

INDUSTRY 4.0

Singapore as 'resilient' hub for advanced global manufacturing

Rethinking of production and supply chains present opportunities for Asean and Singapore: DPM Heng

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AS Covid-19 prompts manufacturers to rethink production and supply chains, Singapore can be a more digital and resilient base for advanced manufacturing in Asia, for the world.

Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat made this point at the opening ceremony of annual Industry 4.0 event Industrial Transformation Asia-Pacific (ITAP) on Tuesday.

This is part of Singapore's vision to be a global-Asia node for technology, innovation and enterprise, he added.

In the wake of Covid-19, there will be an increased premium on resilience, said Mr Heng, who is also Finance Minister.

"There will be added impetus for the reshoring, regionalisation, and diversification of production bases and supply chains. South-east Asia and Singapore are in a good position to be part of this reconfiguration of supply chains in the coming years," he added.

The growth of advanced manufacturing would also create jobs and training opportunities, he noted.

Firms such as Nvidia, Omron and PBA Robotics have committed to train 500 mid-career jobseekers for roles such as automation engineers and machine learning specialists.

"Given the speed of innovation and industry change, continuous upskilling and re-skilling will be a permanent feature in advanced manufacturing," he said.

A new Advanced Manufacturing Training Academy is being established in the Jurong Innovation District advanced manufacturing hub.

This industry-led national programme office will track the state of advanced manufacturing training in Singapore, identify emerging skillsets, and facilitate the development of training courses and curricula.



DPM Heng at the opening ceremony of Industry 4.0 event Industrial Transformation Asia-Pacific on Tuesday. ITAP is the Asian edition of the world's largest manufacturing trade show Hannover Messe. BT PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

It is supported by the Agency for Science, Technology and Research, the Singapore Economic Development Board (EDB), Enterprise Singapore, Nanyang Technological University and SkillsFuture Singapore.

At the regional level, the Asian Development Bank and Singapore Polytechnic are launching the Global Technology Innovation Village to train regional government and business leaders in areas such as advanced manufacturing, 5G and artificial intelligence. Nearly 20 industry players and government agencies are involved.

This is the third year of ITAP, the Asian edition of the world's largest manufacturing trade show Hannover

Messe. This year's ITAP is a hybrid event, featuring digital showcases and networking, and physical add-ons such as site tours.

Speaking at the Singapore Expo where his speech was live-streamed, Mr Heng also announced that EDB is partnering the World Economic Forum (WEF) to make Singapore's Smart Industry Readiness Index (SIRI) an international standard.

Introduced in 2017, SIRI provides a way to assess where firms are in their smart industry journey.

The EDB and the WEF will engage government bodies, trade associations and manufacturing leaders across the world to share more about

SIRI. The aim is to conduct 1,000 new official SIRI assessments globally by end-2021, culminating in a white paper to be published at the 2022 World Economic Forum Annual Meeting.

Mr Heng also sees Singapore helping to strengthen business linkages across borders. With the European Union-Singapore Free Trade Agreement, for instance, there is a lot of potential for collaboration between Singapore and EU states, he said.

One example is the refreshed Germany Singapore Business Forum Connect, held virtually at this ITAP. Mr Heng hoped it would lead to new partnerships between Singapore firms and German firms with a presence in South-east Asia.