

# AIRLINK

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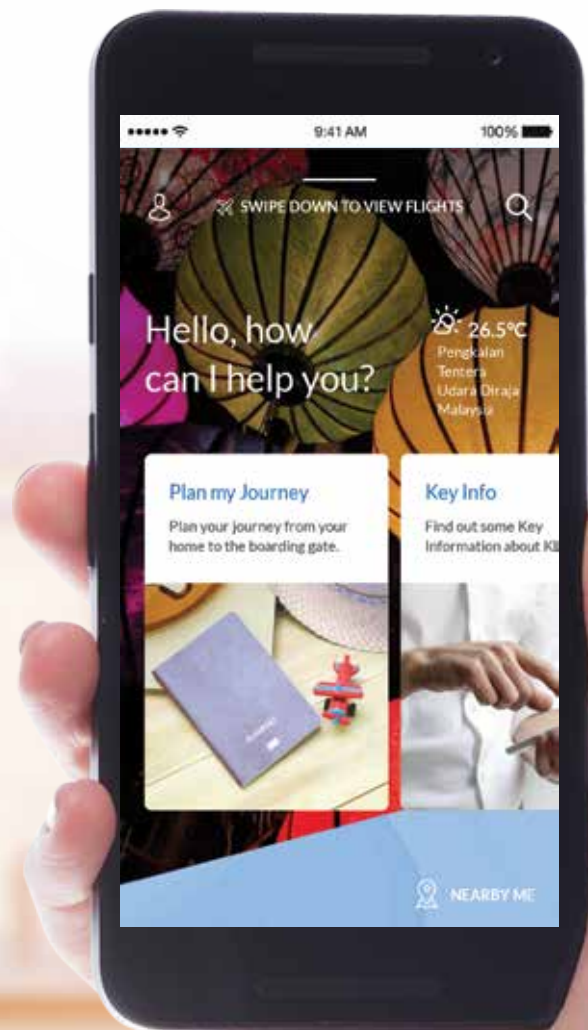
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## Airport CEO Speaks

**A leading corporate leader with strong financial background and extensive experience in various fields, he is currently steering Malaysia Airports to greater heights.**

**This month, Raja Azmi Raja Nazuddin is heartened to announce that the Airports Council International Airports Economics and Finance Conference and Exhibition (ACIAEF) will be held in Kuala Lumpur next year with Malaysia Airports as the proud host.**

I am greatly honoured that the world's biggest gathering of airport operators, key major industry players and stakeholders in the aviation industry will be converging at our capital city for the first-time next year. It holds great significance for us as this will be the second time the ACIAEF will be held outside of London since this event started in 2008.

In conjunction with "Visit Malaysia Year 2020", I believe next year's edition of the ACIAEF will help raise our country's profile. We are not only a business events destination to be reckoned with but also a wonderful shopping experience for business travelers and tourists alike.

At this year's ACIEF event in London, I shared with the delegates about Malaysia Airports' role in ensuring air connectivity in Malaysia through 39 airports, as well as in managing regulatory changes in the ever-growing aviation industry.

As indicated by our latest statistics for the first quarter of 2019 (1Q19), total passenger traffic registered in 1Q19 at all the airports including in Istanbul, rose 3.7% to 33.5 million passengers. Our international traffic registered 3.4% growth with 16.1 million passengers while our domestic movements increased by 4% to 17.4 million passengers. Aircraft movements also grew by 0.7% in 1Q19.

With future seat capacity filings by our airline partners remaining above expectation, I am confident our 4.9% growth forecast for Malaysia and 4.3% growth forecast for Istanbul Sabiha Gokcen International Airport in 2019 is achievable. Firefly's commencement of its Subang-Seletar sector on 21 April and AirAsia's new routes from Kuala Lumpur to Quanzhou, China and Can Tho, Vietnam respectively on 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of May are just some of the new services. This is on top of Malindo Air's Kuala Lumpur – Chengdu and Kuala Lumpur – Zhengzhou services, both on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, followed by AirAsia X new route from Kuala Lumpur to Lanzhou, China on the same date.



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# Incentivising Langkawi and its Airport



**It was a significant achievement for Langkawi International Airport (LIA) to receive the Highly Commended recognition under the four million passenger category at the recent annual Routes Asia 2019 Marketing Awards in Cebu, Philippines considering that this is one of the most highly regarded annual regional awards on excellence in airport and destination marketing.**

It was a significant achievement for Langkawi International Airport (LIA) to receive the Highly Commended recognition under the four million passenger category at the recent annual Routes Asia 2019 Marketing Awards in Cebu, Philippines considering that this is one of the most highly regarded annual regional awards on excellence in airport and destination marketing.

