

THE STRAITS TIMES

Singapore stands out in terms of strategy for autonomous vehicles: Volvo executive



(From left) President of Volvo Buses Hakan Agnevall, NTU president Subra Suresh and LTA deputy chief executive Goh Teck Seng pose for a photo at the launch of the world's first full-sized autonomous bus on March 5, 2019. ST PHOTO: TOH TING WEI



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SINGAPORE - Singapore is at the forefront worldwide in terms of its progress with autonomous vehicles, a top Volvo executive said on Tuesday (March 5).

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 in a significant sum of money in a joint project with the Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

The Swedish carmaker launched a full-sized, autonomous electric bus with NTU on Tuesday, with both 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 formulated in terms of (developing) autonomous vehicles. It also puts 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. As part of the deal, the firm provided two buses fitted with autonomous driving technologies.

Mr Agnevall said that Volvo has invested \$4 million so far in the trials, with the additional amount spent on technology development on the bus "much, much more" than \$4 million.



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Despite having spent a significant sum, Volvo would continue investing in Singapore.

"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 roll-out of autonomous vehicles.

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

In its report, Fitch said: "We believe that this clear set of standards will support the development of autonomous vehicles, as it will create targets for autonomous vehicle technology developers to reach and will seek to eliminate a lot of the risk and uncertainty surrounding this technology.

"Furthermore, it will attract more developers to Singapore, as they will be able to operate the vehicles in a real world environment which will support their development of this tech."

In a separate report released last month, consulting firm KPMG International said Singapore is second in the world behind the Netherlands, and first in Asia in its readiness to adopt autonomous vehicles.

This was judged based on four criteria - policy and legislation, technology and innovation, infrastructure, and consumer acceptance.

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