

# AIRLINK

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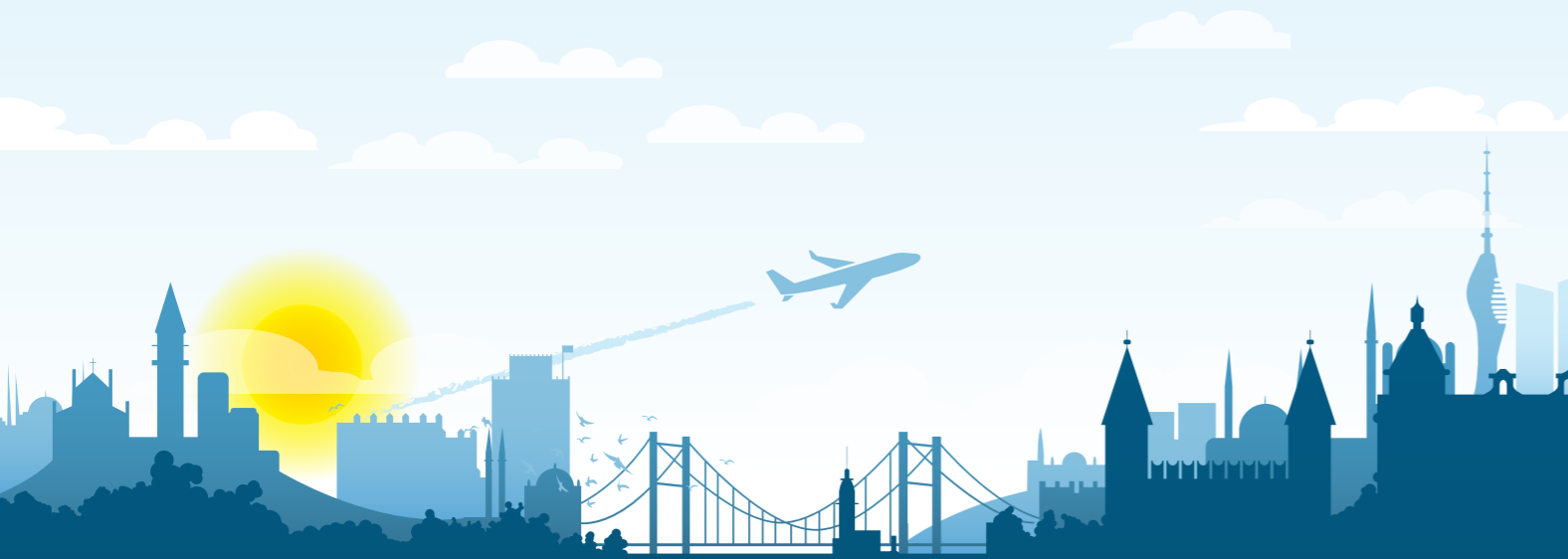
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## Airport CEO Speaks

**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 celebrates the coming of age of its flagship KL International Airport (KLIA) and its continued participation in the prestigious 25<sup>th</sup> World Route Development Forum 2019 (World Routes), an annual event much anticipated by international aviation players and tourism authorities.**

I am honoured to witness how KLIA, Malaysia's leading gateway, which turned 21 years, has evolved to become a strong and modern aviation hub following our relentless efforts to implement the latest technological advancements into our facilities and services apart from expanding our regional and global network connectivity.

Ever mindful of improving our passengers' seamless travelling experience through better distribution flow, we recently worked with our airline partners at the main terminal to redistribute some rows of the check-in counters and relocated several self check-in kiosks.

Another step forward is our launch of a single token passenger journey initiative powered by facial recognition, big data analytics and the Internet of Things as our "guests" go through our electronic gates. So far, 10 new security body scanners have been installed at KLIA and our other terminal at klia2, with 102 more in place by 2022.

We intend next to enhance the airside transfer between KLIA and klia2 and have recently signed a memorandum of business collaboration with ground handler Pos Aviation to design and develop a virtual platform for this initiative. By December, we target to introduce a passenger reconciliation system at these two terminals, which will have improved security features and an "open gate" concept at the boarding lounges. Plans are also afoot to work with Huawei to implement 5G network coverage at KLIA under our Airports 4.0 transformation journey and digitalisation initiatives.

As part of the anniversary celebration, themed KLIA Turns 21: A Precious Legacy, we have on display the original scale model of the main terminal which has been shown at various architectural and art exhibitions held in museums and galleries worldwide. We are grateful to the Japanese firm Kisho Kurokawa Architect and Associates for gifting it to Malaysia as a tribute to our Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's foresight and vision to develop this airport in Sepang when the airport in Subang had reached its capacity.

While you are at our airports, do enjoy the ambience of colourful banners featuring Hibiscus, our national flower, in conjunction with Malaysia Day on 16 September.

On a separate note, our airline marketing team looks forward to its participation at World Routes in Adelaide, Australia later this month to meet the network planners from various airlines exploring new opportunities for connectivity to our airports.

We shall collaborate with Tourism Malaysia at the event to jointly promote our Visit Truly Asia Malaysia 2020 campaign as part of our integrated efforts in boosting the number of travellers into our beloved Malaysia. In addition, we are proud to share that Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport, Turkey's second largest and busiest airport managed by us will also be playing a pivotal role in creating and intensifying greater awareness for the campaign next year.



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## EFFECTIVE AIRPORT AND TOURISM PARTNERSHIP KEY TO ROUTE DEVELOPMENT SUCCESS



**With the air transport and tourism sectors being mutually dependent on each other, it is not uncommon to find key stakeholders in the aviation industry such as airport operators and airlines working closely together with government agencies and tourism authorities in destination marketing of a city or route.**

Research results presented in a conference paper in February 2017 by Bojana Spasojevic, Gui Lohmann and Noel Scott showed airports to be leading stakeholders in air route development. The three authors, all from Griffith University in Brisbane, Australia also identified Partnership and Strategic Vision as the two most important leadership and governance attributes with high scores of 75% and 73.5% respectively.

In their latest study on Leadership and Governance in Air Route Development, published in the Annals of Tourism Research journal in September, they reinforced the idea of how strong relationships between an airport and city or tourism authority can be a critical success factor in route development.

That is partly because they share certain common goals such as the objective to increase passengers' traffic or visitors count to the destination or country. This can be felt mostly by second-tier and mid-sized airports, according to the study.

One of the authors, aviation lecturer Spasojevic will be moderating two Lightning Talks on 'What do airlines really want from an airport' and 'How airport innovation can attract airlines' on the second day of the 25<sup>th</sup> World Route Development Forum (World Routes) in Adelaide on 23 September. On our home front, Malaysia Airports and Tourism Malaysia have been working hand in gloves with international airlines and tour operators to increase connectivity and develop attractive holiday packages to Malaysia.

Their successful collaboration under the Joint International Development Tourism Programme (JITDP) last year saw them partnering with 11 airlines. They are namely Malaysia Airlines, AirAsia, Malindo Air, Qatar Airways, Korean Air, Turkish Airlines, Etihad Airways, Condor Airlines, China Southern Airlines, Scoot Air and Mahan Air, as told by Tourism Malaysia Director General Datuk Musa Yusof to Airlink.

The two refreshed their commitment with the signing of a memorandum of understanding for the JITDP in January with Malaysia Airports Group Chief Executive Officer Raja Azmi Raja Nazuddin and Tourism Malaysia Director General Datuk Musa Yusof as the signatories.

Airlines such as Air Busan, Condor Airlines and Air Arabia have benefited from the programme this year in terms of marketing development, inaugural launches of new routes, chartered flights and the promotion of high-yield niche tourism.

Existing and new airlines in the country have been encouraged to tap into JITDP's combined

fund of up to RM20 million from Tourism Malaysia and Malaysia Airports, where each party comes up with RM10 million to help the airlines in their marketing promotions.

Brushing aside the excuse of having no money or limited funds to do promotions, Datuk Musa in a recent engagement session with the local key tourism industry players, had suggested "smart partnership", citing its collaboration with Malaysia Airports in the JITDP.

The government, through the National Key Economic Area initiative, has provided for a total allocation of RM25 million to increase international arrivals and receipts although the JITDP agreement made between Malaysia Airports and Tourism Malaysia was for RM20 million, he explained.

"With the RM25 million allocation last year, we work with the big tour operators abroad and the destination management companies (DMCs) in Malaysia. This helped us bring in RM1.68 billion from the 152 programmes that were implemented.

"This year, we approached Malaysia Airports and they are pumping in RM10 million into our RM25 million fund to develop more tactical and price-driven packages with participating airlines."

Malaysia Airports' collaboration with Tourism Malaysia can also be seen at the major international tourism trade shows such as ITB Berlin, World Travel Market (WTM) London and the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) in Dubai where it joins the rest of the local delegation to promote Malaysia as a destination and to push for greater air accessibility.

Following the inking of a Memorandum of Understanding between the airport operator and Tourism Malaysia to promote, develop and increase inbound tourism globally, particularly from India, China and Europe, the two had to go through several steps before it could savour some of the fruits of its labour which both are reaping currently.

At Tourism Malaysia's recent announcement of Malaysia's first half performance 2019, Germany came in third among the top three countries with the highest average length of stay at 8.3 nights after Saudi Arabia (10.5 nights) and France (8.7 nights).

One of the contributing factors is Condor



Airlines' decision to start its thrice-weekly FrankfurtKL service in November 2018 using Airbus 330-200 that offers 850 seat capacity a week, which was finalised during WTM London in November 2017.

The following month, Tourism Malaysia signed a Memorandum of Marketing Collaboration with the airline at the latter's office in Frankfurt, which marked the start of their joint marketing initiative using the promotional fund set up between Tourism Malaysia and Malaysia Airports.

At ITB Berlin 2019 in March, where Malaysia was the official country partner, the three signed a Memorandum of Joint Collaboration for the summer season after the success of the airline's winter operations. Condor Airlines' twice-weekly service, using Boeing 767-300 configured with 235 seats, will be offering a total of 25,000 seats from May to October.

While Condor Airlines' entry offers the only direct service from Germany to Malaysia, another breakthrough achieved from the missions and strategic meetings by Malaysia Airports and Tourism Malaysia was when IndiGo started its Bengaluru and Delhi services to klia2 on 15 November 2018.

It is not only India's biggest and fastest growing airline but also the only Indian carrier flying into Malaysia. India was ranked sixth in the 1H19, contributing 354,486 to Malaysia's total of 13.35 million international tourists.

Malaysia Airports and Tourism Malaysia are also working closely in other areas. Heading the secretariat for the Committee on Data

Confirmation, the latter has been meeting monthly this year with representatives from Bank Negara, the Finance Ministry, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) to verify raw data collected by the Immigration Department and Department of Statistics Malaysia.

These data are then cross referenced with figures from Malaysia Airports, Malaysian Aviation Commission, Road Transport Department, Immigration Department's Visa section, Tourism Malaysia's Strategic Planning Division and other relevant sources such as EuroMonitor. The final monthly data approved by MOTAC will then be released to the public.

This will help the various industry players to plan more effectively as they prepare ahead for the Visit Truly Asia Malaysia 2020. Only the quarterly data will be presented to the Cabinet for approval before they are publicly released.

With the airlines such as Qatar Airways soon introducing more new services to Malaysia in October, Datuk Musa also asked the industry players, DMCs included, to think out of the box and not just limit themselves to the connection offered to Doha alone as the airline serves over 160 destinations worldwide.

With the Visit Truly Asia Malaysia 2020 campaign drawing nearer by the day, Malaysia Airports, which manages a total of 39 airports nationwide, will be playing an important role alongside Tourism Malaysia in welcoming the visitors and tourists alike into the country.

# AMAZING OCEANIA

## STUNNING REGION WITH GROWTH POTENTIAL FOR TOURISM & TRADE



**Spanning the eastern and western hemispheres, the Oceania region has a small land area of 8,525,989 sq km and a combined population of 40 million people, with Australia being the largest country.**

It falls into the category of long-haul market of more than six-hour flight time for Malaysia. Oceania is not just a key market for Malaysia in terms of tourism flow but also trade. The Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) views this geographic region, which includes Australasia, Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia, as a new emerging market for Malaysian exporters.

MATRADE recently organised an Export Acceleration Mission to New Zealand (NZ) and Fiji. Its Trade Commissioner based in Melbourne, Jamilah Ibrahim, who is responsible for Oceania, cited NZ and Fiji as the second and fourth largest trading partners for the region last year with total trade value of RM8.1 billion and RM325.4 million respectively.

Malaysian brands that have penetrated these two markets include Julie's, Hernan Food and Hup Seng.

Where tourism is concerned, the latest statistics from Tourism Malaysia and the Immigration Department of Malaysia showed that tourism arrivals from Oceania rose 5.7% to 205,291 during the first half of 2019 (1H19).

Australia, Oceania's most populous country, saw 6.3% growth in tourist arrivals to 177,623 for 1H19. While there was only 0.1% increase in tourist arrivals to 351,500 last year from Australia after several years of decline, Tourism Malaysia has set a target to receive 357,700 and 378,500 tourists for 2019 and 2020 respectively.