Recalling this glorious moment, Malaysia Airports General Manager of Airline Marketing, Mohamed Sallauddin Hj Mat Sah, remarked, "This is an indeed a great recognition for Malaysia Airports as it

has for so many years collaborated with the airlines, industry stakeholders and key players to raise the visibility of Langkawi.

"This achievement underlines that Malaysia Airports is simultaneously raising its efforts to market airports and destinations other than its flagship airport KL International Airport in its quest to develop all airports under its portfolio.

"It also reaffirms that we are focused on applying the relevant marketing strategies to attract airlines and passengers to our stable of diversified airports."

This milestone achieved by LIA is all the more meaningful considering the tough economic conditions last year and moderate growth projections for this year. Nevertheless, despite such odds, LIA has continued to expand its connectivity in terms of new routes and increased frequencies to Europe, Central Asia, China and most recently to Thailand.

Malaysia Airports Group Chief Executive Officer Raja Azmi Raja Nazuddin said the new Phuket-Langkawi service by Malindo Air on 31 March brought the total number of destinations served by LIA to 18, with seven of them being international destinations.

According to Chandra Rama Muthy, CEO of Malindo Air, the airline has brought in about



half a million passengers to Langkawi since 2017.

Latest statistics from Malaysia Airports showed that LIA's total passenger traffic for the first quarter of 2019 (1Q19) grew by 8.3% to 757,616. For the whole of 2018, its passenger movements totalled 2.74 million whereby its international traffic grew by almost 30% to 368,995 passengers.

Meanwhile, LIA's international commercial aircraft movements rose by 38% to 3,084 in 2018, compared to 2,239 in 2017. For 1Q19, its total commercial aircraft movements increased 2.5% to 6,355.

LIA has been attracting more interest from foreign airlines following the aggressive push over the last few years to woo them here at travel marts such as the Arabian Travel Market, World Travel Market London and ITB Berlin.

One of the most exciting news for LIA this year is Qatar Airways plan to start its thrice weekly service from Doha to Langkawi from 15 October by utilising the Boeing 787 aircraft. This new service was announced by Qatar Airways CEO Akbar Al Baker at the recent ITB Berlin in Germany.

LIA airport manager Jefry Ramli welcomes the arrival of this Middle Eastern-based airline later this year to Langkawi having received charter airlines TUI Airways and Sunday Airlines from the United Kingdom and Kazakhstan respectively last year.

Tourists from the Middle East are said to represent the third largest group to the legendary island of Langkawi after Southeast Asia and China. With their longer length of stay and higher spending power, this would augur well for the hospitality and other tourism-related industries here.

### **New RM5 million Fund Launched for Langkawi**

At the recent 15<sup>th</sup> edition of the biennial Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace 2019, Malaysia Airports took the opportunity to launch its new Langkawi International Tourism Promotional Fund (LITPF), which will kick-start from June 2019 for a two-year period.



Mohamed Sallauddin explained, "The RM5 million LITPF provided solely by the airport operator is exclusively dedicated for the destination marketing and promotion of Langkawi."

"It will be used to reimburse activities implemented by airlines, tour operators, travel agents, travel management and destination marketing companies as well as charterers. The beneficiaries are required to obtain the approval from us before launching their campaigns."

Unlike the Joint International Tourism Development Programme (JITDP) with Tourism Malaysia, he said the LITPF is not a dollar-to-dollar programme but provides "full reimbursement". Another difference between the two is LITPF's exclusivity while the JITDP will be used primarily for destinations other than Langkawi.

Out of the RM15 million combined contribution of Malaysia Airports and Tourism Malaysia to meet with RM15 million from the airlines, trade and business partners, RM6.7 million were approved under JITDP last year for 13 airlines and 20 types of campaigns to promote destinations in Malaysia to countries like Bahrain, Oman, Australia, Kazakhstan, India, China, Kuwait, Taiwan and Turkey.

### **Robust Incentives for Airlines**

Mohamed Sallauddin reiterated that incentives are key for airlines in determining which destinations to serve, especially when deciding between two destinations that are within close proximity and of the same market type.

On the three-year Langkawi Charter Flight Incentive Programme (LCFIP), which ended on 31 December 2018, he maintained it would not be renewed as the new LITPF would be able to achieve the same objectives set out in the LCFIP.

The latter saw seven charterers mainly from China, Central Asia and North Asia participated in it last year, amounting to RM343,540.00. They were rewarded based on the total number of passengers brought to Langkawi.

Mohamed Sallauddin said Malaysia Airports also has another exclusive incentive, Langkawi Incentive Programme (LIP) where airlines are rewarded based on their performance for international operations. To-date, Air Asia, China Southern Airlines and Malindo Air have benefitted from the LIP since it debuted in March 2015. This programme is valid until 29 February 2020.

