

SIT plans test bed spanning Punggol Digital District for trial of ideas

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Prime Minister Lawrence Wong viewing Singapore Institute of Technology's (SIT) Punggol Campus before the official opening on Sept 16. With him are (from left) Mr Gerry Wee, associate vice-president for estates, SIT; Mr Bill Chang, chairman of SIT board of trustees; and Professor Chua Kee Chaing, SIT president. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

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The Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) is working with JTC Corporation, the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) and industry partners to set up a test bed that extends beyond the campus so that ideas can be trialled across the entire Punggol Digital District (PDD), and eventually beyond.

One idea is autonomous robots that provide services within the precinct, and could be programmed to patrol areas, detect suspicious objects and alert security officers when needed, Prime Minister Lawrence Wong said on Sept 16.

“Through initiatives like these, SIT is transforming the campus into a rich field of possibilities,” PM Wong said. He was speaking at the official opening ceremony of SIT’s Punggol campus, attended by over

500 students, alumni, industry partners and donors.

The campus comprises two plots – the 42,000 sq m Campus Court that faces the Coney Island waterfront, and the 49,000 sq m Campus Heart featuring the Punggol Heritage Trail.

The campus has been fully operational since May, with about 11,000 students and close to 1,300 staff.

SIT was built within JTC’s PDD, Singapore’s first smart district.

The PDD is Singapore’s first “precinct-scale” test bed, where companies can test solutions in areas such as smart city infrastructure, robotics, artificial intelligence (AI) and sustainability.

PM Wong said the SIT campus can be a vibrant place for lifelong learning and industry partnerships.

He cited how SIT is working with A*Star and the Home Team Science and Technology Agency to develop ways to improve detection of contraband at Jurong Fishery

Port. If successful, this could be scaled up for larger-scale deployment, he said.

“So, this can be much more than a university campus. It can be an ecosystem for closer partnerships, where students, faculty, companies and government agencies come together to share ideas and co-create solutions,” he said. “We all know that learning cannot stop with formal education, not when the world around us is changing so quickly.”

JTC chief executive Jacqueline Poh said in a statement: “For the first time in Singapore, we see a business park and university sitting side by side and fully integrated. Companies in PDD get direct access to young talent, while students can test what they learn in the real world.”

To facilitate such a test bed, SIT’s Living Lab Network will be integrated with the PDD’s Open Digital Platform by the end of 2025. With this integration, companies can test technologies ranging from

cyber-security solutions to autonomous robots. Jointly developed by JTC and the Government Technology Agency (GovTech), the Open Digital Platform is a master operating system that allows the plug and play of any compatible technology, so different systems can “talk” to one another.

SIT’s Living Lab Network is its campus-wide digital infrastructure that gives students and companies real-time access to operational campus data for learning and innovation.

“You have two different operating systems, but integrating them, we now have a much larger place for companies to test things, for our students to learn over a much larger landscape or canvas,” said SIT president Chua Kee Chaing.

Professor Chua stressed the importance of cyber security in having such an integrated system, noting the risk of bad actors hacking into the system and gaining con-

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Smart robots first projects to be trialled in 2026

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trol of the precinct’s facilities and robots. This is where government agencies such as GovTech and the Cyber Security Agency of Singapore come in, he said.

Prof Chua said the first projects to be test-bedded in 2026 will be autonomous robots – for instance, those doing deliveries, cleaning and surveillance.

The test bed will be supported by a new Innovation-as-a-Service platform by SIT to allow the university and its partners to help companies, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups, develop and scale solutions.

SIT will also partner Shanghai Jiao Tong University and robotics innovator SLAMTEC in fields such as robotics, giving SIT students new opportunities for exchange programmes, for instance.

SIT is also partnering SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) on a new initiative to help employers better assess job skills.

From October, SIT will roll out online skills assessments for AI-related skills, problem-solving and effective communication, for employers to evaluate and enhance their organisations’ technical competencies. StarHub and Cragar Industries will be among the first to use these assessments.

From the first quarter of 2026, members of the public can also attempt these assessments and decide if they want the results to be recorded in their SkillsFuture Careers and Skills Passport.

SIT’s assistant provost of applied learning, Associate Professor May Lim, said this initiative recognises individuals’ informal learning. “This means that if perhaps someone has picked up certain skills from their life experience, from their work experience, they now have a way to validate it and to show it to their potential employer.”

At the event on Sept 16, SIT recognised its major donors, including Mr Kwek Leng Beng, executive chairman of Hong Leong Group and City Developments Limited (CDL), and CDL group chief executive Sherman Kwek.

SIT named its administrative building the Kwek Leng Beng University Tower, in honour of the joint endowed gift of \$24 million by the senior Mr Kwek and CDL – one of the largest received by the university.

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