

Singapore

S'pore can shoot for niche services

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Nation well placed to spur industry's growth in Asia

SINGAPORE has what it takes to aim for the final frontier.

With built-in strengths in aerospace, precision engineering and electronics, the country is well placed to spur growth in Asia's space industry, said the Senior Minister of State (Trade and Industry and Education), Mr S. Iswaran.

It can look to complement the growth of satellite service providers in Asia, among other ways.

Mr Iswaran, who was speaking at the opening of the **Global Space and Technology Convention and Satellite Technology Asia** yesterday, added that Singapore has two other key advantages: its pro-business environment and technology-savvy workforce.

Already, large corporations like Arianespace, which owns commercial satellites, and GeoEye, which owns imaging satellites, have recognised the advantages here, and have set up bases to meet the demand of clients in the Asia-Pacific, he said.

Agreeing with Mr Iswaran, Dr Harold Raveche, president of the Stevens Institute of Technology, said he is confident Singapore can make an impact in the industry.

The Stevens Institute of Technology in the United States is a research university that handles projects for America's space movement.

Singapore, he noted, can carve out niche areas.

It does not have to try and get into the big league with the United States, China and Russia.

Instead, it can look at providing global data processing centres for the large amount of information that is collected from countries that actually carry out space exploration.

For example, data and images from satellites and spacecraft can be used by countries for security and defence, by non-governmental organisations for crisis missions, and by companies for port management.

'All the data that is mined needs to be sorted and made sense of, and that's where Singapore can come in,' Dr Raveche said, adding that it does not need to spend billions to offer these services.

'The key is for someone now to take the lead and start,' he said.

The **global space** industry is a growing one.

According to the United States' non-profit organisation The Space Foundation, it was worth US\$257 billion (S\$361 billion) in 2008, and has been growing at a compounded average growth rate of over 8 per cent since 2006.

Asian nations are ramping up space exploration efforts.

China has already completed its first space station module, while India aspires to put a man in space by 2015.

Japan aims to put an astronaut on the moon by 2030.

MARIA ALMENOAR

DATA PROCESSING

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Dr Harold Raveche, president of the Stevens Institute of Technology, on Singapore's role in the space industry

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