Malaysia Airports' other existing incentives for LIA include the Airline Incentive Programme 3 (AIP-3). The AIP-3 includes a landing fee waiver, first year reward, passenger growth reward and six-month free office space at the airport. All new airlines and those operating new routes have been awarded the AIP-3 in 2018 and to-date, over 30 airlines have benefited from it. This enhanced programme also inclusive of marketing support for their business expansion.

Malaysia Airports also has other complementary schemes such as the Domestic Tactical Push (DTP) to strengthen Malaysia's domestic market and Outbound International Travel Development Programme (OITDP) to spur outbound international travel this year.

Mohamed Sallauddin described the two as "purely provisional tactical programmes," which will only be invoked based on set criteria and conditions.

"They will be applied on selected markets or routes. However, owing to the relatively small population of Langkawi and the nature of Langkawi as a leisure destination, the OITDP may not be highly effective but the LIA may be able to benefit from DTP once it is activated by Malaysia Airports and supported by the local airlines."



# Malaysia Strengthens Partnership with Condor Airlines

**Tourism Malaysia and Malaysia Airports signed an agreement with Condor Airlines for Frankfurt-Kuala Lumpur operations in summer 2019 season during ITB Berlin in March this year.**

The Memorandum of Joint Collaboration (MoJC) was signed by Datuk Musa Yusof, Director General of Tourism Malaysia, Mohamed Sallauddin Mohamed Shah, General Manager (Airline Marketing) of Malaysia Airports and Condor Airlines, witnessed by Datuk Ahmad Shah Hussein Tambakau, Chairman of Tourism Malaysia.

The collaboration was built upon the success of a similar initiative undertaken for the winter 2018 season by all three parties. The first three months of the winter campaign saw Condor Airlines plying the Frankfurt-Kuala Lumpur route with more than 90% load factor.

Chairman of Tourism Malaysia, Datuk Ahmad Shah Hussein Tambakau, said, "We



are pleased with the success of the first partnership with Condor Airlines in 2018. It helped us gain a stronger footing in the German market, resulting in a 17.1% growth in German tourist arrivals to Malaysia last year".

He added, "We hope to continue strengthening our market presence here with Condor Airlines and Malaysia Airports partnership especially as we build up towards Visit Malaysia 2020".

Raja Azmi Raja Nazuddin, Group CEO of Malaysia Airports said, "Since starting its operations in November 2018, Condor Airlines has carried more than 16,000 passengers into KLIA. Malaysia has often been Germany's primary trading partner among ASEAN countries, with the continuation from winter to summer schedule, we strongly believe that this will enable both countries to further strengthen both the tourism and economy sectors".

He added, "Condor Airlines' presence

into Malaysia is made possible with the joint collaboration between Malaysia Airports and Tourism Malaysia, under the Joint International Tourism Development Programme (JITDP), which had benefited 20 main projects for short and long-haul markets. I hope to see more beneficiaries take up the opportunity in using the JITDP fund to promote tourist arrivals into Malaysia".

Also at this year's ITB Berlin, Malaysia has taken on the title of Official Partner Country. The title is timely as Malaysia is preparing for Visit Malaysia 2020, a landmark campaign that's targeted to bring in 30 million international tourists into the country.

The Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, the Hon. Datuk Mohamaddin Ketapi, said, "We want to show that Malaysia is a beautiful and culturally diverse country with many fascinating tourist attractions. We are a peaceful nation and we welcome tourists from all over the world to enjoy an affordable and value-for-money holiday in Malaysia".



# KLM Launches Sale of Dutch Tulips for Charity

**KLM Royal Dutch Airlines (KLM) is proud to announce the 'KLM Charity Tulip Sale' held in conjunction with Mother's Day. This year, it will be held at the KL International Airport (KUL) on Saturday, 11 May 2019 from 10am at Level 3 of the Domestic Arrival Hall, KLIA Main Terminal.**

For this event, KLM is specially flying in over 3,500 fresh stalks of tulips from the Netherlands for the special price of only RM6 per stalk for charity. This is part of KLM's Annual Charity Tulip Sale as a corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative since 1998. KLM has found it a great joy to continue this initiative every year as it offers the opportunity for people to express their love as well as contribute to the less fortunate. All the funds raised will be donated to charity. The beneficiary of this lovely event is Hospis Malaysia, with the donations going towards the support of palliative care in Malaysia.

Hospis Malaysia's role is to ensure that palliative care will one day be accessible to all in need. Palliative care is extremely



essential for patients with terminal illnesses to live in dignity and with quality of life that will justify their meaning to live. Hospis Malaysia aims to alleviate physical, emotional as well as the existential spiritual issues that tragically come with being diagnosed with an incurable disease; they are a non-profit organisation.