From January to June this year, the average length of stay (ALOS) from Australia fell 0.7% to 6.1 nights from 6.8 nights compared to the previous corresponding period.

Its average per diem expenditure grew 11.9% to RM718.4 for the first six months of 2019 while its average per capita was up 0.8% to RM4,400.9. Tourism receipts from the Australian tourists also increased by 7.2% to RM781.7 million during this period.

Noor Azlan Abu Bakar, Tourism Malaysia's International Promotion Division senior deputy director for Americas/Europe/Oceania,

attributed the higher figures to the increase in flight frequencies and strategic alliances with various tour operators and airlines.

"Tourism Malaysia will continue to build on these partnerships again this year through the joint promotions with the major tour operators and via the Joint International Development Tourism Programme (JITDP) with airlines," he told Airlink recently.

"We have been working very closely with Malaysia Airlines, Malindo Air and the AirAsia Group over the last few years to promote the Oceania market," Noor Azlan remarked.

Meanwhile, AirAsia X Malaysia CEO Benyamin Ismail has identified Australia to be among its key growth markets besides Northern Asia and India as the long-haul low-cost carrier enters the third and fourth quarter of 2019.

The long-haul brand rationalised its network over the first two quarters, which included the termination of its KL-Auckland service in February. Airlink was told that its flights into Australia operate at an average load factor of 82%. AirAsia X flies to Perth, Gold Coast, Sydney and Melbourne from KL.



**NOOR AZLAN BIN ABU BAKAR**  
Senior Deputy Director, International Promotion  
Division (American/Europe/Oceania)  
Tourism Malaysia

Malindo Air, which commenced its inaugural flight from KL to Sydney via Denpasar on 14 August, had indicated receiving strong load factor of 75% to 80% for its KL-Sydney service for its first two months.

All its Australian destinations, including Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth, use the Boeing 737-800 aircraft configured with 12 business and 150 economy class seats.

Malaysia Airlines also flies to the major Australian cities with the national carrier reinstating its KL-Brisbane sector in June 2018. The potential for passenger traffic growth is there with a number of Malaysians studying in Australia and our local businessmen having their investments here.

Australia was Malaysia's 11<sup>th</sup> largest overall global trading partner last year with total trade between both countries at RM55.13 billion.

International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Darell Leiking led a trade and investment mission to Australia in August to promote Malaysia as the gateway to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Noor Azlan said, "Another thing we can do is to bring the agents from Australia and NZ for educational trips. Periodically, we bring media from these two countries under our mega familiarisation tours."

Tourism Malaysia works with Australian top operators such as Adventure World, Asia Escape Holidays and Helloworld Travel. Flight Centre Tasmania, Australia's leading travel agent, recently held their out-of-the-country meeting in KL for five days for 200 of their production managers.

Tourism Malaysia Director General Datuk Musa Yusof remarked, "There is a need to focus on the business events market. Our collaborations with these operators are mainly joint promotions, more tactical and price driven."

Tourism Malaysia, which has overseas offices in Australia and NZ respectively (Sydney and Auckland), went on a road show recently to these two cities besides Perth and Melbourne over four days and received quite a good response.

According to Knight Frank's 13<sup>th</sup> edition of The Wealth Report 2019, these four cities see 20% to 25% percentage increase in their ultra-high net worth individuals for the period 2018-2023. These individuals usually have a net worth of over US\$30 million excluding their primary residence.

### New Zealand Market

NZ's relatively small but promising market, shares some similarities with the travelling pattern of Australian tourists to Malaysia with the majority of them here for holidays, enjoying sightseeing in the cities and shopping, according to Malaysia Tourists Profile 2018 By Selected Markets prepared by Tourism Malaysia's Strategic Planning Division.

They also love to experience Malaysian food and find the country value for money. Although NZ's 1H19 tourist arrivals showed a slight 0.1% dip to 24,358, Tourism Malaysia targets to receive higher tourist arrivals of 53,000 and 60,000 from NZ for 2019 and 2020 respectively, up from 50,698 in 2018.

The ALOS from New Zealanders for 2018 was 6.4 nights, down from seven nights in 2017. Currently, only Malaysia Airlines flies to NZ with seven direct flights a week to Auckland offering seat capacity totalling 2,009 per week.

In terms of international passenger movements from Australia and NZ, Malaysia Airports groups them under Southwest Pacific.

Comprising traffic from Adelaide, Auckland, Brisbane, Christmas Island, Darwin, Gold Coast, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney, they represented 5% of the market share out of the total international passenger movements of 51,588,818 for 2018.



# SANDAKAN

## GATEWAY TO BORNEO'S WILDLIFE

Formerly known as Elopura, which means "beautiful town", Sandakan was also once the capital of the British North Borneo. This active commercial and trading centre soon came to be called 'Little Hong Kong' due to the huge Chinese migration from Hong Kong during the colonial days.

Strategically facing the Sulu Sea, Sandakan, which means "the place that was pawned" in Sulu language, is Sabah's second largest town with an estimated population of about 409,056 after the state's capital city, Kota Kinabalu.

Sited on the East Coast of this East Malaysian state, the port town of Sandakan boasts of many unique eco-tourism and wildlife conservation products. They include its famous Turtle Islands Park, Labuk Bay Proboscis Monkey Sanctuary, Sepilok Orang Utan Rehabilitation Centre and the Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre (BSBCC), which are crowd pullers among foreign tourists.

Sabah Tourism Board Chairman Ken Pan Ying On, who spent some years growing up in Sandakan, cites wildlife as one of the main reasons tourists flock to Sandakan, especially to the Lower Kinabatangan River on river cruises.

Apart from snorkelling and enjoying the beaches, Pan describes island trips to Sandakan as "unique" as almost daily turtles come ashore to lay eggs at the Selingan Turtle Island. "The experience of witnessing this is quite spectacular," he remarks.

Sandakan is also a paradise for fresh seafood and one of the cheapest in Sabah. Its other specialities include seafood bak kut teh, lobster noodles and UFO tarts.

The Sabah state government has adopted various measures to ensure that Sandakan enjoys sustainable economic growth. It announced, for instance, last December plans to transform the Palm Oil Industrial Cluster area in Sandakan into a furniture manufacturing hub for Sabah.

Meanwhile, the federal government of Malaysia has approved 49 development projects in Sandakan worth RM2.28 billion, including the RM80 million upgrading of Sandakan Airport, to ensure its continuous development as a significant gateway.

In terms of transportation network, Sandakan's town centre is also well connected by roads to the other satellite towns such as Bandar Indah Jaya.

The Sandakan Municipal Council (SMC) is responsible for the construction of infrastructure, maintenance of public facilities and keeping the town clean, among other things. SMC President Datuk Peter Hu Chang Lik @ Hii Chang Lik, in an exclusive interview with Airlink, opens up on how he hopes to expand the local economy and revive Sandakan back to its glorious days.



**DATUK HU CHANG LIK @ HII CHANG LIK, J.P.**  
President  
Sandakan Municipal Council

### Please share how you wish to spearhead Sandakan's development plans and initiatives.

The Council, in collaboration with the government agencies, is developing Sim-Sim Village under the Sim-Sim Redevelopment Comprehensive Plan as a new tourism network or belt in Sandakan spanning from 2018 to 2030 that emphasizes on sustainable development.

This area was chosen due to its strategic location, rich culture and multiracial ethnicity, which can be experienced especially during festive seasons. Besides its proximity to the town, it is also close to Berhala Island and the Maritime Port, hence safe guarding its security concerns.

The water village will be a strategic development for Sandakan as we envisaged it to be a Sim-Sim Cultural Village in the near future.

### In your maiden speech as president in September 2018, you mentioned about tackling the cleanliness in Sandakan among other issues, and improving the town's beauty by "repainting every building in the area" with the latter proposal extended to the government for consideration. Was it accepted?

Yes, I try to ensure the town's cleanliness and beauty are top priorities if we want to attract more tourists to Sandakan. The Council has organised several mutual cooperation programmes which are participated by various government agencies, the private sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the locals in order to maintain the cleanliness in Sandakan. We hold at least two or three gotong-royong programmes monthly.

SMC implemented the "Ops Payung" programme on 1 July to instill awareness to the local community on maintaining cleanliness. Individuals found guilty of littering will be liable to a RM30 fine. Failing to pay the penalty, the offender will be directed to do social work such as sweeping the garbage for an hour by wearing a vest that reads, Kutu Sampah or Litter Bug.

The Council also takes the initiative to ensure that the buildings in Sandakan are in good condition and well maintained. Sabah's Local Government and Housing Ministry has advised the authorities to ensure that all buildings in urban areas be repainted by providing an incentive discount on house assessment to the owners who do so. SMC will make the necessary efforts to implement the state government's recommendations.

### Tell us more about SMC's Tourism Unit and its current responsibilities in steering Sandakan's tourism industry?

Established since 2000, the Tourism Unit is now headed by Irene Johnny. She runs the Secretariat for the Sandakan Tourism Action Committee and is responsible for providing reports and updates on the tourism products and attractions in Sandakan. The Tourism Unit coordinates and implements tourism programmes and promotions besides monitoring the preparation and maintenance of public facilities in tourist areas.

### What are the initiatives to improve Sandakan's tourism potential?

Among the initiatives is to have more direct flights from airlines such as Malindo Air and Royal Brunei Airlines into Sandakan. Another initiative is the federal government's proposal to upgrade Sandakan Airport to not only bring in more tourists but also serve as a catalyst for economic improvement and tourism development in Sandakan.

SMC works closely with Sabah Tourism, other government agencies, the private sector and NGOs to promote tourism in Sandakan. Among these collaborative initiatives throughout the year were the hosting of Sandakan Memorial Day on 15 August, Sandakan Festival from July to August, Agnes Keith Day (6 July) and Anzac Day (25 April).

### Any plans to tap into Visit Truly Asia Malaysia 2020 campaign for Sandakan?

The Council plans to hold Visit Sandakan Year 2020 and is proposing programmes such as Colours of Sandakan to promote its various cultures, and an exhibition with the Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents.

### What are some of the newer attractions in Sandakan that tourists must not miss?

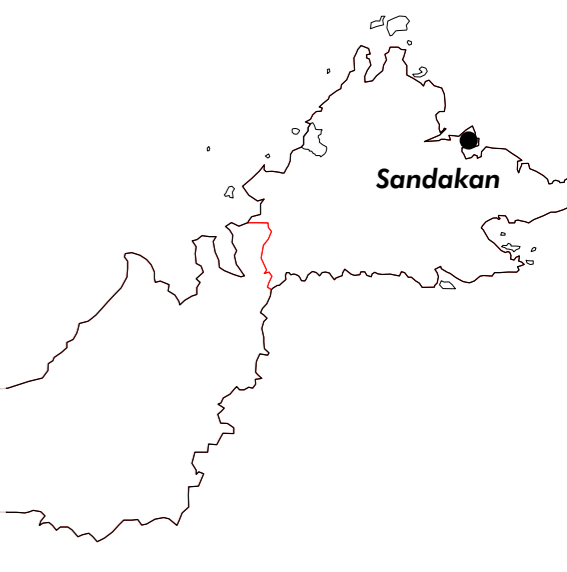
Berhala Island, which is famous for its white sandy beach. We are looking for a potential partner to develop it into a new tourism centre. Another attraction is the BSBCC, a rescue and rehabilitation facility for the Malayan sun bears. Opened to the public since 2014, visitors can learn and observe them in their natural habitat. They are the world's smallest bears and are only found in Southeast Asia.

Owing to the forest degradation and illegal hunting, its population has decreased drastically. The facility has large forest enclosures to provide a natural environment suited to their needs and welfare and to facilitate their rehabilitation back into the wild.

Besides that, Sandakan has ten historical attractions under its Heritage Trail such as Masjid Jamek, the Goddess of Mercy Chinese Temple, St Michael's and All Angels Church, Malaysia Fountain, the Sandakan Heritage Museum and William Pryer Monument.

### How do you envision Sandakan five years from now?

Given its infrastructure development, I hope to see an efficient and comfortable airport that can receive more direct flights from other countries to further boost its tourism industry. With Sandakan being upgraded to city status, I envisaged it to become a sustainable city that will be able to create more job opportunities for our youth while at the same time maintaining its true beauty of nature.



# Four “S” for Sandakan Tourism

Key to the development of a tourism destination is the close partnership between the public and the private sector. The same is true of Sandakan's tourism industry where the role of the private sector and non-governmental organisations such as the Sandakan Tourism Association (STAN) are recognised as equally vital for its survival and continued growth as a sustainable tourist destination.

Formed since 2015, STAN comprises hoteliers, tour and lodge operators, tour guides, restaurant owners, event planners and other tourism related companies.

It has a four “S” campaign with the first S being the Star wildlife attractions of Sandakan followed by the Stories of this historical town, its Seafood and lastly the Sea as Sandakan is also known for having some of the most beautiful islands and embraces nature conservation as well.

