

CAAS boosts airspace coverage

Karamjit Kaur
Aviation Correspondent

The entire airspace managed by Singapore air traffic controllers – the Republic's flight information region – will come under the watch of satellites by the end of 2018.

There are now pockets of the 800,000 sq km zone, primarily areas over remote oceans, that are not covered.

The upgrade by the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) is part of a global initiative to improve flight tracking following the mysterious disappearance of a Malaysia Airlines passenger plane in March 2014.

Flight MH370 vanished en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing with 239 people on board, and presumably plunged into the Indian Ocean.

The search for the plane is ongoing.

The incident prompted the UN's civil aviation arm, the International Civil Aviation Organisation, to propose that aircraft should be tracked every 15 minutes when flying over oceans and remote areas.

This is likely to be made mandatory for the more than 190 member countries of the United Nations in 2018.

The CAAS project is a partnership with Aireon, which provides surveillance capability to air navigation service providers.

Both parties have inked a deal for the American firm to provide space-based automatic dependent surveillance-broadcast data for the Singapore flight information region.

CAAS is the first air navigation service provider in the Asia-Pacific region to adopt the technology for airspace surveillance.

The authority's director-general Kevin Shum said: "By doing so, we can safely improve the efficiency and capacity of air navigation services for the areas under our responsibility."

The tie-up, finalised on the sidelines of the Singapore Airshow, was one of several agreements inked between CAAS and its partners during the event.

Another agreement was sealed with the Institute for Info-comm Research to set up a facility for air traffic management research and development.

CAAS is also partnering Airbus Helicopters to conduct drone testing to address the sustainability and efficiency of a parcel delivery business in large urban environments.

As part of the project, Airbus is working with the National University of Singapore to set up a network of parcel stations within the campus.

This will enable users to send important and urgent items such as documents via unmanned aircraft to other parts of the campus.

karam@sph.com.sg