

SPONSORED SUPPLEMENT >> Asian Aerospace International Expo and Congress

Industry enjoys mood of optimism

Region's aviation showpiece coincides with the 100th anniversary of first flight in Hong Kong

Asian Aerospace, the region's leading commercial aviation exposition and congress, looks set to beat all records in Hong Kong next month.

The Asian Aerospace coincides with 100th anniversary of the first aircraft to fly in Hong Kong – when Belgian aviator Charles Van den Born flew a French-made Farman biplane in Sha Tin.

The high-profile appearance of Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China (COMAC), manufacturer of the new 150-seater, C919 airliner, will be one of the major attractions at the show which runs from March 8-10.

Richard Thiele, head of global sales (aerospace and aviation) at Reed Exhibitions, the organiser of the aviation show and the world's leading organiser of trade and consumer exhibitions, says that the mainland manufacturer will be the largest exhibitor at the show.

COMAC will be among a host of major mainland aerospace companies, and influential government and trade association delegations that are expected to make the Asian Aerospace a truly "East-meets-West" event.

Another Asian manufacturer exhibiting in Hong Kong will be Japan's Mitsubishi, which will be looking to boost the international success of its new 90-seater, MRJ airliner.

A further newcomer to Asian Aerospace will be Russia's Sukhoi, which will be promoting the newly certificated Superjet 100.

Looking westwards, Airbus is expected to join Boeing, Bombardier, CFM International and Embraer among hundreds of international companies returning to Asian Aerospace for this year's event. Asian and mainland airline visitors are expected to exceed the total of 4,600 from 104 carriers achieved at the 2009 event here.

These carriers operate more than 11,000 aircraft, representing half the world's fleet. Official support for Asian Aerospace 2011 from the Civil Aviation Administration of China, China Air Transport Association, China Civil



Richard Thiele expects more than 300 business leaders to network with exhibitors and delegates.

Airports Association and the Civil Aviation MRO Association of China is contributing to prospective record breaking levels of attendance from the mainland.

"The mood in the aviation industry in 2011 is completely different than in 2009," Thiele says.

"Two years ago, the industry was going through a recession, except the

mainland which showed growth throughout 2009. This year, there is optimism in the whole industry, which would show in aircraft purchases."

Another highlight will be the high-level Congress, with confirmed keynote speakers including Tony Tyler, CEO of Cathay Pacific Airways, Norman Lo

Shung-man, director general of Hong Kong Civil Aviation Department, Andrew

Herdman, director general of the Association of Asia-Pacific Airlines, and Professor Wei Shyy, provost and chair professor (mechanical engineering) at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

According to Thiele, more than 300 business leaders are expected at the Congress, which will be a focal point for exhibitors and delegates to network.

The Congress is organised in co-operation with industry's leading B2B publisher, flightglobal.com.

In addition to the Congress, Asian Aerospace will host the Asia-Pacific Aviation Training Symposium which will be held within a dedicated Simulation and Training pavilion.

Leading global and regional experts will deliver updates on regulatory changes, latest technology and proven best practice in the delivery of civil aviation training.

Training is a key enabling technology for safe aviation growth in the Asia-Pacific.

The Hong Kong Civil Aviation Department will host a separate Accident Investigation conference during Asian Aerospace.

Alongside is the Air Freight Asia exhibition. It is a preeminent conference and exhibition for air cargo and the supply chain sector and is attracting strong industry support amid booming market conditions across Asia. Major

This year there is optimism in the whole industry

Richard Thiele
Head of global sales (aerospace and aviation), Reed Exhibitions

international exhibitors committed to the show include Air Bridge Cargo, Etihad Airways, Hactl, Hong Kong International Airport, International Cargo Centre Shenzhen, Kingfisher Airways, United Cargo and World Airways.

Another new feature at Asian Aerospace 2011 will be the inaugural "Aviation Awards Asia" event, organised with *Asian Aviation* magazine.