Airlink had the opportunity to touch base with STAN President Teo Chee Kim and some of its members. Teo was recently appointed special officer to Sandakan's newly elected Member of Parliament (MP) Vivian Wong Shir Yee. He is also the managing director of Inspirasi Borneo Sdn Bhd, an event and destination management company.

Below are the replies from Teo to our questions on his outlook of Sandakan's tourism industry.

## How do you see Sandakan's tourism growth in 2019 and beyond?

We are cautiously optimistic. Having seen the growing numbers of passengers passing through Sandakan Airport since 2016, we expect to see the industry back on course to achieve growth after the decline in passenger movements in 2014 and 2015.

## What would you describe to be Sandakan's tourism assets?

Top on the list are nature and adventure as Sandakan is the gateway to Borneo's wildlife. All the unique flora and fauna of Borneo –

orang utan, proboscis monkey, Bornean sun bear, pygmy elephant, turtle etc - can all be found here and what is more exciting is you can observe them in their natural habitats when you visit Sandakan.

Its other asset is food as Sandakan is known as the “seafood capital” of Malaysia. The seafood comes in fresh and are affordably priced! Complement that with some of our unique eats like the UFO tarts, fresh ingredients from the farm and fusion style of cooking, we have a killer combo here.

Our next asset is heritage. As the former capital of British North Borneo, stories and relics of the bygone era still abound in Sandakan. Heritage sites such as St Michael's and All Angels Church, Sam Sing Kung Temple, Agnes Keith's House and the Sandakan Memorial Park offer a glimpse of how life was in the colonial days.



One of our members, Borneo Sandakan Tour, recently started a free guided walking tour to allow visitors to explore the stories, cultural heritage and history of Sandakan on Wednesdays and Fridays from 10am to noon.

## What are the major issues and concerns affecting its tourism industry?

Like it or not, travel advisory will continue to be an issue even when incidents that happen are nowhere near Sandakan. We have, through our MP, engaged with various ministries and agencies to correct the safety perception, which often times, has been blown out of

proportion by the media. We hope to alleviate this concern in the near future. With insufficient marketing and promotion, we certainly need more destination specific type of promotion to market Sandakan beyond our current market in order to reach a wider audience worldwide. We need to tell interesting stories about Sandakan, use the right imageries and ensure the right people see them. Europe and East Asia are two very different markets. Hence, we need to adopt different strategies when promoting to these two disparate markets.

There is a lack of direct flights to Sandakan. Currently, we have direct links to Kuala Lumpur (KL), Kota Kinabalu (KK), Tawau, Lahad Datu and Kudat. Foreign tourists have to transit via KL or KK in order to get to Sandakan. This inevitably involves spending more time and money on your travel. We are working closely with Malaysia Airports to realise more direct routes to and from Sandakan in order to boost the tourism industry.

## Sabah Deputy Chief Minister-cum-Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment Datuk Christina Liew talks about creating hotspots in focus areas like Sandakan, which have the potential to draw tourists to spur the state's tourism sector. How is it succeeding in Sandakan?

We are glad she is encouraging more tourism activities beyond KK to towns like Sandakan and Tawau, which will benefit Sabah.

Sandakan's offerings are different from that of KK but yet they complement each other to make Sabah a truly unique destination. By promoting focus areas away from the west coast of the state, we are in fact realising Sabah's full tourism potential.

Under the ministry's guidance, STAN is collaborating with Sabah Tourism Board on a few fronts. They include the second edition of our tourist guide map and the launch of our Sandakan's essential guide in September. We believe this will assist Sandakan's tourism industry to grow even further.



**TEO CHEE KIM**  
President

Sandakan Tourism Association

## According to her, Sandakan is supposed to be prepared for a “busy” year ahead. How are your association members helping to make this happen?

STAN has been busy preparing for our second Sandakan Food & Agriculture Festival, where the best of Sandakan eats are showcased over three days from 13-15 September. We intend to grow this celebration of our food-loving culture to be a signature annual event.

We are working closely with the Sabah Tourism Board and other tourism stakeholders to come up with a Sandakan annual event calendar, where we will have at least one major event each month. This will form part of our association's promotional efforts. We are also targeting beyond just the leisure tourists by collaborating with various associations and clubs to bring their national and regional conferences to Sandakan. Since there are many active associations and NGOs in Sandakan, we believe this is something we can build on.

## Besides China, the minister also mentioned about diversifying into other markets such as Europe, America, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Korea. What are STAN's comments on this?

Our top tourist arrivals to Sandakan are from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Holland, Germany, France and Australia. Unlike KK or Semporna, China has never been the main market for us. In fact, we are trying to break into the East Asian market, which includes China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan, in order to have a more diversified market.

## Does Sandakan have ample rooms to meet the tourist influx? What is the current hotel room supply like? Will its future supply be able to meet the demand and challenges of the industry?

The average occupancy rate achieved by our members' hotels was only 35%-40% occupancy in 2018. Sandakan has more than ample rooms for tourists. What we lack is a five-star international chain hotel.

## Tourist arrivals from KK to Sandakan was gaining momentum. The removal of this route operated by MASwings at the onset of 2019 is said to have impacted Sandakan's development as an eco-tourism destination. What is STAN's stance on this?

The withdrawal of MASwings resulted in the reduction of about 210 seats per direction between KK and Sandakan daily or 1,470 seats per direction weekly. With AirAsia increasing the number of seats for this route by about 1,800 seats per direction weekly, the overall number of seats has actually increased slightly.

The real issues now are the timing of the flights and non-availability of the inter-line connections previously provided by MASwings. These have caused inconveniences to tourists from Europe and Australia travelling to Sandakan.

## There were a number of chartered flights to Sandakan last year. Where were these tourists mainly from? Can we expect to see this trend continuing?

We received a few chartered flights last year from Taipei during the Chinese New Year festive period. From Bali, the chartered flight was part of a world tour offered by a European travel company. We hope this trend will continue, especially from destinations such as Taiwan and China.



# Sandakan Airport – Sophisticated Gateway to Nature's Bounty



Sited about 14km west of downtown Sandakan, Sandakan Airport has been recognised as a major gateway to numerous eco-tourism destinations within Sabah in recent years. Besides the Sepilok OrangUtan Rehabilitation Centre, other top attractions located near this domestic airport are the Gomantong Caves, Kinabatangan River, Labuk Bay Proboscis Monkey Sanctuary, Turtle Island and the canopy walk at Rainforest Directory Centre.

Sandakan Airport had a total of 11,561 commercial aircraft movements last year compared to 9,901 in 2017, according to Malaysia Airports.

Malindo Air's recent launch of its four times weekly flights from Kota Kinabalu (KK) to Sandakan using Boeing 737-800, offering 12 Business Class and 150 Economy Class seats, was the latest to join Malaysia Airlines, MASwings and AirAsia at Sandakan Airport.

Besides KK and KL, other domestic destinations served by Sandakan Airport are Lahad Datu, Tawau and Kudat. With Malindo Air's latest route, it now has 186 weekly flight frequencies, with its peak hours from 12.30pm to 2pm.

Its passenger movements have been growing steadily from 618,927 in 2008 to 950,861 in 2018.

The airport has gone through several upgrading exercises since it was built in 1941. Interestingly, it was formerly a military airstrip during World War II (WWII).

Historical records at the Sandakan Memorial Park showed that British and Australian prisoners of war (POWs), "were brought to Sandakan to build an airfield which would be important to the Japanese air force as a refueling point".

According to an information board at the memorial park, "About 4,000 Javanese labourers worked on another part of the airfield". While the POWs were said to slow down the airfield's construction, two airstrips were eventually lengthened to 1,500 and 1,700 metres and used by Japanese aircraft.

The POWs repaired the airstrips when the Allied air raids started in September 1944. Eventually, in early 1945, work on the airstrip was abandoned.

Fast forward to the present, Sandakan Airport currently has five apron bays, of which two cater for the narrow-bodied aircraft while the rest are for the ATRs.

The 44-year-old Airport Manager of Sandakan Airport Haji Suhaimi Abdul Sani, who hails from Melaka, has to-date spent 25 years of his career with Malaysia Airports. He gave some insights into Sandakan Airport's early beginnings, the expansion of its facilities and its growth over the years.

## Please share some historical background about this airport.

Sandakan Airport was officially opened after WWII between 1945 and 1947 with a runway length of 1,067 metres. Borneo Airlines was the pioneer carrier using single twin-engines aircraft.

The airport had a new terminal built in 1958. In 1978, it expanded its runway to 1,372 metres. That same year, Malaysia Airlines started its operation here using the Fokker F27 and Britten-Norman BN2 Islander aircraft.

November 1981 saw Sandakan Airport upgrading its terminal, runway and other related facilities. Upon its completion in 1985, the runway was 2,132 metres long.

The last upgrading, which included the provision of two aerobridges, was done in May 2013 to enable the airport terminal to cater to 1.5 million passengers per annum (mppa). For its upcoming expansion, Sandakan Airport's runway is forecasted to be increased to 2,500 metres.

## Has Sandakan Airport reached its maximum capacity?

No. We achieved 950,861 passengers last year. Our target is to reach 1.5 mppa by 2023 based on the positive movements of both passengers and airlines. We forecast passenger traffic to grow around 8% to 12% a year after the runway's expansion.

## Passenger movements to Sandakan Airport have been increasing for the past few years. What were the reasons for its 6.1% growth in 2018?

Our collaboration with Sabah Tourism Board and non-governmental organisations such as Sandakan Tourism Association to create awareness programmes to promote Sandakan's tourism products for both the domestic or international tourists was one of the contributing factors.

Besides the uniqueness of Sandakan's eco-tourism products, Sandakan Airport's connectivity to the other regions in Sabah also helped in its passenger traffic growth last year. Another reason was the increased in frequencies from AirAsia and Malaysia Airlines.

Encouraging response towards the addition of the new 14 times weekly Sandakan-Lahad Datu route by MASwings in May this year with its all-in one-way RM68 fare valid until December has also boosted passengers' growth.

## Tell us more about the future expansion plans for this domestic airport.

Based on our masterplan, we need to expand its terminal six years' ahead of time, that is by 2025. Besides focusing on its runway expansion that will be able to cater to the medium-haul destinations that operate within five hours of flying time, we are also upgrading the airport's apron bays.

Its existing apron bays for the ATRs will be expanded to accommodate more narrow-bodied aircraft. Additionally, we will create another narrow taxiway for smoother and faster aircraft traffic flow.

## What kind of improvements can we expect at the airport? How much has been allocated for its expansion?

Our next initiative would be to enhance its landscape as we want to transform it to become a 'mini city' and plan to have facilities for sports and recreations. Malaysia Airports has allocated RM8.6 million under capital expenditure this year to refurbish its cargo building, surau and acquire a new x-ray machine.

The amount will be used, among other things, to relocate our information counter to new location for better accessibility. Plans are also afoot to have more shop lots in the retail area for an enhanced shopping experience.

Additionally, the rehabilitation of certain critical areas of the runway and other works will be looked into in September. Our focus is to improve our facilities and customers' overall experience.

## Can we expect to see other airlines fly to Sandakan in the near future?

Following Malindo Air's inaugural flight from KK-Sandakan on 18 August, the next airline that will be flying into Sandakan Airport is Royal Brunei Airlines which announced recently



**HAJI SUHAIMI ABDUL SANI**  
Airport Manager  
Sandakan Airport

its first international service from Bandar Seri Begawan to Sandakan from mid-October. Royal Brunei will utilise the all-economy turboprop ATR 72-600 aircraft for this sector.

Meanwhile, we will do our level best to promote Sandakan to other airlines with opportunities to link us with Australia, Singapore and the Philippines.

## How do you envision Sandakan Airport's future growth?

Sandakan has huge potential for growth in terms of domestic passenger traffic and even international. We target to achieve one million passengers this year based on positive indicators received from year-to-year since 2013.

Barring unforeseen circumstances, I believe Sandakan Airport can reach two million passenger movements by 2025 with all these improvements being made, which include the expansion of its terminal building, apron, runway and taxiways.

# Terengganu,

## OLD WORLD CHARM FOR THE NEW WORLD

There has been much excitement and anticipation for Visit Truly Asia Malaysia 2020, which targets to bring in over 30 million international tourists and approximately RM100 billion in tourist receipts. On the lead up to this, the Director General of Tourism Malaysia, Datuk Musa Yusof led the travel roadshow to three major cities in Australia, and among the major players and sponsors was Tourism Terengganu.

Among the multitude of tourist attractions highlighted at the roadshow, Terengganu's idyllic islands such as Lang Tengah Island and pristine nature spots such as Kenyir Lake as well as cultural destinations such as Terrapuri Heritage Village and Warisan Sari Tok Jembal took their share of the spotlight in seducing foreign tourists to come to Malaysian shores. According to Tourism Malaysia, Terengganu is regarded as having, "a diverse and vibrant mix of history, culture, nature and eco experiences" as well as being, "world renowned for its turtle sanctuaries and pristine, white sandy beaches and islands". It is certainly safe to say that Terengganu possesses many treasures renowned or hidden that will leave a lasting impression.

