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## **Minister launches networking for working women**

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THE gap in networking opportunities for women in Singapore's work landscape will soon be plugged, thanks to a new initiative called the Young Women's Leadership Connection.

The initiative has been launched to plug the gap by creating a pipeline of women leaders in Singapore through networking, mentorship and community opportunities.

Senior Minister of State for Finance and Transport Lim Hwee Hua explained: 'With increased globalisation and higher representation of women in leadership positions, networking becomes crucial. It will bring about synergies and mutual benefits.'

Mrs Lim launched the initiative on Thursday in conjunction with financial firm UBS.

While groups like the International Women's Forum do exist, these are 'few and far between', said Mrs Lim, adding that talks were also held with different women leader groups to possibly organise joint activities.

Unlike for men, networking tends to be a 'low priority for women', the minister said, pointing to responsibilities such as family duties.

And while companies tend to have more men on their boards than women, Mrs Lim feels the playing field is more level today.

Increasingly, industries hire based on competence rather than gender, she said.

Companies can also help by rehiring employees who had left work to have children once they are ready to return or offer them flexible work arrangements.

Industry leaders such as Ascott CEO Jennie Chua, chief of water treatment company Hyflux Olivia Lum as well as some female MPs will be involved in the programme to share their experience.

Sixty women from Nanyang Technological University are participating in the initiative, although other tertiary institutions such as Singapore Management University and National University of Singapore will be invited to participate later.

Criteria for participation include strong academic performance as well as leadership ability in extracurricular activities.

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