



**Moving house:** Executive Jets Asia is investing RM40m to build a 6,600 sq m state-of-the-art aircraft hanger (above) at Senai International Aviation Park

## Senai aviation park woos players from Seletar

**Private jet operator EJA is latest to plan relocation to Johor**

By **VEN SREENIVASAN**

[SINGAPORE] Could the multi-million-dollar Seletar Aerospace Park (SAP) face competition from across the Johor Straits?

Senai International Aviation Park (SIAP), operated by Senai Airport Terminal Services (Senai ATS), has been attracting business aviation players from across the waters.

Just months after aircraft engine supply and maintenance outfit C&A Aviation Pte Ltd signed up to relocate its facilities there, SIAP has managed to attract Seletar-based private jet operator Executive Jets Asia (EJA).

EJA is investing RM40 million (S\$16.6 million) to build a 70,000 sq ft (6,600 sq metre) state-of-the-art aircraft hanger on 2.5 acres of land at SIAP. The facility will boast parking space for at least two Airbus 320 or Boeing 737 aircraft and several executive jets, and over 13,000 sq ft (1,200 sq metres) of lettable office and storage space in a 2-level annex.

It will be completed by end-2011, while C&A is currently building its new facilities in Senai.

Located within the Iskandar economic development zone boasting benefits which include tax exemptions and duty free status, the 50 acres (20 ha) SIAP offers business aviation operators, MRO companies and other aviation players ready infrastructure, utilities and taxways leading to the runway.

And at a much lower costs than at Seletar.

But Shahrull Allam Shah, the deputy CEO of Senai ATS, insisted that SIAP was not competing against Seletar.

"Singapore's lead position in aviation and aerospace is a different league," he said. "We have no intention of competing against Seletar. Rather, we want to complement Seletar and ride on its growth. Obviously, we have some advantages in terms of costs which enables us to offer some aviation players an opportunity to use our facilities."

He added that while Seletar would always attract bigger global players, Senai could be an attractive alternative for secondary or support services such as fixed base operations (FBO), maintenance, overhaul and air logistics.

Indeed, the 300 ha SAP has already attracted numerous global heavyweights like Eurocopter, Pratt & Whitney and Rolls-Royce (which has invested over \$700 million on a state-of-the-art engine making facility there).

But it has also built customised facilities catering to smaller business aviation players, including shared hangar facilities and a multi-storey office block. The park, located just a short drive away from Changi and Loyang, is into its second phase and will be ready in 2018.

Meanwhile, Senai ATS has given EJA the coveted FBO (fixed base operation) licence, enabling it to run ground handling operations for unscheduled flights operating in Senai Airport.

"Senai will become our regional base, though we may still base aircraft in Singapore, just as we have

now in Jakarta, and will have in Bangkok by year-end," said EJA's CEO Prithpal Singh. "We will close our office in Seletar and probably open up a small one downtown. Everything else will be in Senai."

BT understands that several other mid-sized aviation players in Seletar may also be in discussions with Senai. Industry insiders say potential candidates could include players like Hawker Pacific, Fokker and others, who need to remain in the region, but may find it too expensive to operate out of Seletar.

Besides the existing 50 acres, SIAP has another 100 acres ready for development if demand picks up, Mr Shahrull said. EJA has already signed an option to lease a further 2 acres of land at Senai for future expansion.

Mr Singh said that it was not just pricing, but also the potential for scalability which business aviation and other medium sized operators found attractive in Senai.

"Due to the ample plots of ready land available, potential investors of the SIAP will have no issues to expand operations in the future," he said.

Senai ATS' CEO Mohd Sidik Shaik Osman added that the arrival of EJA, C&A and other business aviation operators could also boost the logistics capabilities of the Iskandar region.

"They will not only act as catalysts to attract other industry players to the area, but will also encourage the creation of more jobs in the niche aviation industry."

SIAP already has ready "bonded" facilities for logistics businesses, he added.