

Working Visit of Mr Heng Swee Keat, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the National Research Foundation, to France, 6 to 10 April 2025

Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the National Research Foundation, Mr Heng Swee Keat, has concluded his working visit to France. The visit reaffirmed the longstanding and multifaceted relations between Singapore and France, as both countries commemorate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations this year.

2 During the trip, DPM Heng met with France's Minister of State, Minister of National Education, Higher Education and Research Elisabeth Borne, Minister in charge of Higher Education and Research Philippe Baptiste, and Minister in charge of Transport, Philippe Tabarot. They had productive discussions on strengthening bilateral cooperation in areas such as research and development, and using Artificial Intelligence in fields like education and transport. They also exchanged views on regional and global developments.

3 DPM Heng and Minister Baptiste also commended the signing of two new agreements on research cooperation in infectious diseases and quantum technologies, underscoring the strong partnerships between our Research, Innovation, and Enterprise (RIE) ecosystems (see Annex for more info).

4 DPM Heng also had fruitful discussions with French officials and prominent corporates from various sectors, including Thales Group, and Danone S.A., as well as major French financial institutions BNP Paribas and Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank. These exchanges covered a broad range of topics, including advanced manufacturing, sustainability, green finance, innovation, and digital transformation. The conversations reflected the mutual interest in exploring collaborations that will support long-term resilience and inclusive development in Singapore and France, as well as in jointly tapping on emerging growth opportunities in our respective regions.

5 On 8 April, DPM Heng also met with some members of the Singaporean community in France at a reception in Paris. He shared with them news from home, and reaffirmed the important role overseas Singaporeans play in bolstering Singapore's global connections.

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ANNEX

Strengthening research ties in infectious diseases/global health and quantum technologies

Two new agreements on research cooperation were signed during DPM Heng's working visit to France. The first was a Master Research Collaboration Agreement (MRCA) between the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) Infectious Diseases Labs (A*STAR IDL) and Institut Pasteur, aimed at deepening joint research efforts in infectious diseases.

2 Building on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between both parties in November 2024 to strengthen health resilience and enhance pandemic preparedness, the MRCA establishes a framework for co-developing innovative research projects with tangible outcomes. A*STAR IDL and Institut Pasteur will aim to develop joint research projects, with an initial focus on two key scientific topics, namely:

- **Ageing and Infection:** Research projects will investigate how infections influence ageing by examining factors such as prenatal exposure and post-infection lung health. As ageing populations face increasing vulnerability to infections, understanding these effects is essential for developing targeted therapeutics, diagnostics, vaccines, and medical tools for treating chronic diseases.
- **Microbiome and Infection:** Research projects aim to identify key genes in clinically significant bacteria and fungi that maintain gut and lung microbiome balance. Given the microbiome's vital role in regulating immune responses, these insights will pave the way for novel interventions to enhance infection resistance and improve treatment outcomes.

3 The MRCA will also promote talent exchange and unlock new funding opportunities, further solidifying bilateral ties and driving scientific progress.

4 The second agreement was a MoU between the National Quantum Office (NQO) of Singapore and France's Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) to enhance collaboration in quantum technologies, in particular quantum energetics and quantum photonics.

- **Quantum Energetics:** This collaboration explores how energy, noise, and performance interact in quantum systems, to develop energy-efficient and sustainable quantum technologies. This could eventually lead to powerful quantum computers that solve complex problems while using significantly less energy than today's supercomputers.
- **Quantum Photonics:** The partnership seeks to further develop next-generation quantum communication and networking technologies by bringing together French expertise in quantum photonics and Singapore's capabilities in quantum device fabrication. This includes creating and sharing quantum information based on light across long distances, to enable secure and high-fidelity quantum networks.

5 For more information on the two agreements, please reach out to the A*STAR media contacts below.

Photo and Caption

- [Link to Image](#)
- Suggested caption:

During DPM Heng's working visit to France, two new agreements on research cooperation in infectious diseases and quantum technologies between agencies of both countries were signed. These agreements underscore the shared commitment to strengthen strategic partnerships in Research, Innovation, and Enterprise (RIE).

[from L-R: - Mr Jean-Luc Moullet, Director-General for Research and Innovation at France's Ministry of Higher Education and Research, Dr Philippe Baptiste, Minister in charge of Higher Education and Research, DPM Heng, and Mr John Lim, NRF Chief Executive Officer.]

- Please credit the image to the National Research Foundation (NRF)

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About the National Research Foundation (NRF)

The National Research Foundation, Singapore (NRF), set up on 1 January 2006, is a department within the Prime Minister's Office. The NRF sets the national direction for research and development (R&D) by developing policies, plans and strategies for research, innovation and enterprise. It also funds strategic initiatives and builds up R&D capabilities by nurturing research talent. Learn more about the NRF at www.nrf.gov.sg.

About A*STAR Infectious Diseases Labs (A*STAR IDL)

A*STAR Infectious Diseases Labs (A*STAR IDL) was established in April 2021 with a mission to be a leading research institute of infectious diseases in antimicrobial resistance, respiratory and

vector-borne diseases. A*STAR IDL brings together infectious diseases expertise from across multiple disciplines to drive cutting edge translational infectious diseases research to contribute to Singapore's national preparedness and defence against the threat of emerging infections. Building upon a robust foundation of our strong biomedical research capabilities and complemented by our globally connected scientific network, A*STAR IDL aims to focus on innovative technologies in infectious disease detection, intervention and prevention with a pathway to impact on health and economic outcomes. <https://www.a-star.edu.sg/idlabs>

About the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR)

The Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) is Singapore's lead public sector R&D agency. Through open innovation, we collaborate with our partners in both the public and private sectors to benefit the economy and society. As a Science and Technology Organisation, A*STAR bridges the gap between academia and industry. Our research creates economic growth and jobs for Singapore, and enhances lives by improving societal outcomes in healthcare, urban living, and sustainability. A*STAR plays a key role in nurturing scientific talent and leaders for the wider research community and industry. A*STAR's R&D activities span biomedical sciences to physical sciences and engineering, with research entities primarily located in Biopolis and Fusionopolis. For ongoing news, visit <https://www.a-star.edu.sg>.

About the National Quantum Office (NQO)

The National Quantum Office (NQO) was established with the support of the National Research Foundation (NRF) to drive the development and implementation of the Research, Innovation and Enterprise (RIE) strategy for Quantum in Singapore. The Office was set up in April 2022 and is hosted by A*STAR, the Implementing Agency for Quantum. NQO supports fundamental and translational research in Quantum through various strategic programmes, partnering both public and private sectors to create a vibrant Research, Innovation and Enterprise (RIE) quantum ecosystem in Singapore. For more information, visit <https://nqo.sg>.

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