Additionally, earlier in March 2019, Tourism Malaysia partnered with Terengganu

Tourism in fully capitalising on the social media platform to promote Terengganu. 'Ekspressi Media – Kenyir 2019', as it was called included elements of sightseeing and product inspections, hands-on experiences and product briefings by professionals in the industry to provide a well-rounded experience of Terengganu.

According to state tourism statistics, this form of aggressive advertising is just what this region needs. Last year, Terengganu recorded 4.79 million tourist arrivals out of the 25.8 million nationwide, and now the state government is aiming to reach the next milestone by 2025 - targeting 6.5 million tourist arrivals with a projected revenue of RM6 billion by 2025. In order to achieve this target, Tourism Terengganu has prepared a landmark campaign called the 'Tourism Terengganu Strategic Plan 2019-2023'. This plan emphasises on creating various promotional strategies through conventional and online media platforms, empowering and enhancing staff knowledge particularly on the tourism sector and instill a well-organised tourism and cultural activities along with proper mitigation plan. The main idea is to preserve and conserve a new and existing tourism product to be placed in the eye of the world.

At least for the current year of 2019, the state tourism board is looking to achieve a target

of 5 million tourists, with a windfall from the domestic tourism segment vis-à-vis the hosting of some large scale events such as the Kenyir Festival at Kenyir Lake, Terengganu Beach Carnival at Batu Burok Beach and Cultural Week in several districts around Terengganu between July to September.

Right at the helm, spearheading this team is the new Director of State Tourism Department Ab. Rasid bin Jusoh that has recently succeeded the former Tourism Director, Tun Ahmad Faisal Tun Abdul Razak since January 2019. Eager to hear about how he is going to propel Malaysia's national treasure to global fame, Airlink sat down for an interview in search of a closer glimpse of his vision for Terengganu's tourism industry.

**Recently, Terengganu Tourism was represented at World Travel Market in London in 2018 and at the Travel Roadshow in Sydney and Melbourne in Australia in April 2019. What is your strategy and which attractions in Terengganu that you think appeal to foreigners?**

First and foremost, Terengganu is not just full of natural wonders, but it is also filled with hidden gems waiting to be revealed to tourists. The great thing is that Terengganu has not been gentrified and commercialised so there are many off-the-beaten path

attractions that one can only find out about when they are here.

Hence, we have worked hard to strategise an effective branding plan to display as much of these attractions via the 'Beautiful Terengganu Malaysia' plan. Through this branding campaign we hope to convey the message that Terengganu is the jewel of Malaysia in every sense of the word.

On the other hand, what I believe is unique with our

approach to tourism is that we possess a multitude of various forms of tourism that can attract all types of tourists. These include: (1) Ecotourism; (2) Agrotourism; (3) Islamic Tourism; (4) Cultural Tourism; (5) Education Tourism; (6) Sports Tourism; and (7) Health Tourism.

In general, Terengganu is well known for its idyllic islands such as Redang and Perhentian Island, perfected by its crystal clear waters. It is a paradise that is not located too far away from the city; anyone looking to escape from their hectic work life will find themselves in blissful escapade.

**What are the important tourist source markets for Terengganu?**

In the recent years, there have been several markets that have been emerging. The consensus is that China, Singapore, the United Kingdom and Australia are key market sources for foreign tourists in Terengganu. Additionally, other regions are also showing positive developments in their sentiments towards this region. Our hopes are high for these numbers to increase exponentially as Tourism Malaysia launches Visit Truly Asia Malaysia 2020.

**Terengganu is well renowned for its turtle sanctuaries, pristine white sandy beaches and idyllic islands. What are the steps being taken to conserve and sustain these treasures?**

A steering committee has been set up to conduct regular and frequent meetings, where pressing issues are put forward and the council deliberates in order to address these issues with other related

parties to ensure these treasures are well-kept, maintained and conserved. For example, this committee works together with the locals in protecting the Green Turtle population by reporting the whereabouts of their nests along the beaches, and shielding them from potential harm from poachers. In addition, our state is enforcing laws against the sale and distribution of turtle eggs and anyone caught selling eggs stolen from turtles in Terengganu will be met with heavy penalties.

On the other hand, the state tourism board works closely with other Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the tourism industry in boosting up the tourism sector to be as competitive with the other states.

It is safe to say that conservation efforts places these tourism assets in safe hands. In the case of turtle conservation, we hope that the Leatherback Turtle will one day return to our shores.

**What are the sorts of changes that you are envisioning for Terengganu and how are you working to achieve this?**

Our dream is to turn Terengganu into a tourism-based state in Malaysia. For us, the positive implications for the socio-economy to which a tourism-based state is extremely important to us and is what we strive for. Hence, we have been gradually implementing our 'Tourism Terengganu Strategic Plan 2019-2023' in order to realise this.

**On 11 July 2019, the Terengganu Tourism Department announced the Tourism Strategic Plan 2019-2023 to achieve 6.5 million tourist arrivals by 2025. Please tell us more about this initiative.**

Our outline of the 'Tourism Terengganu Strategic Plan 2019-2023' is as follows:

- Showcasing Terengganu's culture, arts & heritage
- Diversifying tourism attractions, mode of transportation and tourism packages
- Upgrading infrastructures & facilities for tourists
- Initiating promotional activities for tourism products and destinations to be more focussed, integrated and continuous through effective rebranding to cater to the domestic & international markets
- Organising quality cultural and tourism events regularly



**ABDUL RASID BIN JUSOH**  
Director  
Terengganu Tourism Department

- Strengthening human resources to ensure the delivery of quality service to tourists so that they have a memorable stay in Terengganu

**What is your current approach with tourism partners e.g. Tourism Malaysia or the airlines that will contribute to the increase of tourism numbers in Terengganu?**

Currently, we are working very closely with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts & Culture (MOTAC) as well as Tourism Malaysia. In addition, we have a good rapport with other State Tourism Organisations (STOs). For example, with Tourism Productivity Nexus (TPN), we are in the midst of developing an understanding to develop the East Coast Tourism Corridor (ECTC) with the collaboration between the four key states that comprise this region: Terengganu, Kelantan, Pahang and Johor.

Moreover, we are also in frequent discussion with airlines such as AirAsia to augment Terengganu's connectivity by establishing new routes to Sultan Mahmud Airport (TGG). We have our fingers crossed that at least two new routes to Terengganu will be opened

Essentially, we are working together to establish a cohesive and effective strategy with all major tourism players in Terengganu including the airport operations team, as well as the tour guide association, as it is the tour guides that know all the history as well as all the hidden gems in the region at the deepest level.



# Reshaping the Tour Guide's Landscape

Encik Mohammad Nor, the current Chairman of the Terengganu Tourist Guide Association (TGGA) who's been at the helm since September 2016 is a man on a mission to change the local tour guide industry in Terengganu. Having previously worked in Kuala Lumpur as a civil servant, he returned to Terengganu to pursue his passion in the tour guide industry; his zeal for the historical and cultural treasures of his hometown is second to none.

A tour guide leads tourists to various landmarks and attractions while explaining the culture and history that underpin the significance behind them. Tour guides play a major role in the tourism industry since tourists need to have a clear picture of the country and its offerings, laws, rules and regulations. Additionally, guides ought to have the ability to turn a tourist visit into a memorable experience.

In Terengganu, Encik Mohammad Nor was quick to point out some of the famous places to eat Terengganu's famous nasi dagang and satar. One of the places that the Chairman of the TGGA was happy to show us was a restaurant called AZ Selera Timur that served great nasi dagang. Nasi dagang is a delicious and wholesome meal, the dish consists of rice, served with gulai ikan tongkol and lightly pickled vegetables. Interestingly, the rice is a mixture of regular rice and glutinous rice.

During our meal he explained to us there are many challenges of the tour guide industry in Terengganu that he is striving to address. It was revealed that many tour guides in general have low education and training, and thus exhibit a lower service quality. Furthermore, the guides' behaviour may negatively impact on the industry's sustainability by forcing tourists to buy things or attend activities at their own expenses. This also includes relying on cliched introductions to the sights, demonstrating insufficient knowledge about tourism products, services, and access routes; not being proficient in English; charging and

demanding tips; harassment of tourists and bad work ethics.

These are just among the challenges that the local tour guides face. So Airlink arranged an interview to pick the Chairman's brain on his approach to tackling these issues.

## Please tell us more about the history and significance of TGGA and your term as Chairman.

The Terengganu Tourist Guide Association (TGGA) was founded in 2008 in humble beginnings, when we were a fledgling organisation, we had to occupy a space in another office as our numbers were very small. I became the Chairman of the council as a result of 2016's annual general meeting and I have managed to retain my position since then.

In that same year, TGGA pushed for the 'khidmat tour guide', which is a set of guidelines that tour guides have to adhere to in order to provide high quality tour services to tourists. In order to ensure that our tour guides had the necessary skills to adhere to these guidelines, they have to undergo vocational training. This includes, knowledge of history, speech delivery, and nurturing interest. Currently, I have been spearheading these training programmes and so far I have yielded good results from my students.

In general, tour guides contend with multiple issues and problems including unfair competition with unlicensed tour guides, less respect and recognition from the society and trade, low remuneration, and lack of job security caused by seasonal fluctuations in tourist arrivals in Terengganu.

Currently, in Malaysia there is no major requirement in order to become a tour guide, since only a license is required. However, there are essential skills required: firstly, tour guides meet with tourists from all over the world, so tour guides are required to be reasonably proficient in English. Secondly, tour guides need to exhibit welcoming and positive attitude when they guide tourists. What it does is show good morale not only for the tour guide himself, but for the company he represents as well as Malaysia as a whole. What this means is that they also act as an unofficial spokesperson for the country; how a tour guide treats tourists in a way that reflects what Malaysians generally are like. For example, the famous expression – Malaysian Hospitality.

Lastly, TGGA has implemented mandatory guidelines for tour guides to have good knowledge of the historical sites that they take tourists to, this can include history, politics, the educational system, developments and of course, the local food delicacies.



**MOHAMMAD NOR BIN HJ ISMAIL**  
Chairman

Terengganu Tourist Guide Association

## What have you achieved under your term?

Since being Chairman in 2016, I've been striving to bring about many different changes to TGGA. The tour guide guidelines as mentioned, have lifted up the living standards as well as the significance of tour guides in Terengganu. Before my appointment, the local tour guides' historical and cultural knowledge have been found wanting. For example, many tour guides are still unaware of the fact that Terengganu Batik originated from this region in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

On the other hand, I'm proud that TGGA has finally found a home. We have established our own office in Dataran Shahbandar in Kuala Terengganu; although it's not very big, there is enough space for us to park our buses. At the moment, the space accommodates to our needs very well and it serves its purpose.

## What has been the overall feedback on the tour guides in Terengganu?

So far, the feedback of our tour guides from local and foreign tourists have been very positive. At the moment, we have 57 tour guides that belong to our association and they all have good knowledge and professional work ethic.

## How do you envision TGGA in the next few years?

At the moment, there are institutions that provide tour guide training in Kuala Lumpur and Johor, however they are quite expensive and far away for our local tour guides. Thus, what I want to push for a tour guide training institute to be established in Terengganu.

If God willing for me to continue to be Chairman next year, I also want to increase job opportunities for being a tour guide as well as strengthen rapport between all the local tour agencies here. By increasing cooperation between all relevant parties, we can uplift the quality of tourism here, ultimately boosting our state's tourism and the country as a whole.

## Tell us which are the latest tourism hot spots in Terengganu you are promoting this year?

At the moment, we are very excited about the new Terengganu Drawbridge that is opening very soon. It is the first of its kind in Southeast Asia and likens to Tower Bridge in London, England. Not only is it a great addition to the many attractions to Terengganu, but it also presents more diversity and development to a town that is generally considered to be in the rural backwaters of Malaysia.

Besides this, Terengganu has two main types of attractions: historical and natural. Historical destinations include the White Mosque, Chinatown, the State Museum, the Crystal Mosque, and the Islamic Civilisation Park. On the other hand, the natural destinations include Redang Island, Perhentian Island, the Kenyir Dam, Penarik Beach, Rantau Abang and the Turtle and Elephant Conservation Centres.

## What interests you the most about Terengganu?

Personally, I prefer the cultural and heritage element of Terengganu, due to my passion for its local history. For example, I particularly enjoy explaining the lineage of the Terengganu Sultans as well as the history of when the Kingdom of Terengganu was a maritime civilisation as confirmed by the Portuguese Explorer Ferdinand Magellan when he visited the Malayan Archipelago in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.



# Sultan Mahmud Airport – An Arm's Reach To The Next Milestone



Previously known as 'Lapangan Terbang Telaga Batin', the upgrading project took place in 2005 and was completed in 2008 under the new name Sultan Mahmud Airport (TGG). It was named after the 16th Sultan of Terengganu, Almarhum Sultan Mahmud Al-Muktafi Billah Shah Ibni Almarhum Sultan Ismail Nasiruddin Shah that ruled between 1979 to 1998.