Estee Ng, KLM Country Manager Malaysia stated, "After a four-year absence, I am delighted the KLM Charity Tulip Sale is back. Made possible with the collaboration of Malaysia Airports and with support with our logistics partner Sama-Sama Hotel KL International Airport, we are looking forward to help raise funds for the less fortunate with KLM's iconic Charity Tulip Sale. I hope that many will join us and purchase our beautiful air-flown tulips for a minimum donation".

Nik Anis Nik Zakaria, the Corporate Communications General Manager of Malaysia Airports said, "As an airport operator, we will always render our unconditional support to our airline partners be it for their strategic, business, or CSR initiative. KLM is one of our longest serving airline partners at KUL, clocking in 60 years of operations serving the European sector and providing convenient connectivity for our passengers through their routes. On top of

a very good cause, working hand-in-hand with KLM to provide aid to the needy fits well with our airport community CSR pillar that emphasises on the importance of corporate sustainability".

Sundra Kulendra, the General Manager of Sama-Sama Hotel KL International Airport said, "Sama-Sama Hotel KL International Airport is honoured to support both KLM Royal Dutch Airlines and Malaysia Airports for this event. I believe flowers play an important part in various cultures to show love and affection. Hence, the initiative of flying fresh tulips all the way from the Netherlands to KUL is just inspiring. And in support of the initiative, we are presenting 400 fresh tulips during Mother's Day at the hotel".

Tham Su Ming, Hospis Malaysia's Director, Strategy & Communications said, "We would like to thank KLM for electing Hospis Malaysia as the beneficiary of this year's charity tulip sale. As a charity relying almost entirely on support from the public, this beautiful tulip sale initiative will enable us to reach a generous collection of individuals who are supporting our causes as well as honouring their mothers on this special occasion".

For more information, please call 03 – 7712 4555



## Japan Airlines Introduced New Spring Menus

**Malaysian passengers flying with Japan Airlines (JAL) are privileged with the new spring menus, which were introduced on 1 March 2019. Highlights include a new healthy and fulfilling business class meal created by a Michelin 2-star chef.**

Passengers flying from Narita International Airport to KLIA on Business Class will enjoy a European inspired cuisine supervised by New-Star Chef Shinobu Namae, owner of L'Effervescence in Nishiazabu, Tokyo.

The chef is known for serving delicious yet healthy meals that satisfy the palate while keeping customers fulfilled. The main course is, Sirloin Steak with port wine sauce/peppered butter or Seafood with anchoiade sauce, and

on the side is Horse mackerel escabeche, asparagus with mustard, ratatouille with conger and burdock salad.

JAL flights to other international destinations will be served with different but equally sumptuous cuisine.

For more information, please call 03 – 2287 6888



*\*Photographs for reference only. Actual meal subjected to change depending on seasonality.*

## Malaysia Airlines Crowned Best in Asia

**In March at the PATWA International Travel Awards at ITB Berlin, Malaysia Airlines scooped the Best Airline in Asia Award.**

The PATWA (International Council of Pacific Area Travel Writers Association) awards are reputed to be among the most coveted and sought-after awards in the travel industry. Judging is carried out by a jury comprising of PATWA members, officials and mystery travellers who judge the shortlisted names that meet the necessary criteria. The nominees are evaluated on various pre-set standards with an extensive audit, as necessary.

The awards recognise individuals and organisations that have excelled in promoting tourism across aviation, hotels, travel agencies, tour operators, destinations, government bodies and tourism ministries.

Izham Ismail, Malaysia Airlines' Group CEO said, "We are enormously proud to accept the Best Airline in Asia Award from PATWA. I dedicate it to Malaysia Airlines' employees who focus on delivering a world-class travel experience for our passengers every day. The award recognises a number of positive developments we have launched over the past

two years, including new aircraft, products and digital innovations. It is testament to our commitment to offering passengers a fantastic experience both in the air and on the ground".

For more information, please visit [www.malaysiaairlines.com](http://www.malaysiaairlines.com).





# Qatar Airways Announced Enhancement and New Destinations



**In March, Qatar Airways stole the limelight at the world's largest international travel and tourism trade show, ITB Berlin when the airline's Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Akbar Al Baker revealed the airline's new Economy Class experience and announced seven upcoming additions to its rapidly growing global network.**

With the new Economy Class enhancement, travellers with Qatar Airways would be experiencing additional leg room, faster broadband and a new in-flight dining experience. Its new in-flight dining experience, 'Quisine' features all new tableware with 25 percent larger main courses, 20 percent larger appetisers and 50 percent larger desserts.

Qatar Airways is also pleased to be 'going green with Quisine' with a significant increase in rotatable, recyclable and biodegradable products and reduction in single-use plastic. Economy class passengers will also be able to enjoy improved connectivity with up to 10 times faster broadband, as well as more than 4,000 entertainment options on Qatar Airways' Oryx One in-flight entertainment system.

