

## A Boon For Aviation Industry

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**SEPANG** : The reinstatement of Malaysia to Category 1 under the International Aviation Safety Assessment (IASA) will spur the recovery of the nation's aviation industry, says Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong.

"A Category 1 safety rating will not only allow us to expand our future network plans but also stabilise the country's aviation industry.

"Malaysia's position as an aviation hub is strengthened while increasing its network connectivity," the Transport Minister said in his speech at an appreciation dinner for the stakeholders involved in the restoration of the Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia (CAAM) as a Category 1 regulator here yesterday.

He said the reinstatement would open more opportunities for low-cost airlines, particularly with regard to their medium- to long-haul networks.

"This is especially to the United States and Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea.

"It would also attract more air operators to fly into Malaysia, thus increasing the country's network connectivity in the region," said Dr Wee, who added the reinstatement was timely as it would be a boon for the aviation industry that had been affected by the pandemic.

"After an industry reset following the pandemic, this announcement could not have come at a better time.

"It comes as travel demand picks up and will enhance global confidence in the safety and quality of civil aviation," he added.

In November 2019, the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) announced that Malaysia was assigned a Category 2 rating under the IASA programme due to non-compliance with the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) safety standards following a reassessment of CAAM made earlier that year.

Dr Wee said that he made it a priority when taking over as Transport Minister to get the Category 1 reinstated for the nation.

"When I was appointed Transport Minister in March 2020, it was a priority for us to address this downgrade.

"Thus, the past two years have been a crucial period," he added.

Among the steps taken were the appointment of Tan Sri Khairul Adib as chairman and Datuk Capt Chester Voo as chief executive officer of CAAM.

"The whole organisation was restructured.

"Various efforts were carried out to strengthen its workforce, documentation, and developing comprehensive training policy for inspectors to ensure effective safety oversight is carried out for the civil aviation industry," he said, while also thanking the US Embassy in Kuala Lumpur and the FAA team, who had provided assistance in the reinstatement effort.

Malaysia was officially reinstated to Category 1 of the IASA on Oct 8.

Dr Wee also said the reinstatement of the aviation safety standard to Category 1 contributed towards Malaysia retaining its seat on the ICAO council recently.

“Several fellow ICAO member states have also applauded Malaysia regaining Category 1 and wanted to learn from our experience in doing so during our many bilateral meetings in Montreal, Canada recently,” he said.

On Oct 4, Malaysia was elected as ICAO council member for the 2022-2025 term, the country’s sixth consecutive term as a council member since 2007.

Earlier, in his welcoming speech, Khairul commended CAAM personnel for their success which was achieved while the nation and aviation industry were faced with the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.

He said that the reinstatement of Malaysia to Category 1 will create opportunities for local airlines to reach more global destinations.

“It allows Malaysian air operators to expand their reach into the lucrative US market and enter codeshare agreements with other carriers.

“This would positively strengthen Malaysia’s position as an aviation hub and increase the country’s connectivity,” he added.