

Singapore invests heavily in air traffic research



Nanyang Technological University's new two-storey-high control tower simulator, which provides a 360-degree-view, is believed to be the largest in the world for research purposes. ST PHOTO: YEO KAI WEN

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Singapore is investing heavily in air traffic research to beef up its ability to handle a projected increase in flights in the region.

Making the point at an industry gathering yesterday, Transport Minister Lui Tuck Yew said that "managing increasingly crowded skies" is a key challenge in the Asia-Pacific.

With airlines in the region accounting for seven in 10 of all new single-aisle plane deliveries over the next two decades, "there will be pressure on air navigation service providers to handle more aircraft, and less room for error", Mr Lui warned.

To prepare for the task, \$10 million has been spent on two new simulators - one that replicates a control tower and the other, a radar control station - at Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

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CROWDED SKIES

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TRANSPORT MINISTER LUI TUCK YEW, on how the projected increase in flights in the region will present challenges for the industry



NTU's air traffic institute is a joint initiative with the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore.

The authority has also set up a partnership with Mitre, which is a United States-based non-profit organisation that conducts air traffic research.

Mitre Asia Pacific Singapore and the NTU centre were officially inaugurated by Senior Minister of State for Transport Josephine Teo last night.

Earlier in the day, Mr Lui spoke at the Singapore Aviation Academy about other challenges facing the industry, such as safety.

Several high-profile tragedies last year - including the crash of two Malaysian Airlines flights - are a reminder of the need to continually find ways to improve safety practices and procedures, he said.

Humanpower development critical too, Singapore is injecting \$3 million over the next three years into a training programme it started in 2001 for participants from developing countries, such as African and South Asian states.

Areas of focus include aviation safety and security as well as air traffic and airport management.

To date, the Singapore-Icao (International Civil Aviation Organisation) programme has benefited more than 700 international participants from 120 countries.

Mr Olumuyiwa Bernard Aliu, president of Icao - a United Nations arm that regulates global commercial aviation - said training is a critical component of Icao's "no country left behind" initiative.

The campaign is focused on supporting countries with higher accident rates and security threats, but little political will and resources to tackle the issues.

Stressing the need for cooperation and collaboration, he said: "It has always been a hallmark of our sector that we take our greatest steps forward when states and industry are working together."