



ISSUE 1

SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS

The newly restructured Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore is adopting fresh strategic directions, taking the cue from the pro-enterprise approach of its new Director-General, Yap Ong Heng.

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Yap Ong Heng, the new man at the helm of the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS), is a big believer in pro-enterprise organisations.

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And he's looking to adapt that pro-business approach for CAAS, as its new DirectorGeneral. The 49-year-old's appointment last July could not have come at a better time, with the launch of the restructured CAAS following the corporatisation and transfer of Changi Airport to the Changi Airport Group (CAG). Industry experts have already commended this move as it will sharpen the focus of CAAS on developing Singapore's aviation industry and air hub.

According to Yap, the motivation to corporatise Changi Airport and restructure CAAS was to enable the two new organisations to meet the challenges of tomorrow with greater focus, nimbleness and innovative spirit to further grow Singapore as a global air hub. "Today and into the future, there is greater competition within a fast changing aviation landscape. With more defined roles for CAAS and CAG, we can, working in concert, strengthen Singapore's position as a premier aviation hub," says Yap. "This new structure will also allow CAAS to take a more strategic role in developing the wider aviation industry."

CAAS intends to build on our domain knowledge and expertise and robust regulatory system to shape a pro-enterprise environment and actively engage the industry and relevant government agencies.

In a nutshell, CAAS will enable business opportunities and capabilities, ideas and innovation, as well as people opportunities and employment. "CAAS already has the domain knowledge

and expertise to ensure robust regulation and a high level of safety in the aviation industry. Now, CAAS intends to build on this to shape a pro-enterprise environment and actively engage the industry and relevant government agencies,” he adds.

Certainly, the success of CAAS hinges on collaboration. It hopes to enable the growth of the aviation sector through partnerships with various government agencies, such as the Economic Development Board (EDB), Jurong Town Corporation (JTC) and Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR). “CAAS aims to work closely with the economic agencies to chart the direction for the aviation industry and build an integrated aviation sector in Singapore,” he says.

ENABLING BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

The company’s pro-enterprise approach puts it and the Singapore aviation industry in good stead to capitalise on the upturn as Asia recovers from the economic crisis. The Changi air hub stands to capture more of the aircraft, passenger and cargo traffic that is expected in Asia. The aerospace industry in Singapore is set to build on its leading position as a comprehensive Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) centre in order to move up the aerospace value chain.

One of the segments that CAAS has identified to benefit from, is the aerospace business. For instance, Singapore aerospace companies which had carried out successful passenger-to-freight conversions during the recession, are now keen to make use of their newfound capability for conversion of other aircraft types. Yap believes that CAAS can play a part in supporting and facilitating this burgeoning segment.

A firm advocate of harnessing opportunities in challenging times, Yap points to another commercial prospect that has surfaced — transit cargo. He believes that the impact on the air cargo and logistics industry, as a result of the shift in Singapore’s manufacturing base to high value products, can be countered by developing the transit cargo business which leverages on Singapore’s connectivity and capabilities as a leading air cargo and logistics hub. In this respect, the Singapore sector is already ahead of the game, with the establishment of two specialised cargo storage facilities — Singapore Freeport, which handles high value artefacts, and Coolport@Changi, Singapore’s first on-airport perishables handling centre.

Tapping on Singapore’s connectivity can also help propel the business aviation sector. Yap predicts that business aviation in the region will grow as corporations and individuals discover the benefits of flying their own aircraft for business and leisure. This also means that maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) of business jets will get a boost. He explains, “Singapore is in a good position to further develop these sectors, especially with the upgrading of Seletar Airport and the development of Seletar Aerospace Park.”

In supporting the development of niches of excellence and capabilities, CAAS is open to adapting regulation without compromising safety, and offering financial incentives.

ENABLING PEOPLE OPPORTUNITIES

As Singapore develops its aviation capabilities and builds niches of excellence, there will be a need for more talent and trained manpower. Yap not only sees an important role for CAAS in supporting and facilitating manpower development for the aviation industry, but also opportunities for building the aviation education and training sector here. “As the aviation industry grows, it is important to build the necessary talent and manpower pool. We also want to make Singapore a centre of excellence for aviation knowledge and training,” he elaborates.

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To this end, CAAS is committed to further develop the Singapore Aviation Academy as a world-class institution of knowledge and training on international civil aviation. In ensuring the relevance and quality of its array of programmes, the Academy will also collaborate closely with strategic partners, leveraging on their expertise and international reach.

Yap also sees CAAS having a role in promoting jobs and careers in the aviation industry and the effective training of individuals joining the industry, as well as raising the competencies and skills of and providing upgrading and developmental opportunities for industry professionals. “Individuals with a passion for aviation and who are eager to learn can look forward to an exciting and rewarding career in the aviation industry,” says Yap.

CAAS

Yap has his work cut out for him and with the transformation of CAAS, it won't be business as usual. Even as the reorganisation helps CAAS achieve its new corporate goals and directions in the next lap, it also promotes collaboration and teamwork across the divisions and cohesive decision-making. Yap encourages discussion and consultation to bring in various viewpoints and ideas to advance the aviation sector. He says, “I want to promote innovation at work and thinking out-of-the-box.”

These can only serve CAAS well as it negotiates the issues confronting the aviation industry today, such as aviation carbon emissions and environmental protection. Although the industry currently contributes a mere two to three per cent of CO2 emissions, this figure is projected to increase with the growth of the industry, and Yap believes the industry needs to do its part in addressing the climate change challenge.

Moving forward, the future of Singapore's aviation industry looks promising as Yap and CAAS, in its new capacity, maximise Singapore's excellent infrastructure and connectivity, proximity to manufacturing bases and key markets, and other competitive advantages to propel the Singapore aviation hub to achieve greater success.