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NEWS

## Water industry's share of GDP to hit \$1.25b

Business-friendly environment leads to investment flow; local firms gain \$8.4b in foreign deals

By Feng Zengkun

### POOL RESOURCES

'Scientific research and support for companies are our strengths. If the agencies continue to band together to help companies from research and development to exporting their products, I think the industry here will grow from strength to strength.'

**Mr Goh Chee Kiong, director of EDB's cleantech division**



Mr Adrian Yeo said the Environment and Water Industry Programme Office halved the set-up cost of his company Mint, which creates sensors for water treatment plants. -- ST FILE PHOTO

INVESTMENTS are pouring into Singapore's water industry.

Over the last five years, projects have been launched that will eventually add \$590 million to the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

This will take the industry's share of GDP to \$1.25 billion - nearly double what it was in 2005.

Experts said the surge in investments is due to Singapore's business-friendly environment, which attracts foreign firms to set up regional headquarters here, as well as more local companies venturing into the water business.

Meanwhile, Singapore-based water companies have made a splash overseas by winning projects worth \$8.4 billion.

The figures were announced yesterday at a joint update by the national water agency PUB, the Economic Development Board (EDB) and International Enterprise Singapore.

They come at the half-way mark of a 10-year plan for the Singapore water industry announced in 2006. Then, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong identified environmental and water technologies as a key research area for the country.

The target: \$1.7 billion in annual GDP and 11,000 jobs created by 2015. The latest investments have carried the country to more than two-thirds of the way to the finishing line.

Yesterday, the agencies said they are confident of meeting the targets by the deadline.

Ten foreign companies have set up regional headquarters here for water projects since 2006, including engineering giants Black and Veatch, and Siemens Water Technologies.

The firms said they were drawn by the strong government backing in the industry and the ease of doing business here.

Siemens spokesman Yeang Chuan Hui said: 'The Government has made it clear... it wants to stay at the forefront of this industry.'

In 2006, the National Research Foundation committed \$330 million in funding over five years for water projects.

In the same year, the inter-agency Environment and Water Industry Programme Office (EWI) was set up to help firms develop their businesses.

A home-grown company that has benefited from the programme is Mint, which creates sensors for water treatment plants. General manager Adrian Yeo, 33, said the initiative halved the set-up cost of his business.

Under the programme, he was given a place to test his technology in PUB's plants, and technical support from the agency's experts. The technology has since been installed in PUB's Bedok Newater plant. 'Now I'm hoping to sell the product to overseas investors at the International Water Week in July,' he said.

The EWI has helped around 100 projects since its inception. Representatives from the programme said these included local companies, and firms from Japan, the United States and Europe.

Singapore-based companies have also burnished the country's reputation in the industry by winning large projects overseas.

Projects in the Middle East and North Africa made up the bulk of the \$8.4 billion in overseas contracts won over the last five years, said Mr Yeoh Keat Chuan, assistant managing director of the EDB.

He added that this was because projects there tend to be larger in scale. 'But there is growing demand for water projects in regional countries such as Vietnam, China and Australia,' he said.

Singapore-based companies have made in-roads in all three countries by setting up water treatment or desalination plants.

Over the next few years, the agencies plan to continue Singapore's focus on research and development.

They are also looking to expand their presence in important markets like China and emerging ones such as India and Indonesia.

One strategy could be to serve as matchmakers between water tech companies and financing companies.

'Scientific research and support for companies are our strengths,' said Mr Goh Chee Kiong, director of EDB's cleantech division.

'If the agencies continue to band together to help companies from research and development to exporting their products, I think the industry here will grow from strength to strength.'

[zengkun@sph.com.sg](mailto:zengkun@sph.com.sg)

## **Big garden to replace waste**

- Source: Global Times
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- **Comments**

A garden almost twice as large as the famed Summer Palace will be built on a construction waste landfill in order to host the Ninth China International Garden Expo in 2013, according to local authorities.

The ninth expo, with the theme “A Green Symphony, A Green Garden,” will be jointly held by the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development and the municipal government along the Yongding River in Beijing from April to October of 2013, said government officials at a promotional meeting on Wednesday.

Construction of the 513 hectare garden has begun and is expected to finish by the end of 2012, said officials.

The expo will raise awareness about harmony among people, resources and the environment, said the officials.

The biannual expo has been held seven times since 1997, and will be held in Chongqing municipality this year.

*Xinhua*