The awards recognise excellence and outstanding achievements in the following categories: Full Service Airline, Low Cost Carrier, Business Aviation, MRO, Technology and Environment and Airport of the Year Award.

Asian Aerospace 2011 will again take place at AsiaWorld-Expo.

It not only offers convenient and speedy MTR links from downtown Hong Kong and the city's international airport, it is also located close to the static display area.



Makers of small business jets are forecasting a rise in mainland sales.

Opening of airspace means sky's the limit

Business jet manufacturers are looking to the mainland market for growth as, after years of waiting, the authorities are lifting restrictions on airspace.

Makers of small business jets and helicopters are already forecasting a rise in sales. According to many forecasts, the private air-travel industry will be one of the fastest-growing sectors in the next 10 years.

Airspace over the mainland – the world's third-largest country by surface area after Russia and Canada – is under strict military control, but the People's Liberation Army has loosened its iron grip over the skies. In the past, authorities needed a week's notice for approval of a private flight plan. Under new regulations, the green light can be given within a day, sometimes just a few hours.

Richard Thiele, head of global sales (aerospace and aviation) at Reed Exhibitions, says most private business jet manufacturers are happy that flight-plan restrictions have been lifted by mainland authorities.

"The growth in the business jet industry is driven by China," Thiele says.

He says that in 2007, the first event to be held in Hong Kong, there were eight aircraft; in the 2009 expo there were 16; while this year, event organisers are expecting 20.

The central government, which encourages its major state-owned conglomerates to invest abroad – especially in Africa, where commercial air service is patchy – has finally understood the need for private aviation. Some business jets are now able to take mainland executives from Beijing to

London, Nairobi and Los Angeles without refuelling stops.

Thiele says each year the growth rate in the sector is more than 30 per cent and he sees acceleration in the coming year.

More than two-thirds of the 15,000 business jets in operation around the world are in the United States, while just 150 are in China.

John Rosanvallon, head of Dassault Falcon, said in an interview that it will be a "brutal" start for market players on the mainland, with clients "immediately looking for the biggest planes".

"Within two or three years, China will represent not one but 10 per cent of our market worldwide," Rosanvallon predicts.

In the medium term, Dassault is hoping to sell about 10 business jets a year in China, at a list price of between US\$30 million and US\$50 million.

The French firm was not as quick to jump on the mainland market as US company Gulfstream, which says it has a 63 per cent market share in large-cabin business jets on the mainland, Hong Kong and Macau.

The outlook is just as rosy for makers of helicopters and smaller jets, with Eurocopter, Bell, Robinson, Agusta and Cessna poised to enter the market.

Last month, the State Council and Central Military Commission published a joint circular on the "progressive opening" of low-altitude airspace, where such aircraft tend to fly. As with larger planes, flight plan authorisation will come more quickly – opening the skies for tourism and business trips between regions.

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Sky's the limit for Asia-Pacific

Cargo trade and increase in business and leisure travellers contribute to confidence, writes **Chris Davis**

Asia-Pacific airlines are looking forward to a bright future, despite concerns over rising fuel prices and instability in the Middle East.

"The Asia-Pacific airline industry has got off to a good start to the year and remains optimistic about growth potential this year and next. This is reflected through a positive outlook on fleet planning and network development," says Andrew Herdman, director general, Association of Asia-Pacific Airlines.

Figures for January released by the association showed firm growth in the international passenger and air cargo markets.

Asia-Pacific-based airlines carried a combined total of 16.1 million international passengers, an 8 per cent increase over the same month last year. In revenue passenger-kilometre terms, international passenger traffic grew by 6.5 per cent. Available seat capacity grew by 7.8 per cent, with an average international passenger load factor of 78.5 per cent.

"The number of international passengers carried during January exceeded the December figure, underpinned by leisure travel extending from the holiday period and firm demand for premium class seats. January's freight volumes were also reasonably solid, although we could see growth moderating compared to the major rebound seen in 2010," Herdman says.