The new Economy Class experience features a seat with innovative 19-degree recline system, additional legroom, dual trays, 13.3-inch 4K widescreens and type 'C' fast charging USB port.

At the press conference, H.E. Akbar Al Baker said, "We are very pleased to reveal our new Economy Class experience here at ITB, proving that our commitment to providing the very finest experience extends to all of our passengers, not only those in Premium class. Our new



Economy Class seat, with its redesigned recline system and additional leg room, will ensure that our passengers in Economy Class arrive at their destinations feeling rested and refreshed".

H.E. Akbar Al Baker also revealed an array of forthcoming global destinations the airline will launch in 2019, including Lisbon, Portugal; Malta; Rabat, Morocco; Langkawi, Malaysia; Davao, Philippines; Izmir, Turkey; and Mogadishu, Somalia.



He said, "We are also tremendously excited to be adding seven new destinations to our rapidly expanding global route network later this year, and to be able to connect our passengers to anywhere in the world they wish to go".

Qatar Airways operates triple-daily service between Doha and Kuala Lumpur and four times weekly flights between Doha and Penang.

For more information, please call 03 - 2118 6100



# Finnair partners with Marimekko and L:A Bruket



## Malaysian passengers flying Business Class with Finnair on transcontinental flights would be introduced to a range of amenities by Finnish design house Marimekko.

They are designed to complement the new sleep textiles in Finnair's long-haul business class, which feature the classic Kaivo print in a dark blue tone on tone colourway. The Kaivo print was designed by Maija Isola, one of the most iconic Marimekko designers.

The amenity kits and eye shades feature four different Maija Isola designs from the 1960s - Rautasänky, Joonas, Jenkka and Pieni Melooni, with each pattern in two different colourways. A jacquard weave technique brings dark blue together with a second colour in each of the eight combinations, for a premium look with a collectible feel. Finnair is introducing two new designs at a time, changing them for another two every six months.

David Kondo, Head of Cabin Interior Development at Finnair said, "We wanted to introduce more patterns more often, so there is something new and fresh for our frequent flyers. The new kits have also been sized so they can live on after the flight for a variety of uses".

Sustainability in all its forms is key for Finnair, and environmental considerations have played a big part in the product design of the new amenity kits as well. Each new amenity kit comes wrapped in a cardboard band instead of plastic, with a QR code that customers can scan with a personal mobile device to read more about Isola's inspiration for the patterns. The information is provided in a range of languages and can be accessed inflight via the Nordic Sky Wi-Fi portal. Within the kit, the toothbrush is made from bio-plastic containing cornstarch, and plastic wrappings for the earplugs have been replaced with wax paper.

The new amenity kits will also have products from L:A Bruket – the natural and organic skincare brand from Sweden.

Kondo said, "Finnair and L:A Bruket are both Nordic brands that value sustainability. We view this partnership as a great initiative to increase the appeal of our amenity kit. We're also trying to connect the lounge and in-flight experience more and more for our customers, and offering organic and natural L:A Bruket products both on the ground and in the air is a great step in that direction".

Finnair connects 19 cities in Asia with over 100 destinations in Europe on the fast Northern route – the shortest way between Europe and Asia. Finnair is represented by Worldwide Aviation Agencies as the General Sales Agent (GSA) in Malaysia.

For more information, please call 03 – 2145 1155





# Citilink Indonesia Expands Their International Routes



**On the 30 January 2019 and 26 February 2019, Citilink Indonesia launched two new international routes, Surabaya (SUB) to Kuala Lumpur (KUL); and Jakarta (CGK) to Kuala Lumpur (KUL) respectively. This is in conjunction with Citilink Indonesia's new initiatives to expand beyond their current domestic routes in Indonesia.**



Citilink Indonesia Vice President Corporate Secretary & CSR Resty Kusandarina said, "The opening of these routes are a testament to Citilink Indonesia's commitment and seriousness in their efforts to expand their wings at the international level so that it will strengthen Citilink Indonesia's position as the world's leading low-cost airline".

In contrast to Citilink Indonesia's peers, they offer free baggage allowance of 10kg along with a free hot meal for good measure, so that customers are sure to be provided with the best deal possible from a low-cost airline. Furthermore, the Airbus A320-200 with a capacity for 180 economy seats will be employed for these two routes. At the moment, Citilink Indonesia targets a total fleet of 70 aircraft in 2019 consisting of the previously mentioned Airbus as well as the ATR 72-600.

Resty also added that Citilink Indonesia's foray into offering international routes begun with the Denpasar-Dili route followed by Jakarta-Penang, Surabaya-Penang and Banyuwangi-Kuala Lumpur.

