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First Gate at Singapore Changi Airport is Ready for Airbus 380

The Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS), which develops and manages Singapore Changi Airport, is actively preparing for the first commercial flight of the new super jumbo aircraft, the Airbus 380 (A380).

CAAS has converted Gate F31, an existing gate holdroom in Terminal 2, into an A380-compatible gate. As the 555-seat A380 represents a thirty per cent increase in passenger-carrying capacity over that of a Boeing 747-400, Gate F31 has been enlarged to provide more holding and circulation space.

When the A380's first commercial flight takes place at Changi Airport sometime next year, passengers seated on its upper deck will be able to board or disembark from the aircraft directly via a third Passenger Loading Bridge (PLB), or what is more commonly known as the third aerobridge arm. This is a major improvement from the current method practised at airports worldwide whereby only one or two PLBs are provided at each boarding gate, without the capability to reach the upper deck of the double-decker A380 aircraft.

The installation of the PLBs and the additional fixed gangway, which links the gate holdroom to the PLB, at Terminal 1 and Terminal 2 cost approximately S\$15 million.

CAAS will be upgrading a number of gate holdrooms at Terminal 1 and Terminal 2 progressively and adding a third PLB at these gate holdrooms. When Terminal 3 opens for operations by 2008, there will be a total of 19 gates at Changi Airport which can serve A380 flights.

Besides getting the gates ready to accommodate the A380 aircraft, CAAS is also making modifications to other infrastructure at Changi Airport. As Changi's two runways and network of taxiways are already able to take the load of the A380, there was no need to strengthen the runways and taxiways. However, the runways' shoulders and the runway-taxiway and taxiway-taxiway intersections are being widened, so as to allow pilots to manoeuvre the giant A380 aircraft safely at the turns. A pair of A380-compatible remote aircraft parking stands has also been completed for A380 aircraft which may need to park for longer periods away from the passenger terminal buildings. Other modification works include the extension of baggage belt carousels at Terminal 1 and Terminal 2 since A380 flights are expected to carry more passenger baggage. To facilitate cargo airlines' A380 aircraft operations at Changi Airport, CAAS has completed the construction of two new A380-compatible freighter aircraft stands.

Other preparations undertaken by CAAS include spending another S\$8 million to purchase rescue equipment and larger fire-fighting vehicles.

The Minister of State for Finance and Transport, Mrs Lim Hwee Hua, was at Changi Airport this morning to launch F31, the first A380-ready gate to be completed. "As an international air hub, Changi Airport must be well-positioned to handle the demands of the new A380 aircraft as well as the corresponding increase in passenger loads without compromising the high standards of safety, efficiency and service which Changi Airport is well-known for," said Mrs Lim.

She continued, "To ensure that the 'Changi Experience' is not compromised for A380 passengers, adequate check-in, immigration and security screening channels will be provided for to ensure quick clearance of passengers."

Mr Wong Woon Liong, Director-General of Civil Aviation added, "Getting Changi Airport ready ahead of the first A380 commercial flight is part of the need for the airport to be nimble in responding to the needs of our airline customers. CAAS is committed to delivering our promise to continually improve and upgrade airport facilities to meet the expectations and satisfaction of the airlines. The close coordination between CAAS and the various parties, such as Airbus, airlines and airworthiness authorities have helped to ensure that the preparations to handle the A380 flights and modification works to Changi Airport are carried out safely, efficiently and thoroughly with minimal disruption to ongoing airport operations."

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