Singapore makes tech learning fun through IDA Lab on Wheels

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A roving bus that houses technology that is "fun to learn, experiential and engaging" will be visiting Singapore schools very soon. Retrofitted from a 40-seater bus, it has different activities for young learners, including a coding game in an hour, programming a robot, tinkering with a gadget and learning how electronics work.

Launched early this month by Minister for Communications and Information Dr. Yaacob Ibrahim at Vivocity, the IDA Lab on Wheels project developed by the Infocomms Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) with industry partners is envisioned to to reach 80 primary schools and about 16,000 students over the next two years.

"As we envision building Singapore into the world's first Smart Nation, one with the fuller use of technology to live, work and play; our future generation is important in making an impact and contributing to this vision," IDA said in a news release.

"The larger goal is to encourage the youth to pursue tech as part of their school curriculum or career. This in turn, helps build local tech talent for Singapore," it added.

IDA said the launch today on 8 November saw many big and small tech industry players such as Dell, Autodesk, Asus and many others come forward to show their support to nurture and cultivate tech talent by participating in the bus' development. It said even students were involved in the co-creation of the bus.

IDA held a design competition early this year for the look and feel of the bus' exterior. Three winning designs were selected and prizes were given out by Minister Yaacob Ibrahim. Singapore Management University clinched first prize, with Victoria Junior College coming in second, and Anglo-Chinese School coming in third. SMU's winning design is featured on the skin of the IDA Lab on Wheels.

"We are really proud of the efforts from different parties such as the Government, Industry players and especially students who have come together in the development of IDA Lab on Wheels. It is a good starting point to groom and grow Singapore talent for the future by seeding interest in tech at a young age. I encourage more industry players and people to come forward to visit and contribute to the development of the bus," said Steve Leonard, Executive Deputy Chairman of IDA.

The project is fully supported by the Ministry of Education (MOE), which it said will excite students and introduce them to the possibilities offered by technology.

"This program complements our efforts to promote STEM through the Applied Learning programs (ALP) and will provide learning opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills in science, mathematics and technology to solve real world problems," said Sng Chern Wei Director, Curriculum Planning & Development 1, Ministry of Education.

IDA Lab on Wheels' industry partners include Asus, Autodesk, Dell, Faronics, GSA Technology Group, Huawei, IBM, Intel, Microsoft, SAP Pte Ltd., StarHub, Tinkertanker, Unity, and V3 Teletech Pte Ltd.