

CAAT unfolds proactive strategies and operating plan for 2020 to heighten standards of Thai aviation industry towards sustainability

Bangkok (16 January 2020) – The Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT) unfolded its proactive strategies to bolster and bring multi-dimensional development to Thai civil aviation and its organization. The Thai authority revealed its operating plan for 2020, which is focused on the oversight of civil aviation and promotion of the aviation industry in three main areas: 1) upgrades of existing safety standards and preparation for future standards, including use of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) and helicopter emergency medical service (HEMS); 2) economic oversight; and 3) capability development of operators across the Thai aviation supply chain for greater competitiveness in terms of standards, service quality, knowledge and environmental compatibility. CAAT is confident that the plan will heighten the Thai aviation industry in accordance with its ‘Standard toward Sustainability’ vision.

Mr. Chula Sukmanop, Director General of The Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT) said, “CAAT is neither a government agency nor a state enterprise, but a state agency directly oversighted by the Minister of Transport. It was established with the authority to regulate, oversee, control, promote and develop Thai civil aviation, including operations related to civil aviation, the aviation industry and air transport, as well as to support robust growth of the operators and increase their international competitiveness with international standards of aviation safety, security and facilities. CAAT operates under its ‘Standard toward Sustainability’ vision that aims to drive Thai civil aviation and the organization towards sustainability across the economic, social and environmental aspects.”

As an overview of Thailand’s air transport last year, the number of passengers carried in 2019 is forecasted to reach 165.11 million, an increase of 2.2% from the year prior. Of them, 76.20 million are domestic passengers, a decrease of 3.1% from the year prior. Whereas the number of international passengers will rise to 88.91 million, an increase of 7.3% from the previous year, mainly from increased outbound tourism of Thai people who could enjoy better value abroad due to market appreciation of Thai baht during the period, as well as the festive season during the end of year. Thailand’s airline industry in the first half-year of 2019 witnessed issuance of air operator’s certificate (AOC) to two operators, adding to the previous total of 23 certified operators. The industry that had 40 licensed operators also welcomed three new air operator’s license (AOL) holders during the period.

“These figures suggest a slowdown experienced by the Thai aviation industry, coinciding with global aviation industry conditions,” Mr. Chula pointed out. “According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the industry growth was deterred by numerous factors, including soaring fuel price in the global market and increased wages. It is therefore vital to ensure our upgraded standards to keep pace with oncoming changes and drive sustainable civil aviation development in every respect. CAAT has worked out a set of proactive strategies for year 2019 towards 2022 to favourably align our direction and operations with global changes and build up the oversight capabilities to keep Thai civil aviation at an internationally-respected level of safety and quality standards while promoting efficient growth of the aviation industry.”

CAAT Strategies for 2019 - 2022

- Strategy 1: To set up and develop a regulatory system that is consistent with international standards, ready to undergo the audit and to upgrade the standards to meet ICAO’s standards
- Strategy 2: To impose oversight mechanisms continuously and consistently across licensing, standards monitoring, economic oversight, and strict enforcement of laws and regulations
- Strategy 3: To foster sustainable aviation industry development across competitiveness, environmental compatibility and service quality of Thai operators
- Strategy 4: To build up strengths and sustainability of the organization by assuring good corporate governance, optimized human resource management for organizational needs, good quality of life, and development of internationally-accepted standard operating procedures
- Strategy 5: To serve as the hub of information and knowledge of civil aviation to support research, development and innovation.

“To drive forward these strategic plans under our ‘Standard toward Sustainability’ vision, CAAT in 2020 will boost the operational efficiency both within and outside our organization. Internally, CAAT will build up organizational strengths and sustainability by promoting our core values, which will give our people the guidelines to jointly drive our organisational development in the same direction. These core values are Continuous Improvement, Integrity, Accountability, Teamwork, Respect, and Trust,” said Mr. Chula.

Outside its organization, CAAT’s focused areas will be civil aviation oversight and aviation industry promotion in three main parts: 1) **upgrades of safety standards for future times**, such as the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs, commonly known as drones) and helicopter emergency medical service (HEMS), and grooming operators for certification requirements of aviation training institutes, and aviation safety programmes or aviation safety management; 2) **economic oversight**, in which CAAT will communicate with air operators about its roles, responsibilities and authority to perform its economic oversight function as

prescribed by the new Air Navigation Act; and 3) *capability development of operators across the Thai aviation supply chain for greater competitiveness in terms of standards, service quality, knowledge and environmental compatibility*, such as certification of aircraft maintenance and repairs operators and parts manufacturers, promotion of aircraft maintenance and repairs operations and parts production, for example by allowing foreign shareholding of more than 49% in these businesses to help strengthen the Thai aviation supply chain.

“In addition to upgrading the standards to ensure that Thai civil aviation is always abreast of changes, CAAT will intensify safety regulations for other types of aircrafts towards an international level of oversight quality,” he elaborated. “The first of our two highlight missions in 2020 is *regulation of UAVs, or drones*, to cope with the growing use of these aircrafts. With highly advanced technology and affordability of drones today, they are widely used in civil aviation, which poses increased risks to safety of communities and commercial flight operation, security and people’s privacy. This year, CAAT plans to impose licensing regulations for drone flyers, or UAS (unmanned aircraft systems) license, in addition to existing announcements concerning drone flyers in order to comply better with ICAO’s regulations. Besides, legitimate drone flyer schools established in compliance with CAAT standards will be introduced in support of drone flyer licensing and to open the door for the drone industry in Thailand as well as individuals who aspire to fly drones professionally and for commercial purposes. Successful applicants of a drone flyer license must have undergone training in an institute with high standard of theory, practice and examinations to ensure highly-qualified drone flyers. CAAT will work with the Defense Technology Institute (DTI) on validation of training programs and accreditation of an academy to be established by DTI as a model institution for drone flyer training. It will offer high standard drone flying courses to interested public to lay a strong foundation for development and oversight of the drone industry and drone flights in Thailand.”

“The second highlight mission is *helicopter emergency medical service (HEMS)*,” he continued. “CAAT wishes to be part of the efforts to reduce mortality from road accidents. To unlock previous restrictions, CAAT will legitimize landing of medical transport helicopters outside heliports as of 1 March 2020 because extended transportation time can take away the golden hour for patients’ survival. CAAT has established the protocols in partnership with the National Institute for Emergency Medicine (NIEM) to facilitate air, land and water medical transport teams in a bid to increase patients’ chance of survival. In addition, this will contribute to growth of helicopter services and increase the number of helicopter pilots. HEMS has the advantage of quicker and closer access to accident victims or patients, which is especially important in incidents involving severe injuries or patients in critical conditions. Being able to transport the victims, patients and medical staff quickly from and to sites not directly accessible via a heliport will boost survival rate, using international standards of aviation safety and high standard of emergency medicine.”

“With these plans, including our civil aviation oversight and aviation industry promotion, CAAT is confident to help upgrade the standards of Thailand’s aviation industry to an international level and also equip Thai operators with competitiveness against their international peers in the increasingly competitive conditions, in line with CAAT’s vision of ‘Standard toward Sustainability’,” **Mr. Chula** concluded.

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