Commenting on instability in the Middle East, Herdman says that while travel to the Middle East would be disrupted for the near future, the industry expects to see little impact on the industry within Asia.

Growing inter-Asia cargo trade and an increase in the number of business and leisure travellers is also contributing to confidence among Asian airlines, Herdman says.

"We have experienced a robust rebound from the depths of the global recession, and in essence what we are now seeing is a steady year-on-year, single digit growth for both cargo and passenger growth, which is sustainable over the long term," he says. Substantial demand



Figures for January, released by the Association of Asia-Pacific Airlines, showed firm growth in the international passenger and air cargo markets. Asia-Pacific-based airlines carried a combined total of 16.1 million international passengers, an 8 per cent increase over the same month last year. Photo: EPA



Andrew Herdman

for outbound cargo consignments to Europe and the United States could also indicate the economies in the West are in better shape than some figures indicate.

In addition to an increase in inter-Asia leisure travel, Herdman notes a growing number of adventurous Asian tourists and business people are travelling outside the region.

For example, bilateral trade flows between China and South American countries have sparked

an increase in demand for long-haul travel and cargo flows. This has led to new airline routes between Asia to South America transiting through mid-points in Europe.

At the same time, new routes and an increase in frequency on established Asian routes is also showing an upward trend.

"Urbanisation across Asia is creating a concentration in key population areas, which has led to an increased demand for air travel," Herdman says.

Meanwhile, production and assembly in different parts of Asia of high-value electronic products, including semi-conductors, is a growth area for the air cargo sector.

Herdman says inter-Asia trade, which has noticeably increased since the global financial crisis, has opened up new markets and strengthened relationships between former rivals.

"It is no longer the case of who has the largest foreign direct investment or the lion's share of

multinational manufacturers, the business community now looks at the pattern of benefits the Asia-wide supply chain generates.

"You only need to look at recent bilateral trade links between China and India, and the possibilities the two enormous markets present to see how this is viewed positively by the airline industry," Herdman says.

He says the rise in oil prices, triggered by uncertainty in the Middle East, is a concern, but an issue the airline industry is used to.

"The current spike is not an unusual event, it is an issue that airlines must live with. We will be watching closely to see what happens and what it might mean to the overall global economy, but in Asia, where optimism is high, we believe the market will be able to absorb any additional fare increases," Herdman says.

He says fuel prices usually account for about a quarter of a typical ticket price. To counteract

volatile oil prices, Herdman says airlines utilise two main options, increase fares through a fuel surcharge or directly increase the price of tickets.

"A US\$20 per barrel increase in oil prices would normally translate into a 5 to 10 per cent increase in ticket prices, although there is normally a lag between an oil price increase and the cost of a ticket," Herdman says.

Because of the high number of tickets sold in advance of actual travel dates, airlines use fuel-hedging strategies to mitigate the difference between fluctuating oil prices and the real cost of travel, he says.

"Hedging oil prices is not an attempt to outguess future fuel prices. Instead, the intention is to provide a buffer to lock in future fuel prices to match the sale of advance ticket sales," Herdman says.

To provide a buffer, typically, airlines hedge between 25 and 30 per cent of their annual fuel costs.

Expansion gives operator access to key markets

Chris Davis

Fuelled by strong indications that the Asian private aviation market will develop rapidly in the coming years, Hong Kong-based Asia Jet is expanding its fleet to meet expected demand.

Already one of the continent's largest charter fleet operators, with 10 aircraft, Asia Jet, which was established in 2008, has placed orders for three new Gulfstream G150, G200 and G250 with delivery expected this year and next year. In addition, in May, Asia Jet will be taking delivery from Cessna of an XLS+, the first aircraft of its type in the region on the Hong Kong charter registry.

Asia Jet CEO Mike Walsh says the acquisition of new aircraft is part of a strategy to expand services and access key markets. The Gulfstream aircraft will provide charter services from Shanghai Hongqiao Airport. This follows a business partnership agreement with China Eastern Airlines to manage the aircraft on the mainland.

