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New centre at SIM aims to empower social entrepreneurs

Sustainable capabilities needed to advance the country's social service sector will be cultivated and developed by a new centre set up by the Singapore Institute of Management (SIM), which will be launched in 2024.

This will be achieved by fostering social entrepreneurs, nurturing social enterprises, and strengthening collaboration with social service agencies.

The centre, named the Dr Richard K M Eu - SIM Social Entrepreneurship Centre (RESSEC), is a collaboration between SIM and the family of its founding chairman, Dr Richard Eu Keng Mun.

In an interview with Berita Harian (BH), SIM's President and CEO, Mr. Seah Chin Siong, stated: "This centre is also established to commemorate the lifelong achievements of the late Dr Eu and uphold his vision of social entrepreneurship.

Through RESSEC, we hope to equip and empower the next generation of social entrepreneurs to address social challenges in Singapore and the region."

Dr Eu, a pioneer in the social sector, passed away in 2022 at the age of 99. He played a significant role in social initiatives, including education, and served as the founding chairman of SIM from 1964 to 1996.

The centre's establishment was announced in November 2023, marking the 100th birthday of the late Dr Eu.

According to Jonathan Eu, Dr Eu's grandson, naming the centre after his grandfather is a sincere tribute to a man whose lifelong work significantly advanced our social fabric.

RESSEC aims to promote lifelong learning, and when launched in the second quarter of 2024, it will coincide with SIM's 60th anniversary. The centre aims to provide individuals interested in or working in the social service sector with resources for continuous lifelong learning.

"It has been previously reported that there has been a 19 percent increase in the number of mid-career professionals joining the social service sector from 2016 to 2022. Quality education and skill development programmes help create a competitive workforce for Singapore," said Mr Seah.

"As a local lifelong learning organisation, we feel a responsibility to contribute to a resilient and progressive community for the overall development of our country. Our mission is to empower the public and organisations to learn and advance across various stages of life. Quality education is one of the ways SIM can make a meaningful contribution," he added.

Elaborating further, Mr Seah said that the centre is established to enable and equip social service agency staff with the right resources and skills to address the needs of modern business and society. It will focus on developing social entrepreneurs, fostering social enterprises, and collaborating with social service agencies to empower the next generation of social entrepreneurs to address social challenges.

In addition to providing education, scholarships, and bursaries to support individuals interested in addressing social challenges, the centre also funds research on the social landscape to create relevant knowledge databases and build expertise in social service topics.

The first programme to be offered by RESSEC after its launch is the Specialist Diploma in Social Entrepreneurship (SDSE) programme. The programme aims to develop and equip individuals working or aspiring to work in the social service sector with the skills and knowledge to become effective social change-makers and social entrepreneurs.

"The SDSE programme aims to enable students to understand the nature of social issues, develop practical approaches to solving them, and cultivate skills and thinking to formulate innovative solutions to address social challenges and shape a brighter future," said Mr. Seah.

"This programme offers unique opportunities for participants to learn, grow, and make a positive impact on the world, putting them on the path towards a career as social entrepreneurs and agents of social change," he added.

According to Mr Seah, the SDSE curriculum was developed by the SIM academic team and endorsed by 11 experts in the social service sector to ensure it meets the unique challenges of the industry. The centre will also invite guest lecturers from social service agencies and various other sectors to provide students with relevant knowledge and skills needed in the field.

"We aspire to bring leaders and individuals making an impact to share their experiences and unique challenges in this field, thereby better preparing our students to enter the workforce and contribute to this sector," he added.