



## Changi, Seletar gear up for the IMF jet set

**Bookings up for exec jets, security being tightened for IMF/World Bank meetings**

By **VEN SREENIVASAN**

[SINGAPORE] Singapore's two commercial airports are set for a rush of private jets in the lead-up to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank meetings.

More than 16,000 delegates and officials from over 180 countries will attend the meetings from Sept 11 to 20 at Suntec Convention Centre. And aviation sources say many VIPs will fly in on executive jets to save time and avoid airport security hassles.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) and the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) say they have no official information about arrivals by private jet.

But the recently revamped JetQuay CIP Terminal at Changi which caters to these aircraft is bracing itself to receive plenty of politicians, bankers and corporate chieftains next week.

JetQuay officials declined to comment, citing client confidentiality and security. But sources close to the VIP terminal operator say bookings for private jets have increased in re-

cent days. Across town at Seletar Airport, security is being beefed up — not just to handle an expected increase in passengers but also to protect the numerous Gulfstreams, Bombardier Challengers, Learjets and the French Falcon 900s that could be parked there during the week of the IMF/World Bank meetings.

"A substantial number of these planes will be flying into Singapore, and Seletar is designating parking spaces for many of them," said a source. "Security is being significantly tightened."

Besides delegates who fly in on private jets, many visitors arriving at Changi on commercial flights are expected to hop across to neighbouring cities like Bangkok, Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur to meet clients, business associates and their regional offices.

So private jet operators are gearing up to meet this demand also.

Executive Jets Asia, which operates a fleet of jets for regional hire, has flown in three of its jets to Singapore.

"Many executives want the flexibility and time savings which private jet charter provides," said executive director David Ho. "We already have three Learjets on standby for clients who want to take the opportunity to fly to other destinations around the region before heading home to Europe or the Americas."

Use of executive jets has soared worldwide in recent years, boosted by security concerns, the demand for flexibility and time savings. The biggest increase has been in East Asia, where Beijing, for instance, now handles 100 non-commercial charter flight movements a month — about twice the frequency at Tokyo.

In Europe, the recent bomb scare in London and the subsequent logjams at airports saw a spike in demand for private jets. Operators like Sentient Jet and OneSky Jet Network said business surged between 150 per cent and 300 per cent in the week after the terror alert.

Executive jet operators charge one-way hourly rates ranging from around US\$4,000 for five-seat light jets to US\$9,800 an hour on 10-seat luxury jets, which can fly almost 6,000 km non-stop.