As part of the agreement, Asia Jet has been appointed the exclusive sales and marketing agent for aircraft under China Eastern Airlines' newly formed Aircraft Operating Certificate for the region.

Walsh says the partnership agreement will provide several important advantages. These include easier access to mainland domestic airports and close proximity to a large population of potential customers.

"The mainland is a very exciting market and presents huge potential for growth," Walsh says. He believes the central government's commitment to build about 50 new airports in the next five years and simplify flight plan logging, in addition to freeing up airspace for private helicopter flights, will add momentum to the market.

Industry statistics suggest that worldwide there are about 11,000 private aircraft that meet international charter regulations. About 7,500 of these are located in North America and 2,500 in Europe. In Asia, where the industry has been in existence for less than a decade, only a few hundred aircraft are in service.

While generally optimistic about the private jet charter industry's

future, Walsh says the Hong Kong headquartered company faces several challenges. One of these involves competition from foreign registered carriers from the United States and Europe, who use Hong Kong as a transit base to operate charter aircraft services.

He says as a Hong Kong-based carrier, Asia Jet pays local salaries, taxes and often higher operating costs, which may not be the case for foreign registered carriers, whose operating costs are often lower and their tax liabilities payable in other locations.

Volatile fuel prices are another concern. "It is no secret that Hong Kong is one of the most expensive airports in the region to uplift fuel, which at US\$4.50 per US gallon, is considerably more than Macau, Clark Airbase in the Philippines or Shenzhen," Walsh says. "This has made us look at fuel policies and tankering strategies in order for us to



Interior of an Asia Jet aircraft

keep the prices we offer to our clients competitive."

According to Asia Jet's recent trend analysis, the typical usage for charter flights are seven- to 10-day holiday expeditions within the Asia-Pacific region, music tours, finance road shows and sports events. Presently, charters are divided 60-40 in favour of leisure compared to business.

Walsh says clients often opt for private charters because they have difficulty in scheduling flights during peak periods, or flying long distance with domestic connections in Australia, India and Russia.

Walsh has also noticed demand emerging from entrepreneurs in Malaysia wishing to make short overseas trips to look for investment opportunities. As part of its brand building, the firm has launched an Asia Jet Card Programme, offering assistance with booking exclusive resorts and ground transportation.

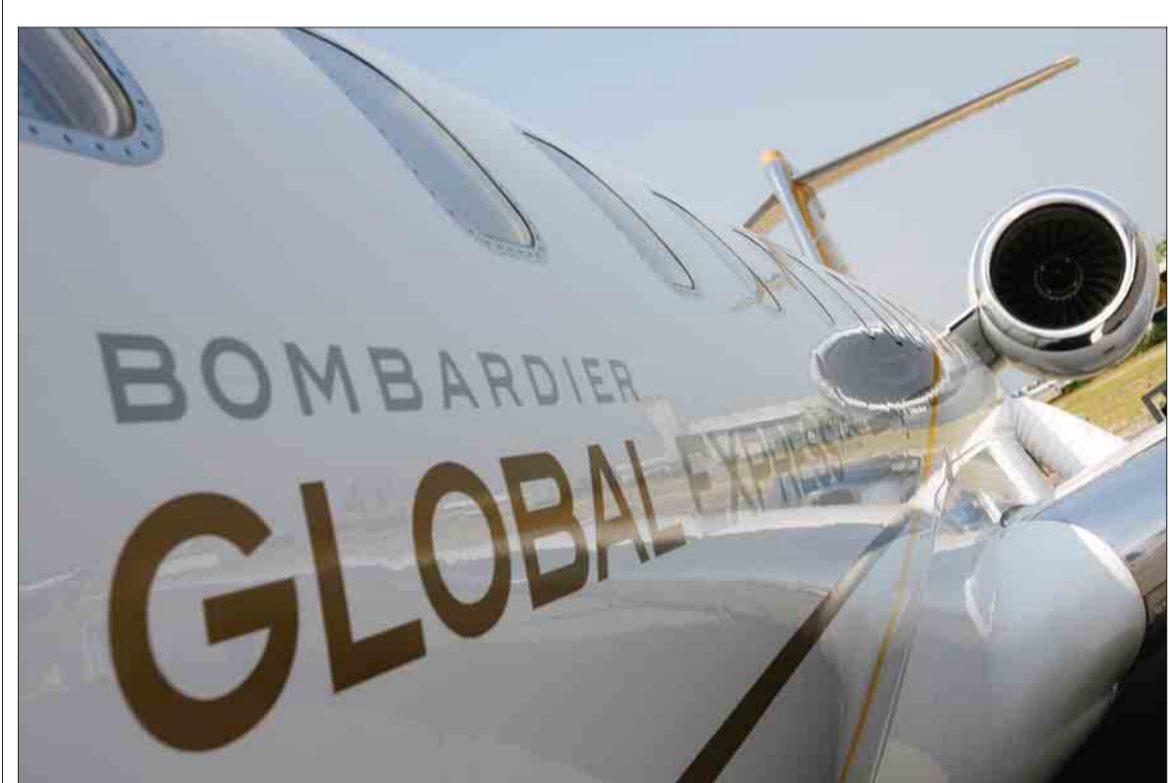
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Images provided courtesy of Bombardier Inc.