Citilink Indonesia has fully engaged in promotional campaigns since their international debut. Over the first quarter of 2019, they have conducted over five events in Malaysia: My Town Citilink Travel Fair on 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2019, Matta Fair on 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> March, Archipelago Expo on 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> March 2019, Banyuwangi Week at KLLA on 20<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> March and Wonderful Indonesia Travel Fair on 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> April.

Citilink Indonesia believes that Malaysians will enjoy the new routes offered by the airlines as well as the attractive luggage and free meal policy that comes with each low-price ticket. According to Citilink Indonesia's President Director Juliandro Nurtjahjo, the airline forecasts that as many as 18 million passengers will experience the airline's innovative solutions and access to hidden gems of Indonesia.

For more information, please call 010 – 4226 294 (KL Office) or 04 – 638 0138 (Penang Office).



## Singapore Airlines Enhances Personalisation in F&B Offerings

**Passengers flying with Singapore Airlines (SIA) are feted with new personalised experience in its in-flight offerings.**

Premium Economy Class customers with SIA will be able to pre-order main courses from its in-flight menu from 1 May. This followed the initial launch to Suites, First Class and Business Class customers on all flights across its network last year, an offer that was also a first among the airlines.

With this new initiative, customers may pre-select their meal choices via the airline's website or mobile app anytime from three weeks before travel up to 24 hours before flight departure.

Passengers do not only enjoy a more personalised dining experience but are also assured of their preferred meal choice from either the in-flight menu or the 'Book the Cook' service.

In another first in the airline industry, SIA will be enhancing its Child Meal programme to enable parents to pre-order specific meals for their children from three different cuisine categories – Asian, Western and Vegetarian.

With this personalised enhancement, parents now have better choices over the child's meal prior to travel. Parents can visit the airline's website up to 24 hours before the day of travel to view the dishes planned for

their flight and select the one that best suits their child's preferences.

The move came about after an intensive focus group and meal tasting session conducted to gather insights from parents and children to better understand their preferences. The airline will roll out this initiative to all cabin classes from June 2019 for flights departing Singapore, extending progressively to flights departing from overseas destinations from August 2019.

Focus group sessions and targeted surveys were also conducted for two of the airline's other popular special meals, the Indian Vegetarian Meal and Muslim Meal. Feedback received from these sessions enabled the airline to improve on these meals by reviewing the ingredients and serviceware used. The frequency of menu rotation will also be increased to provide greater variety for customers.

SIA's Executive Vice President Commercial, Mak Swee Wah said, "Singapore Airlines has always been well known for its focus on customer service, and we see personalisation in in-flight dining offerings as being key to creating an even more memorable travel experience".

He added, "Apart from focus groups and targeted surveys, we are also leveraging on data analytics to better track meal preferences and customers' needs".

For more information, please visit [www.singaporeair.com](http://www.singaporeair.com)





# Sama-Sama Hotel Kicks Off Ramadan Season

**Themed “Gerbang Pesona Malaysia”, Sama-Sama Hotel put out all the stops to create a memorable experience for guests; right from the decorations up to the gastronomical offerings were especially made to celebrate the Ramadan season. Guests at the grand opening were greeted by old Malaya inspired decorations laced with some of the country’s most iconic architectures at the Hotel’s Grand Ballroom foyer at Level 1.**

General Manager Sama-Sama Hotels KLIA, Sundra Kulendra encouraged guests to share their Instagrammable moments in between wall-to-wall 2D pop-out backgrounds complete with the nostalgic hawker style elements.

He stated, “It is our brand promise to provide a meaningful connection with our guest as we strive to give them our best. The waterfall garden is one of our ways to give our guest an in-house oasis where they can have that intimate ‘buka puasa’ with their family and friends on top of a large wooden deck overlooking the man-made pond with a background of a soothing sound of overlapping water”.

The hotel’s culinary team headed by Executive Chef Ahmad Farhan Noorzali has come up with different thematic dishes daily for the Ramadan month based on a runway of cuisines that makes up the epitome of Malaysia’s melting pot of culture. Signature dishes were tastefully prepared by Ahmad and his team, such as Malaysia Gulai Lemak Siput Sedut, Singapore Hainan Chicken Rice, Indonesian Nasi Ambang, Taiwanese Oyster Omelet, Stir Fried Dried Chili Century Eggs, Filipino Beef Kaldereta, and Thailand Roasted Duck Curry and many more.



Sama-Sama Hotel was sure to tailor to the more outdoor-inclined guests as there were live-cooking stalls with hawker style seat settings at the ready outside at the port cochere that features the chef’s skills while they prepared the best dishes they’ve ever cooked for the guests.

Of course, the desserts were not forgotten as dessert stalls featured popular Malaysian specials such as ais kacang, apam balik, cendol and many more. Durian lovers were in for a treat as they were served freshly peeled Durians by the chefs on duty.

