

PM Lee in Warsaw? Singapore students there request meeting via Facebook - and get it

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PM Lee Hsien Loong having tea with seven Singaporean students at the Hyatt Hotel in Warsaw on Oct 30, 2013. -- ST PHOTO: CAROLINE CHI

By Sumiko Tan, Associate Editor

WARSAW - When Singaporean student Chng Pei Ying read on The Straits Times website earlier this week that Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong was in Paris and would be visiting Warsaw next, she saw an opportunity.

She got in touch with several Singaporeans who, like her, are currently on exchange programmes at universities in the Polish capital, and asked: Shall we ask to meet him?

They were as enthusiastic as she was, and so she sent a private message to Mr Lee's Facebook page asking if they could call on him.

Within a day, a reply came from the Prime Minister's Office: The PM would be happy to meet all of you before his dinner.

And so on Wednesday evening, seven smartly turned-out 20somethings spent 45 minutes in lively conversation with Mr Lee in his hotel suite.

He had flown in just hours earlier from Paris for his first official visit to Poland.

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Ms Chng, 22, a student from Singapore Management University (SMU) now on exchange with Kozminski University, said: "The reply came very quickly."

Fellow SMU student Jared Heng, 23, now with Warsaw School of Economics, said: "It was a nice, cosy setting. It's very difficult to get a chance to meet him in Singapore, and we were fortunate to get to meet him here."

The seven are business, accountancy and economics students from SMU, National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University. They met through the exchange programme and have been based in various Warsaw universities since September. They will be there for a semester.

They said Mr Lee was keen to hear about their experiences in Poland.

NUS student Nadine Ng, 20, now with Warsaw School of Economics, said she was glad she chose Poland for her exchange.

"It's really nice here. People are friendly, everything is so cheap - half the price of Singapore - and it's quite central."

In fact, meeting with the Prime Minister over, the seven, still flushed with excitement, headed for the train station for their next adventure - weekend in Prague.