

Business Times - 09 Jun 2010

## S'pore deepens cooperation with China's Tianjin

*Two key areas are ICT as well as MICE and retail services*

By TEH SHI NING

INFOCOMM technology (ICT), and MICE and retail services will be two key areas of cooperation for Singapore and Tianjin in the coming year. Singapore companies have experience in these areas, which will help in Tianjin's plans to become a digitally connected city and develop its modern services sectors, Senior Minister of State for National Development and Education Grace Fu said yesterday.

She was co-chairing the 3rd Singapore Tianjin Economic and Trade Council meeting with Tianjin Vice-Mayor Ren Xuefeng, who is in town with a delegation of 35 government and business representatives.

Four agreements were signed yesterday, including a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Singapore Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers and the Tianjin International Convention & Exhibition Association to share expertise, train manpower and organise international events. The other three were signed by Singapore-based companies investing in the Tianjin Eco-city project, Singapore's second largest government-level collaboration with China after Suzhou Industrial Park.

Sichuan Neatus Traditional Chinese Medicine will invest 500 million yuan (S\$104 million) to set up a processing and distribution base, electronic commerce platform and R&D centre, while Pan Asian Water Solutions will consolidate existing China manufacturing operations to set up its China HQ in the Eco-city.

And the third MOU was signed with green building solutions provider Shanghai Broadway Packaging & Insulation Material, which intends to develop a green technology centre in the Eco-city.

Ms Fu, who visited Tianjin last month, said progress there has been 'rapid and impressive', with more than 30 Singapore-based companies now in various stages of discussion on projects in the Eco-city.

'Tianjin is only about 150km away from Beijing and is now connected by high-speed rail. So if you add the two cities together, we're talking about a sizeable high-income population,' she said. There are thus 'great opportunities' for Singapore's companies, from large players to SMEs.

The council also reported progress in last year's focus areas: tourism, and vocational & technical education.

On the tourism front, the Singapore Cruise Centre is in talks with Tianjin Port to share knowledge in port operations and management, while the Ascott Group, Frasers Hospitality and Ariva Hospitality either have opened or will be opening serviced apartments in Tianjin.

Singapore's East Asia Institute of Management is also in talks with Tianjin Modern Vocational Institute to jointly offer courses and open a branch campus in the Tianjin Haihe Education Park, while PSB Academy has signed an MOU to set up a corporate training office in the Eco-city.

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