Over RM200 million was assigned to upgrade the airport; the funding was used to extend the runway and upgrade the terminal of the airport as well as the architecture of the façade. The airport that now boasts a stunning exterior that is an ode to the Terengganu palaces of old is designed to handle 2 million passengers every year. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of October 2008, the airport made history by receiving the first Boeing 747-400. The airport also possesses the necessary facilities for international operations and accommodates flights to Jeddah and Medina for pilgrims every year.

There is an indication for better times to come for TGG. Last year, the airport received a whopping 47.1% increase in cargo volumes, rising from 247 to 363 metric tonnes. On the other hand, it was in 2017

that TGG set an all-time high record of 944,000 passengers per annum. However, last year passenger numbers dropped marginally into 894,000, dropping by 5.2%.

Hailing from Kota Bharu, Encik Che Sulaiman is the Airport Manager in charge in spearheading TGG to new milestones. He began his career in Malaysia Airports as an electrical engineer in 1998 in Kuala Lumpur, after which he was transferred to Penang International Airport in 2002 and continued his existing role until 2008. His career took a turn for the better when he was promoted to Operations Manager from 2008 to 2013 back in Kuala Lumpur. It was in 2014, that he was transferred yet again to Sandakan Airport where he served until 2017 as Airport Manager and finally, he was posted to Terengganu where he has tirelessly worked to uplift TGG into the next level.

Airlink was keen to find out how the airport manager is spearheading the next few initiatives in reaching that elusive one million mark and talks to us about his dream for TGG.

**Statistics from Malaysia Airports has shown that despite the drop in -5.2% in passengers per annum for 2018, the numbers have increased from 550,000 to 900,000 since 2012. What was the driving force behind this admirable feat?**

I believe one of the factors is due to Terengganu's main attraction that continue to be of great popularity to foreign tourists, such as Redang Island and Perhentian Island. Although most tourists do reach Perhentian Island via Kota Bharu Airport, there are plans in the pipelines to increase connectivity that will eventually reduce the traveling time to this island. And of course, the Terengganu State Tourism has done a spectacular job at collaborating with other parties in promoting the attractions here.

Terengganu does suffer from seasonal fluctuations especially during the monsoon seasons. During these times, passenger volumes are significantly lower as the islands are closed. However, in the past few years, numbers have generally been on the rise as there are more tourists coming in to enjoy places such as our beaches and the cultural heritage that are available throughout the year in Terengganu.

On the other hand, during the pilgrimage season, TGG hosts international flights for Hajj and Umrah pilgrims to Jeddah and Medina. We are proud to say that TGG boasts all the necessary facilities such as an International Departures & Arrival Hall and extended runway length to accommodate international long-haul flights. For example, in 2017, Malaysia Airlines conducted six chartered flights to these Middle Eastern destinations with the Airbus 330 planes.

In 2012, Saudi Arabian Airlines used to operate Umrah chartered flights between Kuala Terengganu and Jeddah. It was the airline's first destination in Malaysia outside of Kuala Lumpur back then and they operated with the Boeing 747s. Unfortunately, they have since terminated their operations from TGG. Nonetheless, TGG is still the hub point for the east coast of Malaysia's Umrah market and we have high hopes for other airlines to serve these markets in the future.

**What is your strategy to push past the one million mark for 2019?**

At the moment, TGG is serving four local airlines: Malaysia Airlines, Malindo Air, Firefly and AirAsia.

Currently, total daily aircraft movements have risen to somewhere between 32 to 34 flights a day. If we are able to maintain these number of flights throughout the year despite seasonal fluctuations, I believe the one million mark is within arm's reach.

Secondly, there is a need for further collaboration between the State Government and airlines, in order to form a feasible promotional campaign as well as in consideration for more strategic flights to bring in more tourists into Terengganu. At the moment, I am delighted to say that there are talks between the State Government and our management team in opening a new route between Terengganu and another state in Peninsular Malaysia as well as to bring in charter flights from China.

Thirdly, I believe that the Umrah market has not been fully capitalised by the airlines. If more chartered flights were to be planned for the Islamic pilgrims, I believe TGG will see more development in the upcoming years. On the other hand, the airport operations team is working on minor upgrades to the facilities in the airport to enrich traveller

experience in three gradual phases. Additionally, we have plans to upgrade WiFi services, and this will be implemented soon, as we are in the midst of finalising the vendor for this initiative.

And lastly, as the airport's architecture is associated with the local heritage in Terengganu, it is essential that we maintain the existing facade as well as ensuring that all interior installations are well-maintained.

**Cargo volume reached an all-time high of 363 metric tonnes last year. What was the cause behind this phenomenon and will it continue to increase in the coming years?**

We were very delighted to record this spike in cargo volume last year as it has been the highest we have ever had. Most of the cargo comprised of E-commerce products attributed to the sharp increase in online consumer behaviour of the locals here. In order to further increase cargo and logistics traffic, we hope that more players in this department can consider TGG as a local logistics hub.

**How many domestic destinations does TGG currently serve?**

At the moment, TGG is connected to the country's capital via three points, KLIA, klia2 and Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport (Subang). However, as I have previously mentioned, there are plans to further increase TGG's connectivity in Peninsular Malaysia as well as to Saudi Arabia & China.

**Can we expect to see TGG experience the arrival of any international airlines in the future?**

The proposals have been put forward to resume international flights to and from Terengganu besides the chartered flights for the Umrah market. Recently, delegates from the provinces of Guangzhou, Xiamen and Shenzhen in China visited Terengganu to see the attractions in consideration for the holiday packages that can be offered to the Chinese market.

Although this does not indicate any further plans for international routes, we must begin from somewhere. The more Terengganu is exposed to the Chinese market, the more they will be attracted to visit some of the most beautiful sites the region has to offer.



**HJ. CHE SULAIMAN BIN CHE PA**  
Airport Manager  
Sultan Mahmud Airport

**What do you envision to achieve in your time as Airport Manager?**

TGG was utilised as a training hub for pilots; however in 2015, KISTAA ceased their operations due to economic circumstances. Currently, demands for pilots are on the increase; we have received proposals to start a pilot academy again. Some of the academies interested are HMA, PVVN, JATOVA and AATA.

Secondly, the state government has land reserved for the airport to provide services for maintenance, repair and overhaul. I believe TGG would be a fitting place to offer these facilities.

These are among the milestones that I want to attain in my time as the airport manager of TGG. For me, the most significant achievement would be to bring life again into the quiet walls of the international departure and arrival halls. That would be a dream come true.

**Where do you go for your holidays?**

I usually head to my hometown of Kota Bharu to visit my family, and I also prefer to take a trip to Kuala Lumpur. I love to enjoy the beautiful natural beauty of Redang Island when I go there for work purposes since Redang STOLport is under the supervision of Sultan Mahmud Airport.

# KLIA – Reimagining the Passenger Experience

**Thanks to factors such as affordability, the spending power of the growing middle class, social media and the exponential rise in romantic consumerism, travelling abroad has been rapidly increasing. Indeed, in Southeast Asia, we are travelling more than ever before.**

According to the operational statistics of KL International Airport (KLIA), the airport has served close to 60 million passengers in 2018. That is equivalent to an increase of over 200% since 2008, with volume continuing to increase every year. In the advent of this phenomenon, are our airports delivering well for passenger experience?

According to research conducted in the United Kingdom, 19% of British passengers find that being at airports is stressful. Another research by McKinsey & Company identified that the number one complaint by passengers is that they “have to wait with nothing to do” at the airport. Other complaints include difficulty navigating the airport, unfriendly security personnel, lengthy security screening process and difficulty finding ground transportation after arrival.

One of the ways that airports can tackle this is to ensure basic levels of comfort for passengers enabling them to feel more at ease. Airports also need to consider thinking about the passenger's overall journey, taking into account various options to make their journey through the terminal as seamless and ‘painless’ as possible. In KLIA, ‘Rest N Go’ stations dot the floors of the large terminal, strategically placed in floors where passengers spend time waiting.

In efforts to improve their end-to-end service for medical tourists, the Malaysia Healthcare Tourism Council (MHTC) has set up a ‘Healthcare & Concierge’ lounge in KLIA. Where as in the low-cost carrier terminal klia2, there are exclusive lounges equipped with premium massage chairs to reduce passenger stress and anxiety. Additionally, spaces where



passengers can sit and relax represent a real opportunity for airports seeking a new source of revenue while keeping abreast with consumer needs.

Besides this mutual benefit, unused square metres of empty space in terminals constitute opportunities for airports to up the game in the form of transit hotels. In KLIA, ‘Sama-Sama Express’ airside transit hotel is conveniently situated in the satellite building next to Gate C5. Meanwhile, in klia2, transit hotels like ‘Aerotel’ and ‘Capsule’ provide rates tailored for passengers in need for a quiet and relaxing atmosphere. In addition, ‘Sama-Sama Express klia2’ is strategically located at the airside area of klia2 terminal to provide transit passengers the convenience of not having to clear immigration and customs.

Moreover, KLIA's Jungle Boardwalk offers a little piece of the rainforest for passengers to experience the serenity and peace that can only be found when traversing the lush jungles of Malaysia.

In efforts to increase efficiency in ground transportation for arriving passengers, Malaysia Airports has allocated designated e-hailing pickup points at KLIA and klia2. These pickup points are located at Gate 3 and 4 for KLIA since August 1, and located at the Transportation Hub, Level 1 for klia2. According to Raja Azmi Raja Nazuddin,

group chief executive officer of Malaysia Airports, the initiative is in line with the organisation's bid to make passenger comfort and convenience a top priority.

He stated, “We have seen a drastic increase in e-hailing rides in the country since they were first introduced to Malaysia. We hope to see our passengers relax on the comfortable seats after a long flight, while waiting for their ride. This initiative will serve our passengers well”.

However, there is still plenty of room to improve for our airports to become more customer-centric. While sustained, long-term growth in air travel is great for airlines' net earnings, it continues to put pressure on the aviation industry to deliver innovative solutions to significantly redefine the customer experience.

According to Ascend, customers and airline executives agree on the top two priorities for improving the airport experience: firstly, “one-time, seamless authentication and security control for the traveller, enabled via a single biometric identification accepted at every security point along the journey”. Secondly, “accurate and efficient baggage processing, delivered through electronic baggage tags linked to the customer profile and offering real-time baggage tracking throughout the journey”.



Furthermore, more than 60% of airline executives and nearly 60% of passengers agree that reducing or completely eliminating human interaction from the boarding process would yield a great improvement in passenger experience. In fact, IATA has indicated that by 2020, it wants 80% of travellers to have the option of total self-service at the airport.

At the moment, it seems that the primary consensus is that the ideal method of travel for many passengers is one in which the airport experience is completely transparent and seamlessly integrated, as well as where the customer feels like they are in control. This implies that our airports need to be dynamic, equipped with communicative intelligent infrastructures that cope with the flexible needs of passengers. In other words, improvements may not lie in building infrastructure but rather in reshaping the technological landscape of existing structures i.e. the creation of an intelligent airport.

There are a number of technologies that are likely to be catalysts for development of an intelligent airport; these include: digital wayfinding, biometric-identifying management, token-based authentication, mobile tracking

and proximity sensing, augmented reality, virtual assistants and predictive analytics.

For an airport that welcomes increasing volumes of passengers every year, Malaysia Airports is well on its way to further improve the passenger's journey. As a form of digital wayfinding, Malaysia Airports has launched a new smartphone app called ‘MyAirports’ as a convenient and simple way for passengers new to the airport to navigate their way around as well as to locate retail and F&B shops as quickly as possible. In addition, new state-of-the-art X-ray scanners at the security checkpoint will be implemented in both terminals.

The good news hasn't stopped here, Malaysia Airports has been evaluating and reworking the check-in counters in KLIA to achieve equal distribution of passenger flow during peak periods, reducing the flow by approximately 50%. As a consequence, this initiative will significantly improve passenger experience and increase the chances for a seamless travel journey through the airport.

In further efforts to improve the airport experience, Malaysia Airports has introduced Malaysia's first outdoor plane observation deck. Bringing back the romantic art of planespotting, ‘Anjung Spotter’ is located at Jalan Pekeliling next to Runway 32 Left (32L). This new initiative has been the result of the social media team's efforts, paying close attention to the desires of the aviation community in Malaysia.

The road to success is a long and winding one, but with the ever-growing need for air travel, Malaysia Airports is introducing innovative and cost-effective solutions to KLIA and klia2 that not only work well with the existing infrastructure but optimises it to its fullest potential. With constant monitoring of consumer needs and intricate operations of the airport, Malaysia Airports is gradually turning Malaysia's most important airport into an intelligent one.

