

## Singapore and France sign eight new agreements to further science and technology collaboration



Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat and France's Minister of Higher Education and Research Sylvie Retailleau (second left) witnessing the signing of the agreement between National University of Singapore's Professor Tan Eng Chye and Universite Paris Cite's Professor Edouard Kaminski. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

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**SINGAPORE** – While strides have been made in women's health care over the past decades, many issues still persist.

For example, heart disease is still underdiagnosed in women, who have different symptoms from men. There are also cancers that affect only women, which can be preventable through early screening or vaccination.

More attention will be paid to such issues with an agreement signed on Monday by the Global Centre for Asian Women's Health at the National University of Singapore's Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (GloW) and Université Paris Cité's Faculty of Health to collaborate on research and education programmes on women's health concerns across their lifespan, with a focus on Asians.

“When you look at the literature, like on maternal health research, it has been focused on the Caucasian population. There’s very little well-conducted high quality research on Asian women, so that’s why we feel we have a mission to do something on Asian women’s health,” said Professor Zhang Cuilin, director of Glownus.

She added that one area of interest for the collaboration would be to study common pregnancy complications such as gestational diabetes, hypertension and preeclampsia, a high blood pressure disorder.

The project was one of eight agreements signed at the third meeting of the France-Singapore Joint Committee on Science and Innovation (JSCI), held at the Campus for Research Excellence and Technological Enterprise in NUS UTown.

The joint committee was set up in 2019 to enhance research cooperation between France and Singapore in the areas of science and technology.



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Organised by the National Research Foundation, the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research and the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, the JSCI was hosted in Singapore for the first time.

The event was attended by Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat and France’s Minister of Higher Education and Research Sylvie Retailleau.

At the meeting, Mr Heng, who is also chairman of the NRF, and Ms Retailleau discussed the progress of current research and innovation partnerships in artificial intelligence, quantum technology and circular economy. Close to 100 senior academics, researchers and industry leaders were present. Potential collaboration in space, nuclear energy, health and maritime and port initiatives was also on the agenda.

Another agreement renewed a collaboration between the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and the French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (CEA) to recover e-waste using environmentally friendly methods.

Electronic waste such as from lithium-ion batteries, silicon solar panels and printed circuit boards have been notoriously hard to recycle, because the resources in them are difficult to extract and break down.

Between 2018 and 2023, researchers working for the Singapore-CEA Alliance for Research in Circular Economy, or Scarce, developed novel ways to recycle e-waste, such as using orange and other citrus fruit peels to break down and recycle lithium-ion batteries. They have also found new ways of sorting and separating e-waste.

Scarce was recently given \$17 million through the National Environment Agency, and with the renewed collaboration under JSCI, will receive an additional \$20 million for the next five years.

Professor Madhavi Srinivasan, co-director of Scarce, said: “We will be looking at how we can scale up the processes we have developed in phase one of the project. We will see how we can take these new approaches from the lab to prototype with our industry partners, and to commercialisation.”

Other agreements were signed for research cooperation between Singapore and French institutions in engineering, physics, materials science, computing and others, as well as for a joint PhD programme between NTU and Universite Paris Sciences et Lettres.

Mr Heng said: “Singapore is glad to have a like-minded partner like France, who shares our belief that science must be global, so that its benefits can uplift people and communities everywhere. As a node for research, innovation and enterprise, Singapore will always remain open-minded to new perspectives, and seek new partnerships to build a more innovative, sustainable, and resilient future for all.”

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