S’pore at the forefront with driverless vehicles

Singapore is at the forefront globally in terms of its progress with autonomous vehicles, a top Volvo executive said yesterday.

Volvo Buses president Hakan Agnevall also said that the company is willing to increase its investment in developing autonomous vehicles in Singapore, having already put a significant sum into a joint project with the Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

The Swedish automaker launched a full-sized autonomous electric bus with NTU yesterday, with both organisations saying that the 12m-long bus was the first of its kind.

Mr Agnevall told The Straits Times: “Everybody is looking at developing autonomous vehicles, but I would say that Singapore is very well-formulated in terms of (developing) autonomous vehicles. It also puts (in) a lot of money, effort and resources to make it happen.

“This is where Singapore stands out.”

Volvo signed its partnership with NTU to develop driverless electricity-powered buses in January last year.

Mr Agnevall said that Volvo has invested $4 million so far in the trials, with the additional amount spent on developing technology for the bus “much, much more” than $4 million.

Volvo plans to continue investing in autonomous vehicle development here.

“There is a great future in this cooperation. It is highly strategic for Singapore and for Volvo as a group,” Mr Agnevall added.

“We are very much looking forward to continuing and deepening the cooperation.”

A report by research house Fitch Solutions Macro Research on Monday said that Singapore is now a step closer to autonomous vehicle adoption, with the publication of provisional national standards to guide the development and deployment of autonomous vehicles.

The standards, termed as Technical Reference 68 (TR 68), were published by Enterprise Singapore in January to promote the safe deployment of fully autonomous vehicles in Singapore.

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