## Royal Brunei Returns to Brisbane



**Royal Brunei Airlines (RB) celebrates the return to Brisbane with non-stop services from Brunei starting July this year.**

At the official launch in Brunei, RB Chief Executive Officer, Karam Chand said, "RB is delighted to recommence our services to Brisbane for the first time since 2011; this is a very significant milestone that we are incredibly proud of and continues our measured and strategic growth objective that started in 2018. The new direct link will no doubt benefit our guests with a seamless travel as we have very good connections from United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia to/from Brisbane.

"We hope these will encourage our guests to take advantage of our single and dual destination packages in all the cities we serve. With one of the youngest fleets of any airline in the world, our guests will also experience the very best of Bruneian hospitality on-board our all-new game changing A320NEO aircraft".

Chand added, "Serving Brisbane will strategically position RB as a key player on the Kangaroo route in the important UK-Australia market. Coupled with our daily non-stop route between London Heathrow and Brunei, it allows us to open an entirely different part of Australia to our guests in addition to our daily

Melbourne flight which has already proved very popular.

"We are delighted to offer our Bruneian, UK and other guests from our expanding route network an additional Australia travel destination where they will find many attractions and activities on offer in Brisbane city and its surrounds".

The four times weekly flights between Brunei and Brisbane use RB's new fleet of A320NEO aircraft. RB now operates one of the youngest fleets in the world with an average fleet age of just over two years.

At the same event, the airline introduced RB Link flights with services connecting Brunei and new cities in Borneo with the flights operated by Malindo Air.

Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Dr Awang Haji Mohd Amin Liew Abdullah, Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and Minister of Finance and Economy II and Chairman of RB Board of Directors said, "RB will launch a regional aircraft operation, initially with two brand new ATR aircrafts. The regional aircraft operation will be a key enabler of increased tourism, trade and movement of people within BIMP-EAGA (Brunei Darussalam Indonesia Malaysia Philippines East Asean Growth Area) and will



further strengthen Brunei's economic ties with the many cities of Borneo. RB's investment in developing air traffic in BIMP-EAGA also shows the commitment of Brunei to contribute to regional development and allows the movement of people which today is extremely challenging between the different cities on the Island of Borneo".

RB Link flights will initially connect two existing cities Kota Kinabalu and Kuching and five new cities Sandakan, Tawau, Bintulu, Sibul and Balikpapan subject to government approvals across Borneo Island and link the destinations to RB's global network of twenty-five international destinations via its hub at the Brunei International Airport.

For more information, please call 03 – 2070 7166

## KLIA Celebrates 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary

**Speaking at KL International Airport's (KLIA) 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary celebration in August, Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad recalled the pride he felt when he officiated its opening in 1998.**

Dr Mahathir said, "I was proud then because it was the realisation of a dream and a promise. I am proud today because it is a reality".

He further recalled, "It was indeed amazing to witness the palm oil estate morphing into an airport of such beauty and ability to become an icon. It is an architectural wonder".

Dr Mahathir recorded his appreciation to the late renowned Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa for the 'Airport in the Forest, Forest in the Airport' Concept. "It wasn't so at first, but after 21 years it is clearly an airport in the forest and a forest in the airport" said Dr Mahathir.

On KLIA's role in the air travel industry, Dr Mahathir said traffic forecasts by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) suggests passenger traffic in the region is expected to grow by an average 5.3 percent annually up to 2045.

He continued, "These trends of growth are certainly to our advantage. As we progress to become a developed nation, the KLIA and Malaysia Airports have an important role to play in facilitating the current economic aspirations of the government".

Dr Mahathir said the digital transformation of KLIA towards Airports 4.0 encompasses advanced technologies such as facial recognition, big data analytics and Internet of Things (IoT), adding that such technologies would give Malaysia a competitive edge in the global economy.

On the Visit Truly Asia Malaysia 2020 campaign, he said there is a need to strengthen Malaysia's position to ensure the success of the campaign, adding, "As part of the campaign, we hope to be able to increase flight connectivity to Malaysia and attract more tourists from ASEAN, China, India, United Kingdom and Germany."

He further thanked Malaysia Airports for its contribution in setting up two Tourism Promotion



Funds totalling RM25 million in collaboration with Tourism Malaysia, adding that Malaysia Airports play a significant role in the national aerospace agenda.

Since the launch of the National Aerospace Blueprint in 2015, MAHB has invested RM50 million in common infrastructure and facilities refurbishment at Subang Airport.

He said the government is also committed in ensuring the growth of the aviation industry is sustainable, "This is evident through the establishment of the Malaysian Aviation Commission (MAVCOM) to regulate the economic aspects of the industry as well as National Aviation Consultative Council (NACC) to address the local aviation development, challenges and direction to aid the country's trade and economy."

Dr Mahathir also said airports should be more than an infrastructure: "It's an economic catalyst, a tourism enabler and often the first impression of a country. Therefore, with a 100 square kilometre landbank, it is the government's hope to see development outpace the demand."

In appraising KLIA Aeropolis, Dr Mahathir said, KLIA Aeropolis should change the landscape of Malaysian aviation to be more integrated and a complete ecosystem.

The strategic plan for KLIA Aeropolis encompasses air cargo and logistics, aerospace and aviation; and meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) and leisure. Dr Mahathir added, "One of the success of KLIA Aeropolis is the development of its Digital Free Trade Zone Park, a partnership with Alibaba Group, which is set to be operational in June 2020."

# Malindo Flies Direct to Varanasi

**Malindo Air launched its inaugural flight between Kuala Lumpur and Varanasi, which is regarded as the spiritual capital of India, on 19 July 2019. Nishit Kumar Ujjwal, Counsellor (Community Affairs, Education & Labour), High Commission of India, Kuala Lumpur and Mark Anthony, General Manager of Operations, Malindo Air were present in KL International Airport for the send-off ceremony.**

Upon its arrival at Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport, the inaugural landing was celebrated with a water cannon salute, followed by a welcoming ceremony to the passengers at the arrival gate.

CEO of Malindo Air, Chandran Rama Muthy said, "India is a significant market to us. Just as its neighbouring cities, the potential is foreseen on both, inbound and outbound travellers on leisure, business, as well as visiting friends & families purposes. However, Varanasi may have the added advantage in terms of demand as it is also primarily a sacred pilgrimage destination for Hindus around the world".

He continued, "We are honoured to be the only Malaysian carrier operating directly between Kuala Lumpur and Varanasi. I



believe our objectives are in line with our government's Tourism and Economic agenda, which is to entice more visitors into Malaysia hence boosting economic conditions and increasing passengers' arrivals at KLIA, which is envisioned to be the main regional hub of Asia".

He added further, "Given our wholesome services that cater for passengers' respective needs, we believe the additional connectivity also creates additional gateway for international travellers to explore beyond Kuala Lumpur".

Group CEO of Malaysia Airports, Raja Azmi Raja Nazuddin said, "I would like to congratulate our airline partner, Malindo Air on the launch of this new destination, Varanasi. Malindo is the first in Malaysia and the 4<sup>th</sup> in the Southeast Asia to introduce this route. This means that we can expect a



further increase in passenger movements at KL International Airport. Last year, the overall total number of arriving and departing passengers that Malindo served for its India routes via KUL grew by 4.3% from January to June this year as compared to the same period in 2018. Not only that, KUL itself also saw an overall YTD 6.1% increase in passenger movements for the India routes as compared to the previous year. Therefore, I am positive that Malindo Air will do very well with the introduction of this new flight route".

Varanasi is the tenth city that Malindo Air flies to, after Amritsar, New Delhi, Kochi, Mumbai, Tiruchirappali, Thiruvananthapuram, Bengaluru, Kolkata and Chennai (code share with Batik Air).

For more information, please call 03 - 7841 5388



## Malaysia Prime Minister Launches Visit Truly Asia Malaysia 2020 Campaign Logo

**YAB Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, has officially launched the Visit Truly Asia Malaysia 2020 campaign logo on 22 July at KL International Airport simultaneously calling upon all Malaysians to embrace the campaign as a national mission to ensure its success.**

The winning logo selected from a competition by Alfred Phua Hong Fook features various recognisable icons of Malaysia such as the hornbill, the bunga raya (hibiscus), the wild fern and colours of the Malaysian flag. Together, they represent the diversity of Malaysia's culture, heritage, flora and fauna as well as experiences offered as a holiday destination.

Dr Mahathir also witnessed the exchange of Memorandum of Joint Promotion ceremony between Tourism Malaysia and various parties, namely Malaysia Airlines, AirAsia, Firefly, Malindo Air, Malaysia Airports and Sharp (M) Electronics Sdn. Bhd. This was followed by

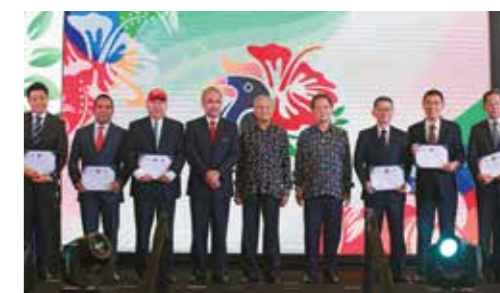
the unveiling of the Visit Malaysia 2020 aircraft livery on the four airlines.

The year 2020 has been designated as Visit Truly Asia Malaysia with targets of achieving 30 million international tourist arrivals and RM100 billion tourist receipts. The focus of the campaign is on ecotourism, arts and culture.

Spearheading the campaign, Tourism Malaysia has partnered with several private sector corporations such as Sharp (M) Electronics Sdn. Bhd., Malaysia Airlines, AirAsia, Firefly, Malindo Air and Malaysia Airports, to implement marketing and promotional activities utilising their local and international media platforms.

A RM5 million fund called GAMELAN Malaysia has been made available to provide financial support to Malaysian tourism industry players who organise marketing and promotional activities to promote Malaysia as a business and leisure destination.

Tourism Malaysia and Malaysia Airports have also partnered with various international



airlines such as Condor Air, Air Arabia and Air Busan in launching new routes into Malaysia from key international destinations.

To ease tourist arrivals, Visa-on-Arrival facilities have been expanded to 13 entry points in Malaysia, ensuring a hassle-free entry for China and India nationals, two of the fastest growing outbound tourist markets in the world.

In 2018, Malaysia welcomed a total of 25.8 million international tourists, while for the first five months of this year, international tourist arrivals have reached a total of 10,954,014 tourists, recording a growth of +4.8% compared to the same period last year.

The data places Malaysia among the major tourism destinations in the world.

## Turkish Airlines Rolls Out New Cabin Crew Uniforms



**Cabin crew of Turkish Airlines are taking to the skies with new uniform designed by top Italian fashion designer Ettore Bilotta in celebration of the airline's 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary.**

Passengers on non-stop flights between Kuala Lumpur and Istanbul with Turkish Airlines will now be greeted by cabin crew donning the new attire.

The new uniforms in flag-red and anthracite gray colors, which were rigorously tested on long-range flights in different climates, have been tailored to 25,000 employees in order for cabin crews to serve passengers comfortably.

Inspired by many classical details in Turkish culture, from the currents of the Bosphorus to the artisanal glassware, ceramics and calligraphy patterns produced by local artisans, the cabin, cockpit, ground handling personnel and flying chef uniforms came to life under a single design in order to give their passengers a holistic brand experience.

M. Ilker Ayci, Chairman of the Board and the Executive Committee of Turkish Airlines said, "The elegance and comfort of our cabin crews, which constitute the most important element of our unrivaled service quality, are of great importance for our brand that continues to fly at the top of its industry. I believe that our brand's presence in the skies will be much more impressive when the new cabin uniforms, which bear elements of our culture, are combined with the elegance of our cabin crews".



When explaining the design of the uniform, designer Ettore Bilotta said, "When I started to design for Turkish Airlines, the first thing that inspired me was Istanbul. This city has been a melting pot for art and civilisation for centuries and has a rare richness as a common heritage of many cultures".

He continued, "I wanted to bring elements from traditional calligraphy and mosaics together with the new interpretations of Turkish motifs, which emphasize modern lines, into foulards and ties to reflect a contrast and duality".

Passengers are able to distinguish chief/attendant from the colours of the uniform

as 'chief' uniforms stand out with dark red while the 'attendant' colours are anthracite-grey.

The new uniform sets include some accessories not available in previous Turkish Airlines' uniforms while maintaining the design integrity. Accessories like hats, leather gloves and one-piece dresses in female uniforms and handbags and leather gloves in male uniforms make a holistic collection.

For more information about Turkish Airlines, please call 03 - 2163 0849.

## Surprise Celebration on KLIA Ekspres

**KLIA Ekspres' 100 millionth passenger received a memorable surprise from Express Rail Link Sdn Bhd (ERL), the operator of the KLIA Ekspres and KLIA Transit services.**

On the day, the train that departed at 11 am from KLIA to KL Sentral was decorated with balloons raising an air of expectation among passengers. Amidst the celebrative atmosphere, passengers rummaged through their goodie bags that were distributed earlier at departure, for the winning ticket number.

Sherif Radwan, an Egyptian visitor to Kuala Lumpur was the lucky winner with number 63. His prize, which was presented by Malaysia's Deputy Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, YB Muhammad Bakhtiar Wan Chik, includes flights, accommodation and ground experiences worth RM10,000. Goodwill was spread to other passengers with each passenger given a Klook voucher to book travel activities and services, gifts and snacks.

