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**SINGAPORE AIRSHOW 2008****Common vision needed for aviation success****Leadership summit hopes to forge alignment of interests: minister**By **CONRAD RAJ**

THE aviation sector, like any other industry, can be successful only if its stakeholders share a common vision and commitment to work together, according to Transport Minister Raymond Lim.

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industry is starting to experience some favourable tailwinds'.

**Related link:** Click here for the full text of Minister for Transport Raymond Lim's speech

Speaking at the inaugural Singapore Airshow Aviation Leadership Summit at the Raffles City Convention Centre, Mr Lim told an audience of some 300: 'The Aviation Leadership Summit hopes to strengthen the partnership between governments, airlines, airports and the industry's associated service providers by bringing together the major stakeholders in a way that is not found in any of the other aviation conferences.

'The Summit hopes to forge an alignment of interests and steer the aviation industry towards a better tomorrow.'

Despite challenges facing the industry, including high oil prices and environmental issues, he said there were some reasons to be confident 'the

First was the growing trend towards greater liberalisation, especially since the coming into force of the European Union's Open Aviation Area in 1993.

In Asia, too, there have been encouraging developments with China and India deciding to progressively liberalise their aviation markets. Within Asean, progress is being made to conclude a multilateral agreement to free up access to the 10 capital cities by year-end. In the longer term there would be open skies and a single aviation market in Asean, he said.

While these developments were motivated by a recognition and need for air travel to be a catalyst for economic growth, the challenge 'is not merely standing up to acknowledge the economic benefits of a liberal aviation market but in mustering the commitment to make this dream come true'. This will require bold leadership and strong political will, Mr Lim added.

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Second is what he described as the dramatic transformations in the operating environment, including the rise of the low cost carriers and the introduction of new aircraft like the Airbus A380 and Boeing's Dreamliner. In just four years, LCCs have captured 10 per cent of total air traffic and account for more than half of Changi's annual traffic growth.

Third, to meet the rising demand, major airports around the world, including Singapore's Changi, are expanding their existing airports or building new ones.

Mr Lim noted that the traditional concept of an airport as a government-provided transportation infrastructure is changing.

'No longer merely gateways into and out of a country, airports are increasingly viewed as potential business enterprises. With increased liberalisation and demand for air travel, there is a growing recognition that airports are required to compete for global clients just like any other commercial entities. This paradigm shift in perception will certainly drive the way future airports are run and funded,' he said.

Corporatising Changi Airport, Mr Lim added, will propel it into a new growth phase. 'With a sharper commercial outlook, enhanced ability to pursue overseas ventures as well as increased flexibility to attract and retain talent, Changi Airport will be ready for the 21st century.'

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