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New 3D printing centre at NTU for precision engineering and manufacturing technologies



Guest of honour S. Iswaran looking at the new way to 3D print customised advanced concrete structures for buildings. PHOTO: ALICIA CHAN FOR THE STRAITS TIMES



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SINGAPORE - A new \$42-million 3D Printing Centre will conduct research and develop innovations for manufacturing technologies and precision engineering.

Funded by the National Research Foundation, the Singapore Centre for 3D Printing was launched on Tuesday (May 17) by Mr S. Iswaran, Minister for Trade and Industry.

In addition to manufacturing technologies, the centre will also study and recommend new industry standards for 3D Printing. This includes looking at the safety of 3D printers and the quality of parts produced.

3D printing is a process in which three-dimensional parts are produced by adding materials in a layer-by-layer fashion. These materials can be made of plastic, metal or even tissue from cells.

At the launch held at Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Mr Iswaran said the new centre will help develop additive manufacturing capabilities together with industry partners which can eventually be adopted by Singapore-based companies.

He said: "3D printing, or additive manufacturing, has emerged from the hobbyist arena, and is fast becoming a viable alternative to manufacturing processes in a wide range of industries."

Already, the new research centre has attracted an additional \$41 million in funds from the industry and various government agencies.

At the launch, NTU chief of staff and vice-president of Research Professor Lam Khin Yong also signed research collaboration agreements with ST Engineering, Keppel Offshore & Marine Technology Centre, Sembcorp Design and Construction and Emerson Process Management.

NTU scientists are working on several new developments in construction including a new way to 3D print customised concrete structures for buildings such as beams and pillars. This process is expected to be more cost effective than current casting methods.

At the sidelines of the event, Mr Iswaran, who was appointed the new co-chairman of the Committee on the Future Economy (CFE), said that the committee has been making steady progress.

The CFE, announced last October, is tasked with charting the course of Singapore's future economy. It will study key areas that are crucial to sustaining economic growth and equipping workers with skill sets needed for the future.

"My objective and priority working with Mr Chan Chun Sing, who is now the deputy chairman, is really to continue that work in the spirit of which Mr Heng Swee Keat and I got started in this, to ensure that we complete that process in order to yield important ideas and recommendations for the Government to consider," said Mr Iswaran.

"And of course, we are all keeping Mr Heng Swee Keat and his family in our prayers and in our thoughts. We would like him to come back as soon as possible."