

Inspired by a journey and a robot with feelings

Poly students return from Germany with keen interest in engineering

By **AMELIA TENG**
IN MUNICH (GERMANY)

FOR two polytechnic students, a trip to Germany to visit campuses was a journey they would never forget.

Ms Asmaa Widad Hamdan, 19, and Ms Ong Zi Xuan, 20, took to the skies in a student-built flight simulator, screamed down a giant four-storey slide, and even met a robot with feelings.

When they returned to Singapore on Monday, it was not just souvenirs that they brought back, but also a stronger interest in their field of study – engineering.

“Seeing all these inventions on this trip, it makes me want to study even harder, because one day, I would like to contribute to society,” said Ms Ong, who is in her second year of industrial and operations management studies at Republic Polytechnic.

Their trip was paid for by the Technical University of Munich

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(TUM) and its Singapore-based branch, the German Institute of Science and Technology-TUM Asia. Located at Pixel Building in Buona Vista, it was set up here in 2002.

To mark its 10th anniversary last year, the school launched a programme to give pre-university students who are beneficiaries of The Straits Times Pocket Money Fund the experience of a learning journey to its campuses in Germany.

The two young women applied, and after an interview in May, became the first students to be part of this project.

The trip, they said, was a “rare opportunity” since the farthest Ms Asmaa, a second-year electrical engineering student at Ngee Ann Polytechnic, and Ms Ong had been was to Indonesia and Taiwan respectively.

“It’s my first time travelling so far, and I’m honoured to be one of the first two to go on this trip,” said Ms Ong, who has two younger siblings and whose mother is a junior chef at a restaurant.

“The last time I took a plane was 15 years ago,” revealed Ms Asmaa, the oldest among six children of a housewife and an operations support officer.

In Germany, they stayed with two local families who are TUM alumni.

They were also given an allowance of \$240, which they spent mostly on souvenirs.

A visit to TUM’s campus in Garching, a town north of Munich, was one of the trip’s highlights.

There, they visited the



Ms Ong and Ms Asmaa at the Technical University of Munich's Garching campus (above), with the four-storey slide behind them. Ms Ong said her favourite part of the trip was trying her hand at the flight simulator (below). PHOTOS: TUM ASIA



school’s nuclear research reactor and played with innovations like the flight simulator built by students, which Ms Ong said was her favourite part.

Ms Asmaa, on the other hand, enjoyed riding down the four-storey slide there so much that she tried it three times.

At TUM’s oldest campus in Munich, they met a robot that could interact with humans and show facial expressions like sadness, surprise and shock.

They also visited a third cam-

pus at Freising.

Last Friday, they attended the final day of the Lindau Nobel Laureate meeting at Mainau Island, where 35 Nobel Prize winners and some 600 young scientists from nearly 80 countries had gathered.

Ms Asmaa, whose favourite subjects are mathematics and physics, said: “More than fun, the trip was relevant to what I study.”

“I will definitely return to TUM if I have the chance.”

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