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SINGAPORE, Dec 22 — The road sweeper and a golf buggy move around the track with ease, jamming their brakes on when a pedestrian steps out and negotiating sharp turns. Welcome to Singapore’s self-drive test centre, complete with traffic lights and mock skyscrapers, which is at the heart of the...

SINGAPORE, Dec 22 — The road sweeper and a golf buggy move around the track with ease, jamming their brakes on when a pedestrian steps out and negotiating sharp turns.

The two-hectare (4.9-acre) site has a track with sharp turns, traffic lights, a slope, and a bus stop to simulate real driving conditions. Shipping containers are also stacked up to emulate how high rises could potentially block satellite signals to self-driving machines.
on a lamp post during a trial test at CETRAN run by the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in Singapore December 5, 2019. — AFP pic

The sweeper is being trialled as part of a government plan that could eventually see them deployed in the city, according to local media, while cars and buses are also being tested, and trials of delivery robots will soon take place.

The first trials of an autonomous car on public roads took place in 2015.

Self-driving vehicles will mainly be used in the public transport network for tasks such as shuttling people to stations and stops from their homes or workplaces, said Subodh Mhaisalkar, an NTU professor involved in the autonomous vehicle programme.

Countries where private companies are taking the lead risk having “wonderful technology” but not being able to launch it in the market because of the absence of rules, he added.

Safety remains a major concern for the industry worldwide — in 2018, a self-driving Uber car was involved in a crash that killed a woman in Arizona.

“It would be very difficult to lead in the whole industry simply because the nation is small,” said Guoli Chen, associate professor of strategy at French business school INSEAD.

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