For these kids, the sky’s the limit

Teams battle it out at the Amazing Flying Machine Competition. CHUANG BING HAN tells you more

STEP aside Superman, Doraemon, SpongeBob SquarePants, and Thomas the Tank Engine rule the skies now.
At least, they did for a day, during the Singapore Amazing Flying Machine Competition (SAFMC) 2010 on March 20.
The SAFMC was a national competition, organised by DSO National Laboratories, in which participants designed and built their own flying machines to compete in various categories.

Unfazed by the older competition, Woodlands Primary School entered five teams in the unpowered glider category, which was targeted at secondary school students.
Three of the teams came away with awards each, in the aesthetic and presentation categories.

One of the teams, Soaring Phoenix, also won a Special Recognition Award, for being the top primary school team in the category.

“We are proud to win two medals, especially since the other teams are secondary school students,” said Thalia Ng, 11, a member of the Soaring Phoenix team.
“We were afraid in the beginning, but it turned out fine.”
Thalia was also chosen to help Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Teo Chee Hian, the guest of honour, launch a glider at the beginning of the event.

In the paper plane category, specifically for primary schools, The Flying Brothers team from Yishun Primary School came out tops.
But the competition was about more than just getting prizes, said their teacher in charge, Mr Terence Ang. He explained: “The pupils carried out the school core value of excellence. As long as they give their best, they are already winners.”

DSO is Singapore’s national defence research and development organisation. This was the second year it organised the SAFMC.

“Passion for aeromodelling has been growing in Singapore, and SAFMC is a unique platform to reach out to our youth to inspire them to design and build flying machines of their dreams,” said its spokesman.

More than 1,000 participants signed up this year, which is an increase of more than a 40 per cent from last year.

Flight Vortices team won the open category with a flying machine that can take off and land vertically. The team of working adults designed the craft for military use, allowing soldiers to use the flying machine to “see” up to 1.5km away.

### Tips to make your plane better:

- For a speedy paper plane:
  - Use stiff paper for the wings. They need to be thicker than the rest of the body of the plane.
  - The wings are made of material that will not collapse when you launch the plane, and you want it to fly as far as possible.

- For a plane that can go a long distance:
  - Launch the plane gently. You want it to go far, but not too fast.

- For a paper plane that can fly high:
  - Curl and cut the wings to give them more lift. This will make the plane fly higher.
  - Launch the plane gently. You want it to go high, but not too fast.