SINGAPORE: The Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) and Nanyang Technological University (NTU) have extended their partnership in air traffic management research for another five years.

They announced on Thursday (Feb 8) that they have jointly committed an initial S$43 million in funds, and will invest up to S$18 million more to programmes to improve airspace and airport capacity, as well as solutions to enhance safety and efficiency of flight operations.

CAAS and NTU established the Air Traffic Management Research Institute (ATMRI) in 2013. The institute is also helping to develop talent for Singapore's workforce in this field.

Over the next five years, artificial intelligence and data science will be a key area of research for the institute, said CAAS and NTU in a joint news release.

NTU President Professor Subra Suresh said: "We can take the latest in technology and try it out so we can position the region as a global leader. With the CAAS partnership, with the anticipated significant increase in air traffic all over the world but especially in Asia, we can bring the latest tools in data and AI ... to benefit society."

A key goal of the institute is to offer expertise to airports of other ASEAN states to analyse their air traffic and operational procedures.

The aim is to optimise regional air traffic, improve turnaround time for flights within the region and reduce delays for travellers.

To date, researchers from the institute have worked with Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.
A continuing area of research is in managing air traffic for drones. In December, NTU researchers demonstrated Singapore's first automated flight of an unmanned aircraft using a 4G mobile network (https://news/singapore/ntu-mi-collaborate-on-using-4g-mobile-phone-networks-to-let-9476886). This was a joint project with communications provider M1, and was proof of concept of the possibility of using commercial networks to manage air traffic for unmanned aircraft systems.

Professor Suresh also formally announced the university's direction to move toward artificial intelligence and data science in all areas, in line with the global economy's transformation into the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

"As a large university, we focus on a lot of areas. AI and data science are part and parcel of a lot of future trends: from personalised medicine; to banking, financial services, wealth management; to cyber security... Our goal is to look at technology not just for the sake of technology, but equally how it benefits society – our campus community, to Singapore, the region, then Asia and the world."

Last month, NTU announced that every undergraduate freshman – about 23,000 every year – will have to take compulsory modules on data literacy moving forward. The university also announced a new undergraduate degree in AI that will begin this year.

Source: CNA/qs

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