digital economy.

Announcing the update at a Singapore Polytechnic (SP) event, Minister for Communications and

Information Josephine Teo said this “very rapid progress” was made possible through the combined effort of all 12 institutes of higher learning in Singapore as well as industry partners.

In September last year, the Government said there were plans to train 5,000 professionals in 5G skills by 2023.

Speaking on Wednesday, Mrs Teo said that globally, countries like the United States, China and Japan are deploying 5G technology at a rapid pace.

Similarly, Singapore is pushing ahead with its 5G roll-out, she said, noting that technologies like 5G and artificial intelligence (AI) “are key planks in the broader trend of digitalisation”.

Telcos M1, Singtel and StarHub have said that their 5G networks – which can offer speeds 10 times higher than today's 4G and allow more devices to be connected with much less lag – already cover half of the country as at the end of August.

The 5G signals are expected to cover the whole island by the end of 2025.

The private and public sectors have launched many trials of 5G solutions. These include the Gov-

ernment's test of a driverless road sweeper on Sentosa that can, in an emergency, be controlled remotely through 5G by an operator located 20km away.

But the various trials would amount to nothing without the people with the skills and the ideas to make things happen, said Mrs Teo.

Mr Lew Chuen Hong, chief executive of the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA), said “5G is the next bound of mobile technology that underpins our digital economy” and “offers many good job opportunities”.

The 5G training was done under the Singapore 5G and Telecoms Academy, set up last November as part of IMDA's TechSkills Accelerator initiative. The initiative designs programmes to train workers and matches them to jobs in information and communications technology.

The 5G academy is led by SP and the National University of Singapore. It works with institutes of higher learning, telcos and industry partners to develop 5G skills.

The 3,000 locals were trained in skills that allow them to operate and maintain 5G networks, as well as develop 5G services.

IMDA also announced last year that it was working with the telcos

to hire and reskill another 1,000 professionals in 5G.

Mr Ramanan Kalechelvam, one of the trainees, said “having a deep understanding of 5G gives insight into what is coming next... so that we can try to build solutions that are more future-proof”.

The 31-year-old, a development operations manager at Singtel, is under a programme that gives fresh and mid-career professionals on-the-job training in infocomm technology like 5G, while they earn a salary. The cost of training is paid by IMDA and the employer.

More 5G training resources are also being made available.

Mrs Teo also said the Singapore 5G and Telecoms Academy is launching a training portal (go.gov.sg/5gacademy) that lists over 500 5G-related courses.

These include hands-on training offered at SP's new 5G and Artificial Intelligence of Things Centre, which the minister launched on Wednesday.

The centre helps firms develop and adopt 5G and AI solutions. For instance, local firm W2 Industrial Services Hub is working with the centre to test the connection of wastewater sampling devices for Covid-19 detection to 5G networks.

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