

S'pore aims for the stars with local satellites

By DAVIDEE

SINGAPORE could have seven locally designed and built satellites in the earth's orbit by next year, as the country pushes ahead with plans to make space its next frontier.

Work on five new satellites by industry players, universities and the Government is well under way, and they will add to the two that the country already has in orbit.

Nanyang Technological University (NTU) had launched the first two made-in-Singapore satellites in 2011 and last year, the former in partnership with DSO National Laboratories.

The nation is looking to grow its space industry to tap the lucrative global market, which was worth US\$304.3 billion (S\$386 billion) in 2012, up 17.7 per cent from 2010.

Last year, the Government set up an office dedicated to researching and developing the industry here, in particular the manufacture of satellites. It also set aside funding worth \$90 million.

The Office for Space Technology and Industry announced on Thursday \$12 million in funding for 11 projects.

These include those by the Agency for Science, Technology and Research and NTU.

Meanwhile, ST Electronics is "in the final stage of development" of the first locally made commercial satellite, the TeLEOS-1. High-resolution images from the 400kg satellite could be used for global disaster and environmental monitoring, resource exploration and maritime observation.

NTU's 130kg tropical weather monitoring satellite, the Velox-CI, funded by the Economic Development Board, will be complete by September.

It will record data on temperature, humidity and pressure from equatorial regions. This could help researchers better understand long-term climate change or how typhoons form.

Both these satellites are expected to be launched from India by September next year.

The National University of Singapore is also getting in on the act with its first satellite planned for launch by the end of next year.

The 50kg satellite will use hyperspectral imaging technology developed by the university's electrical and computer engineering department.

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