Sama-Sama Hotels also wanted to commemorate Mother’s Day (12<sup>th</sup> May) that falls on the Ramadan month. During that day, each mother that comes in to the hotel will be specially gifted with a tulip that is specially flown from the Netherlands. This is part of the Hotel’s continuous initiative charity support of Malaysia Airports together with KLM Royal Dutch Airlines.

The grand opening paved the way for the perfect Ramadan season; Sama-Sama Hotel welcomes all to come by and experience the great signature dishes cooked to it’s best



version. The “Gerbang Pesona Malaysia” ‘buka puasa’ dinner buffet is available all throughout the Ramadan season from 6.00pm to 10.00pm. Priced at RM105 nett per person for early bird and RM145 nett per person at normal price, the culinary brigade at the hotel also offers group bookings of 50 persons and above for Ramadan banquet. This will be allocated to the hotel’s various function rooms for a more private and intimate dining affair with family, friends or business associates.

It is also important to note that for main guests on transit, stopover at KL International Airport as well as for short business visit in KL, the hotel property extends to Sama-Sama Express at KLIA and Sama-Sama Express at klia2.

Find out more or proceed for your reservations by contacting 03 – 8787 3333.

# AVIATION INTERVIEW WITH SHERENE AZLI

CEO of Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council (MHTC)

Sherene Azli is passionate in working towards the rise of the healthcare travel industry in Malaysia. Since her appointment in 2015, Sherene has worked tirelessly to realise Malaysia's vision as the preferred global destination for international healthcare travellers. An energetic, articulate and meticulous leader, Sherene discusses her experience being at the forefront of the industry, how our country has progressed over the years, and the implications for Malaysia's economy and reputation.



**What were the immediate challenges that you had to overcome when you were first appointed as CEO of MHTC? What were the goals and initiatives put in place?**

As I came into office, I had to analyse the situation and formulate an appropriate approach to pave the way for improvement. So, I identified three main initiatives;

**(1) Optimisation of digital marketing:**

To build awareness meant that we had to engage local social media platforms in raising brand awareness, for example, using Malaysian influencers as ambassadors and creating a dedicated website for healthcare travellers to support the seamless end-to-end ecosystem that Malaysia offers.

**(2) Sustainable growth:** We did this by engaging with domestic and international stakeholders from both governmental and private sectors. In addition, we encouraged collaborations and open discourse with international subject matter experts such as Keith Pollard from the International Medical Travel Journal, UK; Ilan Geva, from Ilan Geva and Friends, US; and Prof. Ki Nam Jin, from Yonsei University, Seoul.

**(3) Industry facilitation:** We had to venture out into new markets that would contribute most significantly to the industry's sustainability. Through numerous campaigns, we matched markets to the specialities of our healthcare industry (this is discussed further in Question 5). We realised that Malaysia, in her current capacity, is unable to be an expert in all treatment fields. Therefore, there was a need to build a niche identity for Malaysia, so that we could be distinguished from the rest.

**What is the competitive advantage that Malaysian hospitals have over their Asian competitors such as Singapore, Thailand and South Korea?**

Our competitors in Southeast Asia such as Thailand and Singapore have had a twenty-year head start, however we have done well in catching up. Malaysia is very unique; MHTC was purposely set up by the government to promote the private healthcare industry, which is heavily regulated by the Ministry of Health (MOH) Malaysia, providing peace of mind by safeguarding patient safety. This in itself is our strong value proposition in contrast to our competitors which are more fragmented and operate independently from the government.

We believe that trust is extremely important in the medical industry; outcomes and communication are amongst the prime factors in establishing trust. With MHTC established under MOH Malaysia, the building of



trust amongst different stakeholders was expedited.

Armed with the strong public-private partnerships, MHTC has spearheaded coordinations amongst the different stakeholders, providing a seamless end-to-end experience for our international patients.

Malaysia welcomes our patients by catering to a large variety of patients through competitive affordability and ease of communication. As a country which speaks English as a second language and many other languages such as Mandarin and Hindi, ease of communication is offered in Malaysia; translators can also be arranged. Malaysia Healthcare's 79 healthcare providers can offer easy access to medical attention.

Ultimately, I believe that the best competitive advantage that Malaysia can offer is our famous 'Malaysian Hospitality' and that the genuineness in our care is second to none.

**Please tell us more about the various recognitions awarded to Malaysia and the implications it has for our industry in the present and for the future.**

In the healthcare industry, international recognition such as awards are extremely important. Awards convey trust, competence, and reputation. In gaining acknowledgement on the international scene for healthcare travel, Malaysia was recognised as the "Destination of the Year" by IMTJ for three years in a row from 2015 to 2017. In 2018, we received a "Highly Commendable" from the same institution. Secondly, MHTC also won "Cluster of the Year" in 2017 and 2018 by IMTJ, an additional mark of approval for Malaysia's excellent healthcare travel facilitation.

