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More Flights at Singapore Changi Airport Despite Global Economic Slowdown

Weekly flights to Southeast Asia are leading the increase

More flights are operating out of Singapore Changi Airport this Northern Winter 2008 schedule season, which commenced on 26 October 2008 and ends on 28 March 2009. From 1 November 2008, Changi Airport sees a record 4,466 weekly scheduled flights, representing an increase of 152 weekly flights, or 3.5 per cent, as compared to the levels recorded at the start of this year. From 1 December 2008, the number of weekly scheduled flights is expected to exceed 4,700 to register an approximate increase of 8.9 per cent over January 2008's figure.

The further liberalisation of the air services agreement between Singapore and Malaysia is a major factor contributing to such an increase. Singapore and Malaysia recently agreed to allow low-cost airlines to operate between Singapore and three cities in East Malaysia, namely Kuching, Kota Kinabalu and Miri, starting 1 November 2008. AirAsia has launched daily services from Kuching and Kota Kinabalu to Singapore, and Tiger Airways and Jetstar Asia will follow suit with a new daily service to Kuching and Kota Kinabalu respectively over the next few weeks.

The full liberalisation of the Singapore-Kuala Lumpur route, which takes effect on 1 December 2008, further boosts the number of weekly flights on this sector. AirAsia, Jetstar Asia, Silk Air and Tiger Airways are adding a total of 180 new weekly flights on the sector.

Although softening of travel demand has caused some airlines to rationalise their network at Changi Airport, the reduction in flights has been more than offset by the increase in new flights on intra-Asian sectors such as Bangkok, Phuket, Hong Kong, Manila, Denpasar and Ho Chi Minh City, and the Middle East sectors such as Riyadh and Dubai. Over the next two months, Changi Airport will welcome more new flights. Notably, Jetstar Airways will launch their new daily service from Perth in December.

While such increases in weekly flights is good news for Singapore's aviation industry, Mr Lim Kim Choon, Director-General and Chief Executive Officer, Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS), remains cautious about the outlook for 2009. He said, "The strong growth in weekly scheduled flights this year demonstrates Changi Airport's continued relevance as a major global aviation hub. However, 2009 will be a very challenging year for the aviation industry as the full impact of the global economic downturn is expected to be felt more acutely. CAAS recognises the tough operating environment of our airline partners and is committed to help our airlines ride out the downturn within our means."