

THE STRAITS TIMES

Print Article

[>> Back to the article](#)

Feb 17, 2008

All-star line-up at first S'pore Airshow

FIGHTER jets, commercial planes and unmanned drones will jostle for attention at Asia's biggest airshow this week as titans Boeing, Airbus and other manufacturers take their wares to the booming Asian market, organisers said.

Industry issues like airport bottlenecks, security, environmental damage, the growth of low-cost carriers and the race to send tourists into space are also expected to be discussed at the inaugural Singapore Airshow, they said.

Regional transport ministers, airline chiefs, airport operators as well as the heads of the International Air Transport Association and the International Civil Aviation Organisation are expected to attend.

'The scale of the exhibition is far larger than anything we have had,' managing director Jimmy Lau said, comparing it with the Asian Aerospace fair, which has been moved to Hong Kong after a long presence in the city-state.

'We are on the way to becoming one of the top airshows in the world.'

More than 30,000 trade visitors, half of them from overseas, are predicted to throng the show from Tuesday to Sunday.

Air force chiefs, including the commander of the Israeli Air Force and the Commander of Pacific Forces, United States Air Force, will discuss the future of global air power at their own summit during the event.

Brigadier-General Wong Huat Sern, a Singapore air force commander, said one of the emerging issues is the future of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

'For example, what is the future of unmanned warfare and the future growth of UAVs? Will they be used for air-to-air combat?' he said.

The airshow will also feature a conference on defence procurement and a convention showcasing the latest technology in space engineering and design.

Singapore, South-east Asia's most advanced economy, decided to host its own airshow after organisers of Asian Aerospace transferred the event, held every two years, to Hong Kong.

A record US\$15.2 billion (S\$21.5 billion) worth of deals was clinched during the last Singapore Asian Aerospace in 2006, but Mr Lau would not comment on potential contracts this year.

The Singapore Airshow will be held at a 30-hectare site near Changi Airport and boasts 40,000 square metres of exhibition space, or 40 per cent more area than its predecessor.

Unlike Asian Aerospace, which is now strictly a civil aviation event, the Singapore Airshow will have equal commercial and defence components.

As in the past, United States-based Boeing, Europe's Airbus and other industry players will showcase their products, including the world's biggest airliner, the Airbus A380, UAVs, warplanes and other lethal war machines.

'The Asia Pacific will continue to be a key market,' said Mr Joe Song, Asia Pacific vice-president for international business development at Boeing Integrated Defense Systems.

Defence budgets in the region were growing between five and eight per cent annually, he said.

Boeing will bring three F-18 Super Hornets and an F-15 fighter jet to the airshow as part of its defence exhibit that will also feature the Harpoon and JDAM weapons systems.

Air force Top Guns from Singapore and elsewhere will take to the skies during daily aerobatic displays.

Boeing said its commercial exhibit will feature the 787 Dreamliner, its first new model in more than a

decade.

The Sydney-based Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation consultancy cited reports that Boeing would announce during the airshow orders for about 100 aircraft worth up to US\$8 billion from South-east Asian carriers.

Rival Airbus said it will bring in an A380 aircraft, which will take part in daily flying exhibitions. Last year, Singapore Airlines became the first carrier in the world to commercially fly the double-decker A380, the world's biggest passenger plane.

Scale models of the A350 and the A320, which is popular among Asian budget carriers, will also be displayed.

In its latest 20-year sales forecast, Airbus said the world's fleet of large passenger jets - those with more than 100 seats - and freight planes numbered 14,980 at the end of 2006 and the figure was projected to grow to nearly 33,000.

The greatest demand for new planes will come from the Asia Pacific region, where airlines will take delivery of 31 per cent of new planes in the next 20 years, compared with 24 per cent for Europe and 27 per cent for North America, it said.

US defence firms Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman will also have a large presence at the airshow, organisers said. -- AFP

[Copyright © 2007 Singapore Press Holdings. All rights reserved. Privacy Statement & Condition of Access](#)