Chief Executive Officer of ERL, Noormah Mohd Noor said: "It is a remarkable achievement and yet humbling for us to be celebrating our 100 millionth passengers today. It is an important milestone and testament to our commitment to providing the best travel experience that is efficient, reliable and safe to our customers. ERL is proud to have maintained an impeccable 99.7% on-time service performance until now. We would like to sincerely thank our customers for their continuous support".

Klook, ERL's event partner and strong valued business partner sponsored the event. Klook is



a leading travel activities and services booking platform with more than 100,000 things-to-do across 300 destinations. Its Head of Marketing in Malaysia, Emily Tan was also onboard to congratulate the lucky winner.

Since 2002 when the train services were first launched, ERL carried 1.04 million passengers within its first year of operations. By the time the trains services extended to klia2 in 2014, ERL had carried 50 million passengers. By

August 2016, ERL had recorded 75 million passengers on both services and carried an average of 9 million passengers annually since then.

KLIA Ekspres & KLIA Transit are rail services offering a fast transfer from KL Sentral to KLIA and klia2. KLIA Ekspres runs express to KLIA in 28mins, and on to klia2. KLIA Transit takes 5 minutes longer, with three intermediate stops between KL Sentral and KLIA.



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## ANA Redesigns Luxury Cabin

**Staying at the forefront in aircraft cabin design, All Nippon Airways (ANA) announced in July its collaboration with renowned Japanese architect, Kengo Kuma and leading British designers, Acumen to roll out a total of twelve completely redesigned Boeing 777-300ER aircraft cabin interiors. The first redesigned aircraft cabins will serve the Tokyo/Haneda-London route from 2 August.**

ANA has effectively redefined the experience of luxury with the new designs which were born out of five years of collaborative design development. The new cabin products 'THE Suite' and 'THE Room' that are featured in First Class and Business Class are inspired by Japanese heritage and Western designs principles.

New First Class Seating, 'THE Suite' features all-new spacious First Class seats that are inspired by luxury Japanese hotels. New elements include the addition of privacy-enhancing doors as well as a crystal-clear 43 inch monitor that is the world's first 4K personal monitor on a commercial airliner. THE Suite also boasts a movable partition which can be adjusted upon request to pair seats as well as a universal PC and USB port. For the ultimate grandeur, a luxury dark wood finish features throughout the cabin.

New Business Class Seating, 'THE Room' has



at its heart a brand new seat design that is inspired by modern, multifunctional Japanese living spaces. THE Room offers for the first time flexible doors for personal privacy that can also be adjusted to share the space with fellow travel companions - from dining together with the family to conducting meetings with colleagues.

Along with the Luxury Cabins, ANA has also made changes to the new Premium Economy and Economy Class seats with upholstery redesigned with Japanese patterns which suggest movement and direction. Non-repeating patterns mean each seat cover, across the Premium Economy and Economy seats will be completely unique. Passengers travelling in these cabins will also enjoy improved touch screen monitors and headrests that are adjustable along six distinct axes.

Complementing these changes, ANA has also created a hotel like reception complete with welcome monitors. The food service area has

been redesigned to embody the Japanese 'Omotenashi' philosophy of hospitality. ANA has also redesigned the self-service bar area, which now boast mini-fridges stocked with beverages and snacks for customers to enjoy at any time. The contemporary design of the galleys integrates a back light panel which incorporates patterns inspired by traditional Japanese hand-made paper (known as 'washi').

Executive Vice President of ANA, Hideki Kunugi said, "In 2010, we were the first in Japan to introduce the full flat seat with all aisle access and in order for ANA to continue to lead and set the global standard for comfort and convenience, we knew that it would be necessary to integrate the latest insights from design professionals as we sought to redesign the flight experience and elevate every aspect of travel for our passengers".

For more information, please call 03 – 2032 1331



## MITM Delight Travellers with Irresistible Travel Deals



**Travellers were served with one of the most anticipated travel fairs in Kuala Lumpur from 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> of August. The Malaysian International Travel Mart (MITM) was held in Mid Valley Exhibition Centre with the expectation of being well-received by over 90,000 visitors this year.**

The travel and tourism fair was organised by the Malaysian Chinese Tourism Association (MCTA), with a setup of 300 booths and 60 exhibitors. The association aims to promote the best travel deals to Malaysians so that they can trot the globe without having to pay through their nose. Official sponsors include Taiwan Tourism Bureau, Ministry of Tourism Republic of Indonesia, Tourism Authority of Thailand, Genting Cruise Lines, Bank of China and China Southern Airlines and supported by Ministry of Tourism, Arts & Culture Malaysia as well as Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board.

MCTA began with MITM in 2001 to provide a platform for its members that include over 1,000 members comprising travel and tour companies, airlines, cruise companies, hoteliers, theme park operators, restaurants, transport companies and souvenir companies. In ensuring the benefit and welfare of its members, MCTA places strong emphasis on practicing fair and transparent policies.



Pondering on the future of the travel industry, MCTA President Dato Albert Tan Sam Soon stated, "As the middle-class population is growing steadily accompanied by the exponential rise in technology, the travel industry is certainly growing rapidly. Because of this, we have seen a rise in travel volumes in the domestic and international tourism industry. This phenomenon has been capitalised by the airlines and the growing number of international routes from Malaysia. For example, our national airlines have been aggressively expanding their route network in order to cater for Malaysian's growing need to travel the world. And, that is why we have worked so hard to organise MITM every year. We have been delighted with steady growth in visitors every year and we always strive to curate and improve our list of exhibitors".

The President further added, "That being said, there is still room for more international airlines to come in to the Malaysian market. I believe that our market is in dire need of airlines from the Middle East, Europe and the United States, as the future of the travel industry in Malaysia looks bright. However, in order to accelerate development in the tourism industry, I urge the government to consider reducing visa restrictions from the core markets such as China and India, so that tourists can enter Malaysia hassle-free".

Inside Mid Valley's Exhibition Hall, technology made its place as a driver for an interesting visitor experience. In addition to having photos, videos and live streams posted onto the event's Facebook page, visitors enjoyed having an augmented reality (AR) experience at the trade fair. Visitors were able to download an app and then use it to find hidden content, play games as well as join Buyers' Contests and win prizes worth over RM25,000.



## Malaysia Airlines Signs Charter Flight Agreement



**Malaysia Airlines signed a three-month agreement with Dorak Holdings, one of Turkish's most prominent tourism players on 27 July to provide charter flights between Kuala Lumpur and Istanbul's Sabiha Gökçen International Airport (ISGIA) from October until December 2019.**

The agreement was signed between Hazman Hilmi Sallahuddin, member of the senior management team of Malaysia Airlines and Ahmet Serdar Körükçü, Chairman of the Board, Dorak Holdings. Malaysia Airlines will operate three times weekly charter flights utilising its Airbus A330 aircraft.

Malaysia Airlines Group Chief Executive Officer, Captain Izhom Ismail said, "We are delighted to enter into the agreement with Dorak Holdings to offer charter services between Kuala Lumpur and Istanbul. With this agreement, Malaysia Airlines will be the first Malaysian carrier to land in Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport, since Malaysia Airports acquired the airport in 2015. As the national carrier of Malaysia, we are the first touch point of Malaysia, and the first touch

point for travellers to experience Malaysian Hospitality. We hope that through this agreement, we are able to promote more of Malaysia to Turkey and at the same time, to attract new markets to visit Malaysia".

Malaysia Airports' involvement in ISGIA started in 2008 when together with its consortium partners, it was awarded the concession to operate the airport for 20 + 4 years. By 2014, the airport operator had acquired 100% stake in ISGIA, making it one of the world's largest airport operator group in terms of passenger numbers. ISGIA is the second largest airport in Turkey and is the world's busiest single runway and terminal. In 2018, ISGIA registered a total of 34.1 million passenger traffic movements and revenue of RM1,154.1 million. As at June this year, the airport registered 16.7 million passenger traffic movements, rising a further 3.4% from the same period last year.

With its long-term growth potential, the airport is a strategic investment for Malaysia Airports. In 2018, ISGIA was the second fastest growing airport in Europe within its category of above 30 million passengers per annum (mppa). It is currently the 12th busiest airport in Europe surpassing Zurich, Manchester, Stansted, Dublin and Berlin.

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



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## American Airlines Adds New Southeast Asia Destinations with Cathay Dragon

**In July, American Airlines (AA) announced a codeshare agreement with Cathay Dragon, adding four new destinations to its network while increasing existing service to three other cities, all of which are located in Southeast Asia. The new agreement increases interconnectivity between the two airlines.**

The new codeshare destinations added are Dhaka, Da Nang, Chiang Mai and Phuket. Cities with increased services are Hanoi, Penang and Kuala Lumpur. The interchanged flights originate or

terminate at the Cathay Dragon's hub in Hong Kong.

In a press statement, American said, "The codeshare relationship with Cathay Dragon will further strengthen American's existing partnership with the Cathay Pacific Group in the years to come".

This is a boost to American's Hong Kong portfolio – the airline has operated flights on a daily year-round basis since 2013, and provides direct connections to Dallas/Fort Worth and Los Angeles.

Cathay Dragon is a wholly-owned subsidiary airline of the Cathay Pacific Group and is based in Hong Kong, and similar to American is a founding member of the oneworld

alliance. While its parent airline Cathay Pacific mainly operates long-haul routes, Cathay Dragon focuses mainly on China and Southeast Asian destinations with 23 of its 53 destinations located in mainland China.

The airline currently has 49 aircraft, consisting of 15 Airbus A320-200s, eight A321-200s and 26 A330-300s. Cathay Dragon has on order 32 A321neos which will replace its older A321ceo aircraft. It is likely that with the arrival of the new planes the airline will continue expanding its regional network to further destinations.

For more information, please call American Airlines' GSA - Discover the World at 03 - 2715 1122 or Cathay Dragon at 03 - 6207 4989.





**Mitsui Outlet Park KLIA Sepang (MOP KLIA), Japan's branded factory outlet shopping is creating exciting events for its customers for the Fourth Anniversary Celebration this year. In July, MOP KLIA announced the winners of the 'Spend & Win a Motorbike Contest'. Three winners walked away with a brand new Vespa; meanwhile, nine winners brought home the latest Honda Beat.**

The contest winners Voon Yoke Mei and Nur Hazwani Mohd Hairuddin said they didn't expect to win when they participated in the contest.

Voon said, "I was pleasantly surprised and excited when I received the call as I didn't expect to win. Both my brother and I submitted our entry forms just to try our luck but I guess I got lucky as I won the Vespa! My brother would appreciate the Vespa more so I will be giving it to him."

Nur Hazwani who also won the Vespa was ecstatic. "It's my first time actually winning something from a contest so I'm really excited about it. But I will be giving the Vespa to my brother as his birthday present so he is the one feeling excited about it now," she said.

The celebration included many exciting programmes with plenty of gifts and discounts available. The anniversary celebration is a great opportunity for MOP KLIA to display their appreciation to customers as well as to gain public awareness.

The Anniversary Sale which occurred in conjunction with several holidays such as the

August school holidays, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong's birthday as well as National Day commended from 26<sup>th</sup> July to 2<sup>nd</sup> September. While this was happening, MOP KLIA also held a '4 Days Special Sale' campaign from the 30<sup>th</sup> of August to 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2019 where shoppers could seize the opportunity to buy their favourite products at great discounts during the long weekends with public holidays. Additionally, throughout the weekends, public holidays and school holidays, shoppers were able to enjoy exciting instant reward giveaways with a minimum spend of RM200 and above in a maximum of two (02) receipts. Amongst the rewards were the double cash back campaign, 'Spin & Win a Surprise Gift'; shoppers also had the opportunity to get a personalised T-Shirt or a metal straw set. This is not to mention hourly

specials from 12noon to 9:00pm where one could win a cup of coffee or a dessert.

MOP KLIA is strategically located, just 8 minutes away from KLIA and approximately 45 minutes from KL City Centre. The outlet mall is easily accessible through the various highways namely ELITE, LDP, KESAS, MAJU and NKVE. Getting to MOP KLIA is also convenient via the KLIA Ekspres which departs from KL Sentral every 20 minutes to KLIA and klia2 and thereafter visitors can take the dedicated free shuttle bus that is offered to and from KLIA and klia2.

For more information on upcoming offers, promotions and happenings at MOP KLIA, please visit [www.mitsuioutletparkklia.com.my](http://www.mitsuioutletparkklia.com.my)



## Celebration at Mitsui Outlet Park KLIA Sepang Fourth Anniversary



## Sama-Sama Celebrates Merdeka and Malaysia Day with Eat, Pose and Win

**Sama-Sama Hotel KLIA celebrates this year Merdeka and Malaysia Day in August and September with a myriad of Malaysia's favourite food and an online contest.**

At the all-day dining restaurant, Degrees at Sama-Sama, customers indulge in local delights such as Mee Rebus, Roti Jala, Nasi Lemak and many more over Degrees Merdeka & Malaysia Day Weekend Hi-Tea in the month of August and September.

