

CAAS announces initiatives, collaboration efforts to ramp up industry transformation

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THE Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) is rolling out new initiatives and partnering companies in the aviation industry in a bid to boost innovation, enhance capacity and up-skill workers.

The initiatives build on the sector's transformation efforts under the Air Transport Industry Transformation Map announced last year. Over the past year, the air transport sector's real value-add increased by five per cent, higher than the national average of 3.6 per cent. Meanwhile, productivity grew by 5.7 per cent, which is about 12 per cent faster than the average for the previous five years.

To support innovation and productivity projects, the Aviation Development Fund (ADF) – which was set up in 2010 – will receive a further top up of S\$120 million. Prior to this, over S\$140 million has already been committed, which supports more than 150 industry initiatives involving some 70 organisations.

In addition, CAAS is planning a third Aviation Challenge, which will focus on innovative solutions for ground operations amid growing passenger traffic. An increased funding of S\$9 million will be set aside to support the development and implementation of prototypes.

Describing how Aviation Challenge 3 will be enhanced, CAAS director-general Kevin Shum said: "We will tap deeper into the expertise of both aviation companies and technology providers. They will be required to form consortia and submit joint-proposals. We also want to tap more on the expertise of our SMEs. Therefore, we will be working closely with Enterprise Singapore to bring them onboard."

Mr Shum was speaking at CAAS' annual aviation community reception held at the newly completed passenger terminal building at Seletar Airport. Costing S\$80 million to construct and fit out, the new terminal will offer improved facilities for a better passenger experience and a passenger capacity of 700,000 annually when it opens by the end of this year.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Transport (MOT) and CAAS will be awarding up to S\$6 million to four consortiums which submitted proposals to CAAS' unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) call-for-proposal (CFP) last November to develop and test UAS working prototypes. The proposals explore solutions in areas such as surveillance, inspection, package and maritime delivery, as well as the safe use of airspace. Among the teams shortlisted are local technology SMEs Garuda Robotics and Avetics.

In his speech, Mr Shum also said

that Jewel Changi is about 75 per cent complete and on track to opening in the first half of next year. Meanwhile, Changi Airport's third runway is also close to completion, but will first be used by the Air Force; the transition to a three-runway system from the current two will take place around the early-2020s.

Aside from ongoing efforts to upgrade and expand Changi Airport, investments are also being channelled towards air traffic management systems, with the first phase of Changi Airport's smart tower project slated for completion by 2020. In addition, work has started on a next-generation air traffic control system, with the aim of leveraging speech-recognition, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and other emerging technologies.

Meanwhile, there are also initiatives underway to develop and upskill the work force. For example, 33 aviation professionals were awarded the SkillsFuture Study Award for Air Transport this year.

In addition, the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) has developed a new, three-year Bachelor of Science in Air Transport Management, which is the first MOE-recognised degree programme for air transport and will help increase the pipeline of skilled aviation professionals. SIT plans to take in 50 students for the first intake, with classes to begin next year.