



Mr Tan enjoys the opportunity to travel widely in his work. PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

Off to a flying start

A CAAS scholarship enables Mr Dalen Tan to fulfil his childhood dream of working in the aviation industry

by philip lee

EVEN as a boy, Mr Dalen Tan knew what he wanted to be when he grew up.

Although he might have been unsure about a specific job, he was certain that it must be in the aviation industry.

Focused at such a young age, this Raffles Junior College alumnus, son of an accountant father and an auditor mother, was spared the dilemma of making a choice

when it came to picking a university course.

Mr Tan, 26, says: "My childhood curiosity in aircraft eventually became a career interest in aviation."

This was why he accepted a Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) Overseas Scholarship in 2001.

Five years later, he graduated with a Bachelor of Science in engineering (aerospace) from the University of Michigan in the United States.

He says: "After graduation, CAAS

granted approval for me to continue my post-graduate studies.

"I enrolled in the Master of Engineering Management programme at Duke University to gain some management insight."

He explains that the course was customised for students who wished to complement technical experience with management knowledge.

"That really helped me in understanding corporate strategy," he adds.

He started work in 2007 as an assistant manager in the airworthiness/flight division in CAAS.

He has been exposed to various operational aspects of the organisation in a career he describes as "challenging, satisfying and rewarding".

A year into his job, he was transferred to the environment unit in the international relations (IR) division.

He says: "I was involved in analysing emissions arising from international flights in and out of Singapore, and exploring possible mitigating measures."

"Specifically, I deal with ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization) environmental matters, so I am more in touch with developments on addressing aviation emissions discussed at the international level."

He is also involved, among other duties, in international strategy work such as climate change talks at the United Nations and ICAO.

"Overall, CAAS offers wide exposure to its staff. Moreover, in both positions, I get to travel widely for work purposes. That's something I always look forward to," he says.

He explains that while his previous role focused on technicalities, regulatory work and understanding of the aviation industry, his present environment portfolio requires strategic thinking, diplomacy and intuitive understanding of IR.

"Of course, with IR work, you can't miss out on a little wine and dine that we organise for high-level delegates," he adds.

On the work of the IR division, Mr Tan explains: "We look after the international interests of Singapore's civil aviation."

"We were one of the first countries to develop guidance for safety management systems for the aviation industry and our safety guidance work is highly regarded."

"We participate actively in various international forums and in ICAO."

"It can be really fun rubbing shoulders with VIPs and meeting people from different cultures and backgrounds. I think this is the kind of exposure that IR can give. Not many other positions offer this."

Asked why CAAS is special, he says: "The management makes an effort to show care for staff through small but thoughtful acts like the flexi-place (work-from-home) scheme."

"My colleagues were very helpful from day one, which made work more enjoyable."

"It takes enlightened bosses and colleagues to provide both advice and autonomy, at appropriate times, and I am fortunate to encounter such people in CAAS."

"It is definitely a place where talents are nurtured and treasured. It isn't all work and no fun."

He says CAAS will become two entities from July 1 this year.

A restructured and enhanced CAAS will take care of government services such as safety regulation and air transport negotiations, and a new company will be formed to operate Changi Airport and its commercial functions.

To young school-leavers who are pondering study and career choices, Mr Tan says: "Both companies will offer vast career opportunities and obviously need different set skills as well."

"Because CAAS provides so many functions, work is diverse, and opportunities for career advancements are plenty."

He adds that the organisation also practises job rotation for staff to be exposed to a variety of work experiences.

"An organisation that is aviation-related and which works closely with international partners also means greater international exposure."

"To anyone looking for challenges, dynamism and a job that contributes meaningfully to Singapore's vitality, a career in CAAS beckons," he says.

We've set the
STAGE
Now it's your turn to run the
SHOW

The world would be really boring if all of us were alike. We seek people with fresh ideas and different perspectives, people who thrive on challenges, and who are ready to take on Singapore's dynamic and vibrant economy.

As a MAS Scholar, your future is under your directorship. You choose the field of studies you wish to pursue. Upon graduation, you'll be formulating and implementing policies that will shape the economic future of an entire nation. And you'll be setting standards that others can only hope to emulate.

Are you ready to run the show?

For more information on MAS Undergraduate Scholarships, log on to www.mas.gov.sg

MAS

Monetary Authority
of Singapore