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## Training vital to growth of aviation industry



An air-traffic management researcher directing air traffic in a control tower simulator at the Air Traffic Management Research Institute in Singapore, which is dedicated to research and development in air-traffic management. Photo: Nanyang Technological University

*Longer-term challenges need to be addressed so sector can continue to grow: Minister Lui*

SINGAPORE – As more aircraft take to the skies to cater to the burgeoning demand for air travel, making the global airspace even more crowded, Minister for Transport and Second Minister for Defence Lui Tuck Yew has pressed for the steady development of aviation professionals while highlighting key challenges such as a talent crunch, increased pressure on air navigation service providers, and the need to improve safety standards.

“We all know that aviation is a key enabler and beneficiary of economic growth. The emerging economies of Africa, Latin-America, the Middle-East and Asia-Pacific will see the strongest growth. Prospects for the sector in the near term are therefore good, especially as fuel prices are not likely to increase to the high levels seen barely a year ago .... Nonetheless, we cannot be complacent. There are longer-term challenges that we need to address so aviation can continue to grow,” Mr Lui said at the opening ceremony of the 5th World Civil Aviation Chief Executive Forum yesterday.

Mr Lui’s comments came as Singapore reaffirmed its commitment to develop talent in the global aviation sector by extending and expanding an ongoing training programme aimed at building up the human resources critical to the industry’s development.

The Singapore-ICAO Developing Countries Training Programme (DCTP) will be extended by another three years from 2016, Mr Lui said yesterday.

Established in 2001, the DCTP is administered by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), and jointly sponsored by Singapore’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs here and the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS). It provides fellowships for aviation professionals from developing states to train at the Singapore Aviation Academy.

Over the next three years, Singapore will inject US\$2.25 million (S\$3.15 million) for 300 fellowships and 10 scholarships, the CAAS said yesterday. This is up from the US\$2.2 million in 2013, and an increase of 50 fellowships and four scholarships.

In addition to the DCTP programme, the Government has, over the years, provided its own fellowships to almost 6,000 international participants in the aviation sector through the Singapore Aviation Academy, Mr Lui said.

“Competent aviation professionals will continue to be in short supply, particularly in emerging economies. The talent pool is limited, and the shortage is worsened by competition with other industries for the same talent,” Mr Lui said.

According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), demand for air travel is expected to grow at a compound annual rate of 5.4 per cent between 2013 and 2017. Passenger and freighter fleets, according to Airbus’ latest forecast, will more than double from today’s 19,000 to about 38,000 in the next 20 years. With airlines in the Asia-Pacific accounting for 70 per cent of all new single-aisle aircraft deliveries, the challenge of crowded skies will be particularly felt within the region.

“We have to improve the coordination of airspace between different air navigation service providers to eliminate errors and inefficient routes,” Mr Lui said.

Hong Kong, Thailand and Singapore, Mr Lui highlighted, have developed a multi-nodal air-traffic flow-management concept based on collaborative decision-making. This concept, which is currently undergoing an operational trial with several other states and airlines, will help improve the overall on-time performance of flight operations and cut down on wasteful delays.

Also yesterday, two air-traffic management (ATM) research and development centres were inaugurated by the CAAS in an event presided over by Senior Minister of State (Transport and Finance) Josephine Teo.

“ATM is a critical part of the Singapore aviation system. We will have to raise our ATM capabilities as air traffic in the region grows ... Our goals are to maximise airspace capacity, optimise aircraft operations, and enhance the performance of air traffic controllers,” said Director-General of the CAAS, Mr Kevin Shum.