

# S'pore education players look to UAE

NTUC Childcare and SMU among those exploring opportunities in Middle East

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FOLLOWING in the footsteps of local entrepreneurs from the transport, health and finance sector, representatives from Singapore's leading education institutes are on a one-week visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to explore growth opportunities there.

The UAE, which chalked up \$11.6 billion in trade with Singapore last year, is setting aside 33 per cent of its total expenditure this year to develop the education sector. Its economy is projected to grow at an average annual rate of 7 per cent. Among the 10 companies in the delegation led by International Enterprise (IE) Singapore's deputy chief executive Ted Tan, are APMI Kaplan, NTUC Childcare Cooperative, Republic Polytechnic, the Singapore Institute of Management and the Singapore Management University.

"The UAE is a key market that IE Singapore is actively engaging and there are good opportunities for Singapore's education players," said Mr Tan.

Potential areas of "win-win partnerships" are curriculum development, pedagogy innovations, and delivery and management. "We believe that our players will be able to add value to the education scene in the UAE by virtue of their experience and track record in establishing an interna-

tionally-recognised and highly regarded education system in Singapore," said Mr Tan.

The companies are also on the lookout for partners to set up schools and training centres. In Dubai, for example, the delegates will engage in a roundtable sharing and networking session with education and related participants from the UAE. There will also be visits to educational institutions.

The delegation, together with Minister of State for Trade and Industry Lee Yi Shyan, will meet the UAE Education Minister, Dr Hanif Hassan Ali, and officials from the Education Ministry, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the Abu Dhabi Education Council.

An example of an existing collaboration between Singapore and Abu Dhabi is in the area of education services between the National Institute of Education (NIE), the Nanyang Technological University and the Abu Dhabi Educational Council.

Under the agreement, signed last October, the NIE will provide consultancy services for the preparation of education personnel for the Abu Dhabi emirate. NIE and Abu Dhabi Educational Zone have been collaborating since 2003 to enhance the quality of professional development offered to teachers in the three zones in the emirate. Over 1,200 teachers, principals and supervisors have been trained so far.

In an earlier visit with Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong, SMRT Corp was short-listed for the operation contract for the estimated US\$3.96-million (\$6.07 million) Dubai Metro.