Bombardier's wide-bodied Global Express aircraft are popular with mainland businessmen. Photo: Sam Tsang

Private companies find their niche in business jet sector

Mukul Munish

Asia's private aircraft charter business has come a long way, judging by the sharp spike in businesses and chartering in the past couple of years. After a brief hiatus during the global financial crisis, when corporates and businessmen cut costs, the private jet chartering business has picked up especially on the mainland and in Hong Kong.

Diana Chou, founder and managing director of Sino Private Aviation, was one of the first players to get into the business aviation market when she launched the company 12 years ago. Chou says she found a niche in the market and launched the jet chartering business. "In those days, there were no aircraft manufacturers or [chartering] agents in the business active in Asia, and just a handful of jets," Chou says. "We sensed that there was a need for private jets, not only in Hong Kong but also in China."

Sino Private is a representative of Canada-based Bombardier business jets on the mainland, and in Hong Kong and Macau. It also represents VistaJet, one of the leading business jet charter companies.

She also founded Aerochine Aviation, a Bell helicopter

distributor and broker of second-hand aircraft. Since founding her aviation business in 1999, Chou has built her companies into leading players in the general aviation industry on the mainland.

Chou says she has seen the business jet market take off as more businessmen on the mainland buy their own aircraft as a result of the improvement in the business



Diana Chou

environment, and as aviation restrictions are lifted. "In the China market it's all about face," she says. "If one tycoon buys a jet, his friends and associates will buy one too. Once you get one customer, you have got them all."

Chou says her company is selling about six aircraft a year on the mainland and in Hong Kong, but expects this number to increase in the future.

The central government has reduced the time needed to get permission to enter mainland airspace. The mainland has also removed many restrictions on the use of low-level airspace and this has boosted business aviation.

Chuck Woods, chairman of the Asian Business Aviation Association, says the market for business jet manufacturers in the Asia-Pacific is improving, and he sees tremendous growth in the years ahead. Business jet manufacturers are queuing up to open sales offices on the mainland. Late last year, Dassault opened a sales and marketing office in Beijing to serve the needs of its growing business aviation sector.

Bombardier and Gulfstream Aerospace are the other business jet manufacturers whose top executives regularly visit the mainland to meet prospective clients and corporates. Sino Private Aviation says the Global Express and Challenger series aircraft by Bombardier are popular with clients because the aircraft are wide-bodied and mainland businessmen love space.

Chou is an active campaigner for the improvement of aviation standards and pilot training on the mainland and in Hong Kong, and is raising funds to establish a scholarship for aviation students.

