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- Hot News
Cloned for the table
Will airshow extravaganza set record for business deals?
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Will airshow extravaganza set record for business deals?

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It promises to be the biggest air show ever to be staged in the region, when the inaugural Singapore Airshow is unveiled on a brand-new 30 ha site — the size of around 28 football fields — near Changi Airport next month.

And the Republic is pulling all stops to ensure that it lives up to its premier status as the world's third largest airshow after the more established events in Paris and Farnborough, England.

Visitors will be thrilled daily by the aerobatics of the Republic of Singapore Air Force's Black Knights, brought out of mothballs especially for the airshow, and the Royal Australian Air Force's Roulettes.

For those with very deep pockets, a trip to outer space may well be the ultimate trip. For them, the Global Space and Technology Convention — Asia's first international space conference showcasing the latest technology in space engineering and design — will whet their appetite.

For visitors with ambitions closer to the ground, there will be a total of 42 civilian and military aircraft, to salivate over. Want to get up close to the A380? Airbus is flying in one of its super jumbos for the show.

The huge plane will take to the skies like the other aircraft who will want to impress buyers with their flying capabilities.

Those with a military bent will be able

to get a good look at the lethal Apache attack helicopter of the Singapore Armed Forces.

Less spectacularly, but just as important, is the fact that the Singapore Airshow will bring together key players in the aviation industry.

The Asia-Pacific market will propel growth in the industry and is expected to account for a third of global aircraft orders over the next 20 years, with China a major buyer.

"We are bringing the industry to the buyers," said the show's managing director Jimmy Lau, underscoring the fact that 80 per cent of the trade participants will be from the Asia-Pacific region. "Visitors from this region don't go in large numbers to the major air shows at Paris and Farnborough," he

PREVIOUS PAGE 1 / 3 NEXT