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2 JC students try out lab work in German university

10-day trip part of joint effort with ST fund

By AMELIA TENG

THIS year's June holiday was an unusual one for 17-year-old Abigail Sim.

She got a glimpse of what it took to discover cures for diseases, toured Munich, and stayed with a German host family – all on a trip that was fully paid for.

The second-year Victoria Junior College student spent three days this month in a lab at the Technical University of Munich (TUM), a renowned German science and engineering institution.

There, she helped a PhD student with research on new anti-virulence drugs, which fight antibiotic-resistant infections.

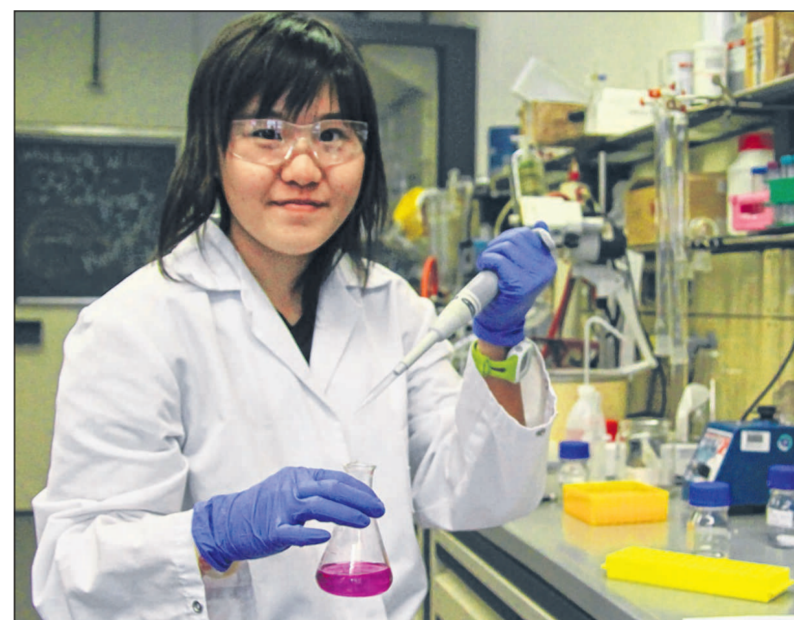
For seven hours each day, she tried her hand at lab techniques, from purifying chemical compounds to separating molecules.

At first, she was worried that she would not be studying for the A-level exams like her friends, but she said her mother told her this was "a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity". "It was very exciting as I've never had the chance to use the labs in universities in Singapore," said Abigail, who hopes to study medicine at the National University of Singapore or Monash University in Melbourne.

She was one of two students – the other was Tampines JC student Elicia Nadya Elvis Isyak, 18 – who spent 10 days on the trip exploring the German university's three campuses in Munich, Garching and Freising, both located north of Munich.

The girls are the second batch of students taking part in an initiative by the school's Singapore-based branch TUM Asia, and The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund. The scheme allows the fund's beneficiaries to visit TUM's campuses in Germany. The programme was launched in 2012 to mark the 10th anniversary of the school located at Pixel Building in Buona Vista. The trip, which cost close to \$10,000, was paid for by TUM and TUM Asia.

Besides learning about lab work, both students – who were each given an allowance of €240



Victoria JC student Abigail Sim at a lab in TUM's Garching campus helping with research on new anti-virulence drugs to fight antibiotic-resistant infections.



Tampines JC student Elicia Nadya Elvis Isyak working on a project to disinfect water in TUM's Garching campus. PHOTOS: COURTESY OF TUM ASIA

(S\$408) – also went to tourist spots such as the Deutsches Museum, which has science and technology exhibits, and Allianz Arena, home of Bayern Munich football club.

Elicia, whose father is a technician and mother is unemployed, said: "It was my first time taking such a long flight and going to Europe, which is so different from Singapore." The oldest of four children, who hopes to study forensic science, said: "Spending time in the lab gave me a glimpse of what I could expect in university in the future." Her research

was on disinfecting water.

Abigail, the middle of three children, said: "I learnt that discovery of new things takes time and perseverance." Her mother is an accounts clerk and father is unemployed.

She hopes to one day go to developing countries to help children who suffer from malnutrition and diseases like malaria. "My mother shared with us newspaper stories about how there are people in other countries who have no access to medical technology, so I want to help them." ateng@sph.com.sg

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