Mainland's aviation boom gives new focus

The world's biggest aircraft market will feature prominently at an event attracting all the movers and shakers, writes **Mukul Munish**

Asia's growing influence in the resurgent aviation industry is being driven by the mainland, the biggest market for aircraft in the world today. That will be reflected in the Asian Aerospace International Expo and Congress, which opens its doors at AsiaWorld-Expo today and runs until Thursday. More than 11,000 trade delegates will attend the event, including 3,500 from the mainland. About 1,200 of these mainland delegates are from airlines that operate 90 per cent of the nation's fleet.

Organiser Reed Exhibitions expects the attendance from global airlines to significantly exceed the figure in 2009 when the 100 featured airlines operated more than 11,000 aircraft, more than half the world's commercial fleet.

A major reason is the improving climate for the aviation sector after the sharp downturn in the last two years due to the global financial crisis.

"We are back – bigger and better, with a record number of exhibitors and visitors at a terrific, centrally located venue," says Brian Thomas, vice-president (aerospace) at Reed Exhibitions.

"The continuing shift of influence and commercial dynamism towards Asia means that Asian Aerospace has grown as the most important fixture in Asia for

The continuing shift of influence and commercial dynamism towards Asia means that Asian Aerospace has grown as the most important fixture in Asia for commercial aviation

BRIAN THOMAS
VICE-PRESIDENT (AEROSPACE),
REED EXHIBITIONS

commercial aviation. We are especially delighted to welcome new Western and mainland companies who have identified the show as a must-attend networking opportunity."

Asian Aerospace, which is taking place in Hong Kong for the third time, has a packed programme of informative conferences and a busy exhibition hall, where 270 exhibitors from 32 countries will be represented under one roof.

The largest exhibitor will be the Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China (COMAC), manufacturer of



Asian Aerospace International Expo and Congress will host more than 11,000 delegates. Photo: Sam Tsang

the C919 airliner, while newcomers to the show include the Mitsubishi Regional Jet from Japan and the Sukhoi Superjet 100 from Russia. Other major exhibitors will be Airbus, Air China Technics, AVIC International, Boeing, Bombardier, Cathay Pacific, CFM International, China Eastern, China Southern Cargo, Dassault, Gulfstream, Haeco and Hawker Beechcraft.

The focus of the three-day congress will be China, the biggest aviation market in the world in terms of the number of aircraft on order. It will be attended by leaders from the aerospace, airline, airport, aircraft leasing and financial sectors.

The congress will discuss critical issues such as growth and development, infrastructure, financing strategies, airspace optimisation and emerging technologies.

The large static aircraft display at Hong Kong Business Aviation Centre will feature a record number of business jets. Bombardier will exhibit a Learjet 60XR, Challenger CL300, Challenger CL850 and Global Express XRS, while Gulfstream will display a G150, G200, G450 and G550. Airbus will display its A318 Elite and Boeing a BBJ, while Cessna

will exhibit a Citation Sovereign & Citation X, and charter service provider Jetstream International's Citation 560XL. Dassault will showcase the Falcon 2000LX & 7X, Embraer will display the Legacy 650 and Hawker Beechcraft the 4000 & 900XP. Smaller business aircraft on show include the Hawker Beechcraft King Air 350i and Pilatus PC-12.

An Asian Business Aviation Association event, "Business aircraft in Asia – a buyer's and operator's guide", will be held tomorrow and Thursday in the conference room, Hangar 2, at the aviation centre. Global and regional experts will offer their views on the market.

These include representatives from Airbus, Bombardier, Cessna, Dassault Falcon Jet, Embraer, Gulfstream, Hawker Beechcraft Corp, JSSI, Merrill Lynch, TAG Asia, Jet Aviation, Hawker Pacific, The ASA Group, Signature Flight Support and Flight Safety International.

Air Freight Asia, the region's foremost conference and exhibition for air cargo and supply chain executives, will hold its conference, called "The Golden Dragon: China's air cargo market continues to shine", over all three days.

