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Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean speaking at the one-north Festival. (Photo: A*STAR's Facebook page)

SINGAPORE: Stronger partnerships in the areas of research and development (R&D) and innovation are needed to help Singapore capture growth opportunities and develop new solutions, according to Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean.

Speaking at one-north's inaugural forum on Tuesday (Aug 2), Mr Teo said the stronger partnerships will help cement Singapore's position as a science and innovation hub. These include collaboration between the public and private sectors, across different areas and across borders.

"Collaboration between the public sector, academia and private sectors can bring new inventions and processes to market," he said. "Beyond translating R&D from our research institutes and Institutes of Higher Learning, industry-led public-private partnerships allow industries to work closely with our researchers, articulate real-world needs, spark new ideas and accelerate the development of solutions."

TECHNOLOGY CHANGING URBAN PLANNING

Automated vehicles that one can hire using an app, which may become the norm in the future, was also touched on at the forum. This could mean drastic changes in urban planning and for the economy.

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Said Mr William Saito, a special advisor for the government of Japan's cabinet office: "We may live in a world where we will have an Uber-like application where say you go on a date and you want to impress your girlfriend and you rent a sports car.

"You go to the mall with her but she buys a lot of things and it no longer fits in the sports car. So what do you do, you pick another car, the car automatically picks you up, takes you home. This has fundamental implications - not only is it obviously beneficial and useful and entertaining for the people, but for city planners and governments, this asks a lot of questions.

"No longer - if you have cars automatically picking you up and disappearing after they drop you off - do you have to worry about car parks, gas stations, insurance. So it changes a lot of industries."

Mr Saito was a panellist at the Leaders in Science Forum, where experts discussed the impact of science and innovation on public policy-making and its role in the next phase of the nation's development. He added that the speed at which technology moves means governments must remain flexible.

"Innovation in ICT is actually measurable through Moore's law, and how you see the performance in computing is somewhat linear," he said. "And so through that, it gives policymakers some room to decide what the future will look like 20 to 30 years from now, but it also requires governments to be flexible in how they do this process, how they are flexible in adapting when things may go left instead of right."

INAUGURAL FORUM

Held for the first time, the one-north Festival brings together researchers, industry partners and educators to discuss ways in which they can collaborate. The forum is part of a five-day festival for members of the scientific community and the public.

one-north is a business park where Singapore's R&D and high-tech industries are located.

"This is now a very sizeable community - 16,000 people just in Biopolis, Fusionopolis, and over 30,000 people in the entire one-north area," said Mr Lim Chuan Poh, chairman of the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR). "It spans from public sector research to private research to academic."

"one-north Festival is just to get people to see the opportunity in being able to work across disciplines, across professions, because you see things a little differently and when you bring different perspectives together, you open up the space for innovation," he added.

The event, which started on Tuesday, will be open to members of the public on Friday and Saturday, for them to take part in talks and tour labs, which are usually off-limits. Happening at Fusionopolis One, it will be open from 11am to 6pm. By-invitation events for scientists and budding entrepreneurs will take place on Wednesday and Thursday.

- CNA/ek