

English Stream Junior Group
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Topic: Sustainable development for maintaining Hong Kong International Airport's status as a leading air cargo hub in the world

The new Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) at Chek Lap Kok was opened in July 1998 and it has been consistently ranked as one of the world's most highly-regarded airports. The success of HKIA's air cargo industry has won widespread international recognitions, including the 2006-2013 Air Cargo Award of Excellence by Air Cargo World and was even crowned as the "Best Airport in Asia Pacific" by Air GlobeRunner Awards 2012. To continue this outstanding achievement, it is undoubtedly that sustainable development must be carried out for maintaining HKIA's status as a leading air cargo hub in the world.

Although HKIA has managed to maintain its leading air cargo hub status, it would be dangerous to assume that this will automatically continue. HKIA faces increasing challenges from other competitors like Incheon (Seoul), Dubai and Pudong (Shanghai). In particular, the infrastructure development of our neighbourhood airports posed an inevitable threat to the HKIA: the Guangzhou Baiyun Airport has set a target to handle 4 million tonnes of cargo with the airport having 5 runways, three terminals and three logistic parks whereas the Shenzhen Baoan Airport has also planned to build capacity to handle 2.4 million tonnes of cargo volume by 2020. With these intensifying pressures faced by the HKIA, sustainable developments must be done in order to keep its status as a leading air cargo hub in the world with the following measures.

Firstly, the building of a third runway is a pre-requisite to achieve the subject goal. According to the HKIA Annual Report 2012/2013, in 2012, HKIA handled 4.03 million tonnes of cargo (+2.2% year-on-year growth) and it is expected that HKIA will be receiving 8.9 million tonnes of cargo per year by 2030. In other words, HKIA is fast approaching its maximum handling capacity under the current two-runway system. To enhance HKIA's competitiveness as a leading air cargo hub in the world, it is therefore crucial to ensure that there is sufficient runway capacity to handle the forecast air cargo growth in the long run.

The HKSAR Government has given in-principle approval to adopt the three-runway system as the future development for HKIA whom will make a final decision on whether to proceed with

the implementation of this new system when a detailed planning report and the assessment details are completed by the Airport Authority Hong Kong (AAHK) in around August 2014. The proposal of a third runway system by the HKIA includes improvement of the road network in the cargo areas as well as new landside transportation facilities, such as the new car parks, and even expansion of the existing Terminal 2. Should this third runway is being built, this sustainable development certainly helps to maintain HKIA's status as a leading air cargo hub in the world.

Secondly, adequate supply of skilled manpower also plays an important role in sustainable development for maintaining HKIA's status as a leading air cargo hub in the world. According to a recent government report on manpower projections to 2018, Hong Kong can expect a shortfall in manpower resources for positions that require different education levels. The shortage of semi-skilled labour, often referred to as technicians and craftsmen, is of serious concern as it forms a large part of supporting the air cargo operations. Furthermore, in accordance to an article of Ming Pao News printed on 3rd December 2012, the HKIA faced difficulty in hiring cargo loading staff required at the airport. To solve this problem, the Administration and Management of the relevant parties should pay careful attention in training a skilled workforce for the air cargo industry. For instance, to provide different vocational training courses for both the existing air cargo staff and the unskilled workers.

Thirdly, expansion of infrastructure facilities is also an essential sustainable development required for the growth and development of the air cargo industry. The Airport Authority (AA) is currently developing the Apron Expansion and will be completed in phases by the end of 2014 which includes 28 parking stands and a cross-runway vehicular tunnel linking to the cargo area. In addition, with the full operation of the new Cathay Pacific Cargo Terminal as scheduled at the end of 2013, this new facility was expected to handle 2.6 million tonnes of cargo a year, increasing HKIA's annual cargo handling capacity by 50% to 7.4 million tonnes of air cargo. All these new facilities helped HKIA's status as a leading air cargo hub in the world.

Fourthly, the construction of cross-boundary infrastructure is a significant factor too. With Hong Kong's geographical location as a gateway to China – the access into and out of the world's second largest economy and fastest growing consumer market, the HKIA is important as a multi-modal transport hub, connecting it with China by land and sea. With the completion of the

projects of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link later, together with the setup of cargo depots at the strategic locations in the Pearl Rive Delta, all these developments help to facilitate the flow of goods via Hong Kong, enhancing HKIA's role as a premier supply chain together in China and maintain HKIA's status as a leading air cargo hub in the world.

Last but not least, the HKSAR Government and the HKIA Management must treasure and maintain the HKIA's current existing advantages as a leading air cargo hub in the world, such as the the free port policy, efficient customs facilities, extensive Information Technology application, high safety and security, efficient cargo operation and competitive costs.

Apart from the profound economic impact to the Hong Kong society, the air cargo industry also contributes to the long-term stability, sustainability and development of Hong Kong. Therefore, looking into the future, I am confident that Hong Kong International Airport will continue to maintain its status as a leading air cargo hub in the world by carrying out the following sustainable development effectively and efficiently, including the building of a third runway, provision of an adequate supply of skilled manpower, expansion of air cargo infrastructure facilities, construction of cross-boundary infrastructure and maintaining of the HKIA's current existing advantages.