The event will be attended by

global and local leaders in air freight, logistics and freight forwarding. Delegates will also have the opportunity to make site visits to the world's leading international air cargo terminal operator, Hong Kong Air Cargo Terminals Limited, Asia Airfreight Terminal and DHL's Central Asia hub, all situated at Hong Kong International Airport.

Asian Aerospace will also host the Asia-Pacific Airline Training Symposium in a dedicated simulation and training pavilion, while Hong Kong Civil Aviation Department will also host a separate accident investigation conference.

Reed Exhibitions and *Asian Aviation* magazine will hold the inaugural Aviation Awards Asia. The awards will celebrate outstanding achievements in the commercial aviation industry in five categories: full-service airlines, low-cost carriers, business aviation, technology and environment.

Reed Exhibitions is the world's leading organiser of trade and consumer exhibitions. Every year, it runs more than 500 events in 38 countries, bringing together about 90,000 suppliers and six million buyers. It has 2,600 staff, serving 47 industries.

SCHEDULE

TOMORROW

Moderator Chuck Woods

9.30-10am
Registration/morning coffee networking opportunity

10-10.15am
Opening speech
Anthony Tam, assistant director-general (flight standards)

10.20-11am
Panel discussion
Aircraft leasing, availability of finance and protecting the value of your asset
Amy He, Aviation Department, Minsheng Leasing
David Taylor, Bank of America, Merrill Lynch
Lou Seno, CEO JSSI
Johnny Lau, managing director ICBC

11.05-11.50am
Panel discussion
A look at different options for aircraft purchase, fractional and pre-owned with discussion on insurance requirements
Philip Rushton, CEO Aviatrade
Mike Walsh, CEO AsiaJet
Peter Coles, partner of Aerospace Department, Barlow Lyde and Gilbert
Paul Ng, global head of Aviation, Stephenson Harwood

11.50am-12.05pm
Tea break
12.10-1pm
Panel discussion
Regional infrastructure – where to go for MRO, FBOs hangarage and airport options
Helena Lang, chief representative and business development director, People's Republic of China, Hawker Pacific Shanghai
Luke Chiang, director of regional maintenance sales Asia, Jet Aviation

1-2pm
Lunch
2.05-2.45pm
Panel discussion
Regulatory issues affecting operators – airspace access and fees
Chris Buchholz, president, Asia-Pacific Universal Weather and Aviation
Joe Wilson, managing director, ASA Group (security focus)
Jolie Howard, director of sales, TAG Asia

2.50-3.50pm
Panel discussion
Business aviation development in the region from the OEM perspective
Moderator Jason Liao
Speakers Jeff Dunn, business director/sales director – Greater China region and Japan, Boeing
David Dixon, Bombardier
Trevor Esling, vice-president, international sales, Cessna, Dassault Falcon Jet
Lee Li, vice-president, sales Embraer China, Gulfstream
Jeff Anastas, vice-president, north Asia, HBC

THURSDAY
Moderator Jason Liao
9.30-10am
Registration/morning coffee networking opportunity
10-10.15am
Opening speech
CY Yeung, director of operations, HKBAC
10.20-11am
Panel discussion
Staffing issues – access to qualified talent, training and licensing
Daniel Yuen, Flight Safety International
Gehan Talwatt, Ascend Asia
11.05-11.50am
Panel discussion
Maintenance best practices and parts distribution
Bjorn Naf, CEO, Metrojet
George Kieros, JSSI
11.50am-12.05pm
Tea break
12.05-12.35pm
Panel discussion
Fulfilling client expectations – aircraft management challenges
Jackie Wu, CEO, Hong Kong Jets
Jolie Howard, TAG, Asia

1-2pm
Lunch
2.05-2.45pm
Panel discussion
Safety and security considerations
Universal Weather and Aviation
2.50pm-3.50pm
Panel discussion
The role of member organisations to promote business aviation in the region
Chuck Woods, CEO, ASBAA
Shuan Huang, CEO, Taiwan Business Aviation Association
Ed Smith, president, GAMA



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