

Unilever sets up S'pore leadership centre

PM Lee officially opens the campus, its second worldwide

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IT may be called Four Acres, but Unilever's new leadership development centre here is actually much bigger than its name suggests.

The tranquil campus, built at a cost of 50 million euros (S\$82.6 million), sits on a prime plot of land in Nepal Hill, stretching over 5.6 acres, or about 2.3 hectares, to be exact.

The facility, officially opened by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong yesterday, is Unilever's second such campus and its first in Asia.

Its other Four Acres branch in London was established back in 1954, coincidentally the same year Unilever set up shop here.

Both centres are expected to train some 2,800 of the Anglo-Dutch firm's leaders in 90 different courses every year, with the Singapore campus taking care of more than half that number. The programmes here are residential and last four to five days.

Singapore was the "logical choice" as the base for this latest campus, given Unilever's significant operations here, said the company's chief executive Paul Polman yesterday.

The Republic is home to the global business headquarters of Unilever brands such as Pond's, Clear, Lux, Lifebuoy and Close-Up.

"Singapore sits at the nexus of the developed and the emerging world. It's a leading hub for leadership and innovation, and a gateway to the rapidly growing Asian economies," he added.

One of Four Acres Singapore's most unique features is its nine colonial "black and white" bungalows, which were developed by the British in the 1930s to house army officers and their families. These renovated homes can house up to five persons each.

With the campus ready to go, Unilever says it will offer courses that draw on the insights and expertise of top institutions such as Harvard Business School, Insead and the Singapore Management University.



FOUR ACRES AT NEPAL HILL

In fact, the Unilever campus, built at a cost of 50 million euros, sits on a prime plot of land stretching over 5.6 acres, or about 2.3 hectares.

Unilever hopes that Four Acres Singapore will help the company double the size of its business to 80 billion euros in the years to come, while halving its environment impact in the process.

Mr Polman said: "Today's need for outstanding leaders is undoubtedly greater than ever. What type of leadership is needed? Obviously, we need men and women with a strong sense of purpose. When you

run a complex company like this, it is this purpose and values that unite us all and are the glue that keeps us all together."

He suggested that a Singaporean could one day lead Unilever's business in the Asian region, or even the entire company, for that matter.

"I think the setting up of Four Acres Singapore is the first clear commitment to getting there," he said.