

THE BUSINESS TIMES

PUBLISHED MAY 14, 2013

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NTU start-up runs Vietnam water treatment unit remotely

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NANYANG Technological University (NTU) start-up has launched a water treatment plant in Vietnam that is remotely monitored from Singapore.

De.Mem Pte Ltd's plant, the first of its kind in South-east Asia, occupies 120 square metres - a space just a little larger than a five-room HDB flat - near Ho Chi Minh City, but churns out a million litres of drinking water a day, roughly the amount consumed by 6,600 Singaporeans.

And all the manpower this facility needs is vested in just one person there, handling operations. Most of the oversight is done by a Singapore office via an NTU-designed wireless network.

De.Mem is in this venture with GD Wasser, a Vietnamese company which finances, designs, builds and operates decentralised water treatment plants. The facility relies on the latest in info-communications technology, patented sensors from De.Mem's parent company MINT and Singapore-developed membranes and treatment processes.

The general manager of De.Mem, Adrian Yeo, said: "This model is a new form of decentralised water treatment plant, in which we can control the quality and operations of dozens of small water plants simultaneously, while only needing very few skilled workers locally."

The plant is backed by Singapore-based investment firm New Asia Investments (NAI), which put \$300,000 into De.Mem as a first-round investment. NAI also finances GD Wasser through a loan facility.

The collaboration between De.Mem and GD Wasser will continue with four other water treatment plants modelled after De.Mem's decentralised water network model. These are expected to launch in Vietnam by the end of this year.

Andreas Kroell, the director of NAI, said: "Our investment in De.Mem and GD Wasser meets a strong market need for modern, but cost-efficient decentralised water treatment technologies in South-east Asia. The synergy with the know-how of MINT and the leading expertise of NTU in this space provides an excellent basis for further expansion of the business model."