

# Here's help in Race for robotics Excellence

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e2i CEO Gilbert Tan (left) taking a look at a compound remover with Race trainer A. S. Sundaram yesterday. ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

Every six months, the pieces of silicon glue used on a fan cover of an aircraft engine need to be replaced.

A worker takes eight to 12 hours to complete the tedious task. But a robot does it in four hours.

Such industrial robots are increasingly being used on the factory floor, prompting the introduction of a new training programme.

Announced yesterday, its aim is to train more than 2,000 professionals, managers, executives and technicians in the next two years to operate and implement automated production systems.

The training will be done by the Robotics Application Centre of Excellence (Race), a collaboration between professors from Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and local precision engineering company PBA Group.

Said Race chief executive Derrick Yap: "South-east Asia has been earmarked to be the factory of the world and Singapore, being at the epicentre of the region, is very well-positioned (to take advantage of this)."

The series of courses under the new Robotics Applications Training and Education Programme starts on Jan 11, with a one-day "novice" level session for people without any technical background in robotics and automation. They will learn about technology trends and how to analyse the cost-effectiveness of adopting robotics and automation. The session costs \$50 for Singaporeans, after subsidies.

The next two higher-level courses, each to run for five days, will be launched in March, with another two to follow later.

Mr Gilbert Tan, chief executive of the Employment and Employability Institute (e2i), urged firms and industries to prepare for the future and adopt more advanced technology in manufacturing. His institute has signed an agreement with Race and Workforce Singapore to develop skills training and support employers in staff development.

Race will also team up with the Singapore Precision Engineering and Technology Association and e2i, to help its members learn about technology and buy more of it.

Yesterday, Race held a session on it for about 40 company officials.

ASTech managing director Mun Kok Woh, whose robotics solutions company employs 12 people, said it is costly for his more experienced staff to stop work to train new hires. "If someone can teach them the basic know-how that would help. Some have relevant background knowledge but we want them to move up faster," he said.

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