

# Chartering a course <sup>36</sup> for flying in Malaysia

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A CRISIS can hit anyone at any time, but planning, quick and effective response can avert disasters.

Any operation that is trained to cope with breakdowns or crises will definitely have an advantage.

That's precisely what the Department of Civil Aviation's Air Traffic Controllers (ATCs) have been trained for, and they coped well when the Kuala Lumpur International Airport's computer systems broke down on its opening day.

DCA Director-General Datuk Zaini Omar said: "If things can go wrong it will. Right from the outset, ATCs were trained to handle air traffic operations if there was a breakdown in the computer or communications systems.

"In the event of a crisis, its imperative that a crisis management team take charge of the situation and respond quickly, positively and effectively.

"A moment of crisis is not the time to start finger-pointing whose mistake it is."

Zaini recalled: "Problems are there ... but we focussed on the solutions, and at end of the day, the ATCs are credited for their performance."

In fact, even Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed, who took the first first domestic flight on June 30 to Langkawi from KLIA and returned later in the evening to Sepang, commended the DCA for their excellent performance.

Zaini said about 80 ATCs started training to work with the airport's state-of-the-art radar system six months ahead of KLIA's opening.

"The senior managers and ATCs swung into action working as a team. They assessed the situation, recognised the problem areas and communicated effectively," explained Zaini, a qualified professional engineer, lawyer and pilot.

"Fax machines, handphones and direct lines were activated when our communication systems could not link up to the ground systems."

Having helmed the DCA for the past two years, Zaini is a professional who takes his job seriously and constantly introducing innovative ideas.

Zaini sees things differently, to the extend to making his DCA regulators not only ask "why", but also "why not" for the sake of progress.

"If regulations are archaic, we will put them in the museum. We will act quickly on proposals from the private sector, and develop the aviation industry in the spirit of *Malaysia Boleh!*," he said.

For example, the DCA worked closely with the first experimental aircraft manufacturers last month when the first two-seater plane, Langkawi 1, was launched.

Using local raw materials, except for the Rotax engine from Austria, the experimental aircraft, jointly built by the Association of Malaysia Airlines Licensed Aircraft Engineers (Amalae) and Eurodynamic Sdn Bhd, is estimated to cost about RM80,000.

Amalae president Abdul Rashid Sharif said that it took about two years to develop the four-piston, twin-propeller aircraft.

Zaini said the experimental and recreational sectors of the aviation industry was high on the DCA's agenda.

"Everyone involved with the experimental aircraft sector should explore ways of finding better and cheaper ways of doing things safely," he said.

"By building an experimental aircraft with Malaysian content and personnel, it is a boost for the nation's aerospace industry."

This year, to encourage flying, the DCA organised two "Fly-Ins" for smaller aircraft into Sungai Tiang at Taman Negara and Pangkor.

Former Malaysia Airlines managing director Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Abdul Rahman commended Zaini at the launch of the experimental aircraft.

"Zaini has shown his undivided support not only for the made-in-Malaysia aircraft project, but has also got his officers involved in it.

"Untiringly, Zaini and his officials have developed the experimental sector through various Fly-In activities."