

Singapore to develop small satellite capabilities

Singapore

SINGAPORE could be one of the first few countries in the world to have small satellites flying in formation.

This initiative would be the first such effort in Asia, said Minister for Trade and Industry S Iswaran on Thursday at the Global Space and Technology Convention, held at Sheraton Towers.

The plan is a move by the new Satellite Technology and Research Centre (Star), jointly launched by the National University of Singapore and DSO National Laboratories last week.

Several small satellites flying in formation can do the same work as one larger satellite, but cheaper and faster, according to ST Electronics president Ravinder Singh.

Mr Iswaran said that the space industry's shift to small satellites presents Singapore with "new possibilities" not only in research but also business.

He said that the number of small satellites launched worldwide had increased from 20 in 2011 to more than 250 last year. "Aided by advancements in miniaturisation of electronics and an increase in companies offering space launch services, small satellites promise more comprehensive coverage and flexible usage at a lower cost," said Mr Iswaran.

He said this opens up new possibilities not only for communication and research, but also for commercialisation and businesses, noting that the global space industry is estimated to be worth US\$330 billion.

The new centre's efforts to fly



The Global Space and Technology Convention, now in its tenth year, is being held at Sheraton Towers Singapore. BT PHOTO: TIMOTHY DAVID

small satellites in formation require "high-precision navigation and high-complexity engineering", said Mr Iswaran.

However, it will build the "deep capabilities" needed to develop advanced satellite applications such as collaborative sensing and in-orbit servicing.

The Global Space and Technology Convention, now in its tenth year, is organised by the Singapore Space and Technology Association (SSTA).

The association entered a partnership with India's Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry to promote cooperation between the two countries in the area of space technology. Next week, it

will also sign an agreement with the French Aerospace Industries Association.

To support the Republic's burgeoning space technology sector, SSTA is also entering a partnership with the National Trades Union Congress.

It also plans to launch a six-month long accelerator programme for space startups here in the second quarter of this year, said SSTA president Jonathan Hung.

He added: "Working closely with space startups for the last few years made us realise the need for a more structured and sustainable accelerator programme to support space startups in Asia, helping them to develop at the right place in an industry which is blasting off."