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**Title** : More civil servants to be groomed for China-related work

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SINGAPORE: The Public Service Commission (PSC) is introducing a one-year Overseas Development Programme for China to groom public servants for China-related work. This was announced at the PSC scholarships award ceremony on Saturday.

Fresh graduates or mid-career professionals can apply for the programme where they will get to spend up to nine months working in a Singapore company or government agency located in China. When they finish their stint, they will be doing China-related work in the Civil Service in Singapore.

This year, 87 PSC scholars were selected from over 2,500 applicants. And a record number will be going to China for their undergraduate studies.

The PSC has been sending scholars to China since 1993 but the numbers have been small in the past.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, speaking at the award ceremony, said: "We need to send more students to study in China because it has become a major player in Asia and in the world.

"Its influence has grown and will continue to grow. Its relevance to us is increasing.

"And we need people who can understand the Chinese, interact with them, be comfortable in that milieu, be able to read how they think, how they act, what their preoccupations are, and to know some of them personally so there are personal ties to link you up."

Ten students were awarded the inaugural PSC China Scholarship, seven are from the Bicultural Studies Programme and one from the Chinese Language Elective Programme.

Lau Yuan Zhi, a recipient of the PSC China Scholarship who is headed to Peking University, said: "China and Singapore currently already have very strong bilateral ties. Through more of us going over there, we hope that when we come back, we can serve the government, serve the people, to strengthen such ties."

This year, two undergraduates were also awarded the PSC Mid-Term Scholarship, the purpose of which is to widen the points of entry into the public service. Since its inception in 2007, six such scholarships have been given out.

Faiz Mohd Irwan Law was one of the PSC Mid-Term Scholarship recipients this year. The Honours-year student at the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) said: "When I finished my 'A' Level, I haven't decided what I wanted to do as a career. It was only after my experiences in NS (National Service) and a few years of my university that I realised that I have a passion to serve the people."

For the future, Mr Lee said the PSC will have to work harder to bring in good people, as more scholarships become available and more parents have the resources to send their children abroad.

Meanwhile, those interested in the Overseas Development Programme for China can attend an information session on 15 August. More information is available at this website: [www.psd.gov.sg/odp](http://www.psd.gov.sg/odp)

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