

ONLINE CONSENSUS

The Asia Pacific civil aviation authorities are taking advantage of the Internet to bring ideas together with the Asia Pacific Consultative Link (APCL) – a portal that connects them.

The 21st century is the age of the information evolution, where those who can harness the power of the Internet to make communication and information faster, more efficient and even cheaper stand to gain the most. Leveraging this technology, the Asia Pacific civil aviation authorities, in a sector that has always been at the forefront of tech innovation, is using the World Wide Web to bring together ideas from various countries and bridging them closer to each other. In 2005, the ground breaking idea APCL was proposed and accepted during the 42nd Conference of the Directors-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). APCL was envisioned as a portal for 37 civil aviation authorities of the Asia Pacific region to share and promote consensus on topical aviation issues.

Today, the APCL is managed by the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS).

GETTING MESSAGES ACROSS

The APCL is mainly a venue for the region's various aviation authorities to gather data, share perspectives, and arrive at a consensus on pressing issues affecting air transport and air navigation services including safety, security, efficiency and other issues agreed by the DGCA Conference. For instance, the site was crucial during pandemic situations, when the APCL provided a forum that allowed Asia Pacific DGCA's to update each other on preventive measures adopted to mitigate the spread of communicable diseases like H1N1, as well as share best practices in the facilitation of travel to and from different states.

It also serves as a platform for the exchange of views among Asia Pacific DGCA's, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Secretariat, the ICAO Bangkok Regional Office and the Asia Pacific Council Representatives in ICAO. Adding on, the APCL also presents itself as a means for states to stay up to date with what is going on at ICAO and the events at its Montreal headquarters.

SINGAPORE: STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS

Continuing on from Australia's earlier efforts, Singapore will continue to coordinate the flow of information among participating states and the ICAO and also disseminate information received from the Montreal Group – the informal group of Asia Pacific states on the Council of ICAO responsible for articulating the views of the Asia Pacific region to the rest of the ICAO Council – to the region, setting necessary timeframes for response and forwarding feedback

from the region to the Montreal Group. “As we take on the management of the APCL, Singapore will build on the efforts made by Australia in publicising and promoting the use of the APCL as a communication channel for all Asia Pacific member states on aviation matters,” said Yap Ong Heng, Director-General, CAAS.

The APCL became the ideal venue to get crucial information and discussions of issues to member states faster and more efficiently. To make it more user-friendly, new features were added to the site and communication channels were streamlined. The portal was also subject to a robust security audit by a reputable IT auditor before it was launched officially in March 2009.

The APCL sports new and refined features, including a new look and feel, with a simple overall design to make navigation easier. New content was added to make it easier for members to get information: A calendar feature was installed so that Asia Pacific DGCAAs are provided with a list of relevant and useful upcoming conferences, meetings and events in the region and elsewhere. Other aviation-related portals can now be accessed from the site through more links. This is particularly useful for data-gathering as well as for weighing in on relevant issues that affect the region.

SECURING THE FUTURE

While the APCL shows great potential as a valuable communication channel, there is more to be done to promote the site to its full potential to facilitate greater communication, understanding and collaboration among states. To further encourage participation and utilisation, a yearly schedule of topics of concern to the Asia Pacific aviation industry that can be discussed in the APCL for the upcoming year will be proposed.