PM Lee: S’pore remains committed to basic research

In an interview with The Straits Times, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong underlined the Government’s commitment to basic research.

“I am a strong believer in basic research,” he said, adding that Singapore’s R&D expenditure has grown from 0.5 per cent of GDP in 1990 to 1.2 per cent in 2017.

He said the country needed to continue investing in research and development, especially in areas like biotechnology, where Singapore has a competitive advantage.

Mr Lee, who chairs the National Research Foundation (NRF), an agency that funds and administers grants for research projects, said the R&D expenditure had increased from S$4.6 billion in 2018 to S$4.8 billion in 2019.

“I am confident that we will continue to see growth in this area,” he said.

He added that the Government had established the Research, Innovation and Enterprise (RIE) Council in January 2019, with the aim of steering Singapore’s research strategy for the next five years.

The council will consider how to balance investment in basic research and applications-driven research, since both are important.

Mr Lee said the council will also consider how to target more resources on, which activities are currently being funded.

He added that the council will take into account the need for Singapore to continue investing in digital technologies and automation.

Mr Lee said the RIE Council was set up in response to the need to balance investment in basic research and applications-driven research.

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