

S'pore well positioned to tap on rapidly developing space industry: S Iswaran

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SINGAPORE: Singapore is well positioned to tap on the rapidly-developing industry for space-related technologies in Asia. This is according to Senior Minister of State for Trade & Industry and Education, S Iswaran.

Speaking at a space technology conference, he said the country can also serve as a catalyst for the further growth of the Asian space industry.

Meanwhile, plans are underway between the public and private sector to start a regional space-training camp to drive interest in the industry.

The infra-red in-ear thermometer is just one of many spinoffs developed from space-related technology.

New composite materials for spacecraft have also found their way into everyday vehicles.

Observers said this may have significant potential for commercial opportunities in the global space industry.

As Asian giants like China and India develop space programmes, the industry for related technologies is expected to grow rapidly and Singapore wants a slice of the space technology pie.

Mr Iswaran said: "The developments in Asia in this sector create very interesting and compelling opportunities for several decades to come. We have capabilities in many parts of Asia and Singapore is very well positioned to be a catalytic player in these developments. Because of our indigenous capabilities, traditional strengths, and also our collaborations from many partners from overseas."

Singapore will be able to leverage on its strengths in aerospace, precision engineering and electronics.

Jonathan Hung, president, Singapore Space and Technology Association, said: 'Definitely the centre of gravity is moving to Asia and I guess after this post-economic crisis, beyond general economics, I think the space industry is starting to look at Asia quite seriously because the regional countries are moving quite heavily into space.'

'Space agencies are already set up in Asia Pacific. More and more are going into satellite development and there is an increase in satellite launches as well. So there are a lot of opportunities.'

'Singapore has traditionally been a focal point for mindshare. We are neutral as well, that's a very strong advantage. Singapore is also home to various sectors that are very relevant and strong to the space industries specifically the electronics sector, telecommunications sector, the aerospace sector.'

'We also have quite a vibrant engineering sector as well. Talent pool is there and we also have good infrastructure and R&D. And space does not just mean space per-se. For space R&D, we can leverage on all these aspects. Singapore does have those strong foundations to tap on.'

A memorandum of understanding has also been signed for a space-themed training camp in Singapore.

The project is aimed at driving regional interest in the space industry especially among the youth.

The parties behind the camp are Singapore Space and Technology Association, Singapore Science Centre and Vanguard International Consultants.

40 local secondary students will kick off the first batch in June. The camp will eventually be open to the rest of the region. The programme will include both academic and practical lesson over three days.

There are also plans for industry attachments. Other details such as investment costs, fees, and funding are still being finalised.

The global space industry was estimated to be worth over S\$250 billion in 2008.

It's estimated to have grown 8.4 per cent each year over the last four years. - CNA/vm