Moreover, US-based International Living also acknowledged Malaysia as the country with the "Best Country in the World for Healthcare" based on the Global Retirement Index from 2015 to 2017 and once more 2019. Malaysia is also listed as the top Asian country for retirement in 2018 and 2019.

Winning these awards positions Malaysia to be a top of mind healthcare travel destination and raises our global profile above our competitors.

**What are the demographics that comprise the healthcare travellers in Malaysia and where do you focus in gaining more healthcare travellers in the future?**

We have identified Indonesia, Vietnam, Myanmar, China and India as core markets, after accounting for the volume of healthcare travellers and growth potential

of these markets. In 2018, we welcomed over 1.2 million healthcare travellers from these countries as well as individuals from Singapore, the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan and Australia.

The specialist services we offer such as cardiology, is one of the best in Asia; and our fertility treatments have a success rate of one in two clinical pregnancies, which is an exceptional result. In addition, we specialise in orthopaedics treatment, cosmetic surgery as well as bariatric (gastric bypass) treatment. All of these treatments have been internationally recognised by healthcare travellers, proven by the exponential increase on numbers on our shores throughout the years.

**What impact has the healthcare travel industry had on the overall GDP since 2015?**

We are very proud to highlight that the total number of healthcare travellers has increased from 643,000 to over 1.2 million from 2011 to 2018. From 2015 to 2018, our country's healthcare industry has been growing at a compound annual growth rate of 17% in comparison to the Asia Pacific performance of 15% in the same period.

In 2018, our industry achieved close to RM1.5 billion in revenue receipts from the 1.2 million healthcare travellers. This growth contributed almost RM3-4 billion to the country's GDP. This calculation is based on a multiplier effect of 2.24\* times of hospital receipt which factors in out-of-hospital spending such as wellness, transportation, accommodation, as well as including touristic activities.

*\*Note: Multiplier effect estimated in The Global Wellness Tourism Report in 2014 by the Stanford Research Institute*

**How is MHTC's support from the government as well as from private corporate partnerships helpful to the industry's growth?**

MHTC is a government agency under the Ministry of Finance (MOF), which has been appointed with the responsibility of curating Malaysia's healthcare travel industry. Since then, MHTC has worked to streamline industry players and service providers into a more focused development strategy to raise Malaysia's profile in healthcare travel on the international stage through a strategic form of partnership. This model of partnership can be described as a public-private partnership (PPP).

In terms of the public sector, MHTC engages with agencies such as MOH, Tourism Malaysia, Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE), Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA), and MOF. In order to continuously facilitate industry growth, MHTC

maintains close ties with the Association of Private Hospitals of Malaysia (APHM), the main driver of the private healthcare sector in Malaysia.

Furthermore, MHTC's working relationship with the Immigration Department of Malaysia has resulted in the all-new eVISA (Medical) platform. eVISA (Medical) is an electronic visa that facilitates the entry of healthcare travellers seeking medical treatment in Malaysia's private hospitals. This is to avoid the unnecessary hassle of leaving the country and re-entering for the sake of renewing a standard visa.

I would also like to share that Malaysia Healthcare provides an exclusive, seamless, end-to-end service, which is our way of translating 'Malaysian Hospitality' to patients; and this is where our private partnerships come into play. It is a service that provides a smooth experience from the arrival at the airport, all the way to the hospital. Our dedicated personnel greet the healthcare travellers from their arrival gate and assist them all the way through immigration and luggage claim. Our Malaysia Healthcare lounges in KL International Airport (KLIA and klia2) and Penang International Airport are able to service both incoming and outgoing healthcare travellers, from when they land until when they decide to return home.

**What is your educational and professional background, and how has it been essential for leading MHTC?**

I hold a Master's in Business Administration from the University of Durham (United Kingdom) and a Bachelor of Business Studies (Hons) in Accounting & Finance from the University of Limerick (Republic of Ireland).

Prior to joining MHTC, I was the General Manager at Talent Corporation Malaysia, where I played an instrumental role in building strategies for talent development in 12 key sectors. Preceding that, I was in Telekom Malaysia for 15 years, where I was the Vice President of Group Marketing and subsequently, the Vice President of Strategy and Business Development.

Over the years, I have developed the belief in accentuating the power of developing human capital; I perceive value in building industry relationships and networks, and hence carry these ideals with me into my current role.

**What do you like to do in your free time?**

At least twice a week, I run and swim. I also enjoy reading and travelling. However, what I believe to be the utmost importance is to get 7-8 hours of sleep every day.

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