In conjunction with the food feast, customers can take the celebration up a notch by joining the culinary photo contest organised by Sama-Sama in the 'Eat & Win' online contest.

At Degrees, customers are invited to take a photo with their favourite local dish and post it online on Instagram with their most creative caption of the Malaysian dish they love at the Weekend Hi-Tea.

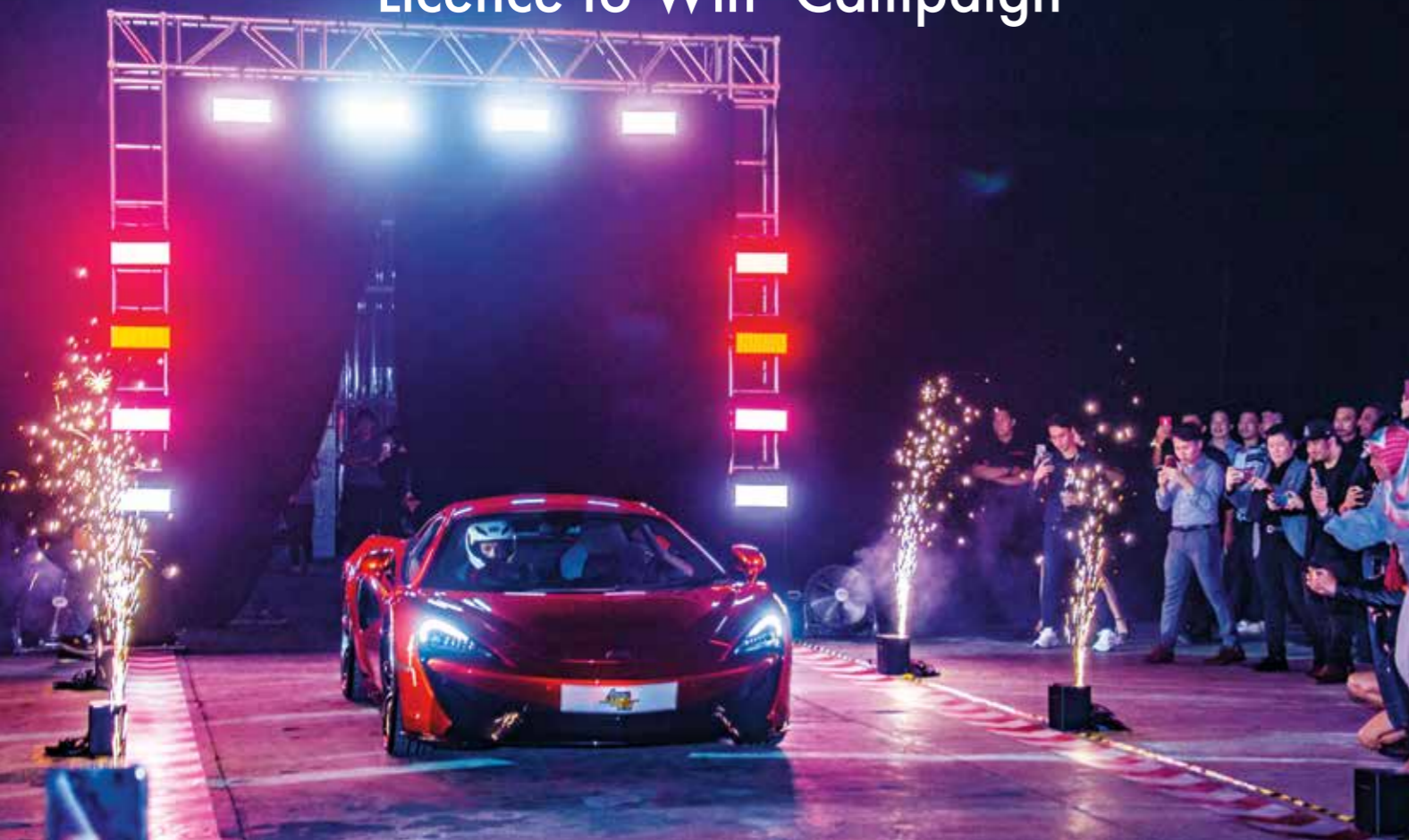
Customers with Facebook can add to the celebration in a Facebook contest called

'Pose & Win'. They are invited with their family to put on a national flag attire and photograph themselves on Facebook and complete the sentence, "I love Malaysia because ...."

Both online contests run until 15 September 2019. Winners are to be announced on 18 September 2019. Five winners of each contest will win prizes including 2 Days 1 Night stay at Sama-Sama Hotel KL International Airport and dining vouchers worth RM230 for two persons.



# Stand A Chance to Win a McLaren 570S – ‘Licence to Win’ Campaign



**Malaysia Airports officially launched the latest instalment of their much anticipated ‘Licence to Win’ annual shopping campaign. Themed ‘Born to Reign’, the campaign runs from 1 August 2019 to 31 January 2020, and features an irresistible line-up of prizes for those who shop and dine at selected international airports in Malaysia. For this year’s Grand Prize, shoppers stand a chance to drive home a McLaren 570S Coupé.**

The lavish launch campaign organised by Malaysia Airports unveiled the jaw-dropping McLaren 570 Coupé at a star-studded party attended by some of Kuala Lumpur’s hottest personalities including Marion Caunter, Awal Ashaari, Scha Al-Yahya, and Alif Satar. The location of the event, Sentul Depot, was transformed into a playground that

reflects the McLaren’s signature elements: speed, thrill and attitude. If that was not enough, the event was topped off with an electrifying performance by local-rapper Zamaera and heart-pounding tunes by DJ IRAMA.

Mohammad Nazli Abdul Aziz, Senior General Manager of Commercial Services, stated that the campaign aims to reward shoppers by enhancing the airport passenger experience, while highlighting the diverse selection of commercial offerings at international airports in Malaysia.

“This initiative perfectly aligns with our commercial reset strategy, a key initiative to transform our airports from mere transportation hubs to premiere lifestyle destinations,” he proudly stated.

This is how you can stand a chance to win: submit a contest entry for every RM250 spent in a single receipt at any retail outlet within any of the following international airports

in Malaysia: KL International Airport (KUL), Penang International Airport (PEN), Kota Kinabalu International Airport (BKI), Langkawi International Airport (LGK) and Kuching International Airport (KCH).

This year’s campaign also sees the introduction of a bonus prize for one lucky shopper in the form of a Ducati Monster 821 Superbike, exclusively for shoppers who spend RM250 in a single receipt at PEN, LGK, BKI and KCH.

The other thrilling prizes that are on offer include:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Prize: A McLaren VIP Paddock Experience in Singapore for two plus two return business class flight tickets to Singapore worth RM100,000
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: Malaysia Airlines Flight Tickets worth RM80,000
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: Malaysia Airlines Flight Tickets worth RM60,000
- 4<sup>th</sup> Prize: Malaysia Airlines Flight Tickets worth RM40,000

Additionally, guests can anticipate monthly prize giveaways such as RM1,000 gift vouchers from Boost E-Wallet or Petron Miles Points to be won. Those who spend a minimum of RM1,000 and RM500 can instantly redeem an exclusive Malaysia Airports ‘Kembara Bag’ or Duty-Free Bag respectively. Guests can also increase their chances of winning by spending with the campaign partners: Maybank, Eraman, Boost, Malaysia Airlines and Petron.

“As of June 2019, the number of passengers at our international airports in Malaysia for the January to June period grew by 4.2% compared to the same period last year. This saw a total of 43.4 million passengers passing through our doors, signifying the opportunity for growth in airport retail. With retail incentives such as ‘Licence to Win’, we hope to further entice airport guests to shop and enhance their total airport experience by offering lucrative prizes,” added Nazli.

In terms of submissions this year, Malaysia Airports has also introduced a new online method for shoppers to submit their receipts via the campaign’s official website. Meanwhile, manual entries can be submitted through filling in contest entry forms or at digital kiosks within KUL.

For the curious bunch that want to catch a glimpse of the prizes in person can do so beginning September, as the McLaren 570S Coupé will be displayed at the KLIA main terminal in KUL while the Ducati Monster 821 Superbike will be displayed in PEN and LGK respectively.

For more information on ‘Licence to Win’ campaign, please visit <https://licencetowin.com.my/> or follow ShopMYAirports on Facebook and Instagram.



# AVIATION INTERVIEW WITH DATUK MUSA YUSOF

## Director General of Tourism Malaysia

With 30 years of experience serving in Tourism Malaysia, which was known as Tourist Development Corporation of Malaysia when he joined on 7 July 1990, Datuk Musa has always been known as a marketing and promotions man with his knowledge extending to the corporate, international and domestic sectors.

Having looked after key markets such as Europe, Asia, Africa and worked in the Tourism Malaysia's Paris office in his early years, all these past experiences count for the man who has moved up the ladder to step into his current position on 3 December 2018. His biggest responsibility in spearheading the Visit Truly Asia Malaysia 2020 campaign with his team is to bring it to greater heights.

Being the only student to pass with distinction when he took up the Austrian government's scholarship to do the Diploma in Tourism Management from Schloss Klessheim in Salzburg, his eight-month course had linked him to many tourism professionals from various parts of the world. Until today, the networking remains strong as he is part of its alumni. Datuk Musa is also armed with a Bachelor of Science in Economics with International Business from the University of Southern Mississippi, USA.



### Following your appointment, what are some of the new initiatives implemented by Tourism Malaysia?

Among them was our participation in ITB Berlin in March where Malaysia was the Official Partner Country. We received immense media exposure and opportunities for partnerships.

In our recent collaboration with Sharp Electronics (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd, we will be using its network of 20,000 retail outlets and 200,000 display panels across China, Japan, Taiwan, India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region to promote Malaysia's tourism video contents using the Japanese multinational electronics giant's latest 8K ultra high definition technology.

We have also been actively developing packages from Moscow with carriers from the Middle East and Europe, namely Qatar Airways, Etihad Airways, Emirates and Turkish Airlines that fly direct to Kuala Lumpur daily.

To harness digital technology and social media for Malaysia's tourism promotion, we invited 26 key opinion leaders from ASEAN to the Malaysia ASEAN Tourism Influencers Key Opinion Leaders Programme, which was held from 26 August to 1 September.

### How was the response from the industry players towards Tourism Malaysia's RM5 million Gamelan Malaysia 2019 Fund to support their tourism promotional efforts?

It was encouraging. Following our announcement on 9 July, we have received over 72 applications besides queries and requests for briefing sessions by us as the implementing agency, from major associations in Malaysia. The incentives under this fund will help lessen their burden during the current weak global economic conditions.

### As we enter into the last quarter of 2019 and fast approaching Visit Truly Asia Malaysia 2020 campaign to meet the targeted 30 million tourist arrivals, please share some of the strategies for the year ahead.

Under the Tourism Malaysia Integrated Promotion Plan 2018-2020, we have outlined several strategies. The strategies include leveraging on upcoming major business events in Malaysia like the Malaysia-China Cooperation Year in 2019-2020, APEC meetings that will be held from December 2019 to November 2020 in various venues in Malaysia as well as the PATA Adventure Travel and Responsible Tourism Conference and Mart in Sabah from 12-14 February 2020.

New sports tourism events such as the FIM Endurance World Championship (EWVC) and the FIA Endurance World Touring Cup (WTCR), to be held from 13-15 December at Sepang International Circuit, were recently promoted at Silverstone, the home of the British Grand Prix as we need to make 'noise' heard outside of Malaysia of our campaign.

In promoting Malaysia as a filming destination, we had 10 film producers from China to view our locations recently. National Film Development Corporation's Film in Malaysia Incentive, gives foreign film makers 30% cash rebate on qualifying Malaysian post-production expenditure when they use our country for filming.

We are also enhancing the National Key Economic Area initiatives in our collaboration with airlines and tour operators where chartered flights and the high yield segments are concerned.

### What are the unique selling points of Visit Truly Asia Malaysia 2020 that will help it stand tall above the other destinations in the region?

The campaign's emphasis on promoting nature and culture. Guided by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture's National EcoTourism Plan 2016-2025, our programmes will thus reflect on the promotion of ecotourism and tourism sustainability.

We will also be promoting new products at Desaru Coast in Johor, Sealife at Legoland, Selangor's Sky Mirror and Blue Tears, as well as indoor theme parks like Superpark in Avenue K, My Best Box in Berjaya Times Square, Futureland Fun Zone in Sunway Pyramid and The Rift in Mid Valley MegaMall.

### How do you plan to engage with the industry players this time around to get their full support in order to make this campaign a success?

Following our engagement sessions in Negeri Sembilan and Sabah last April, our next session to encourage local tour operators and agents to develop special travel packages will be in Johor.

We would like to encourage the industry players to create a countdown in order to build up the excitement for the celebration of this national campaign and carry its logo in all their promotional activities.

So far, engagement sessions have also been organised with the local media in KL, Sabah

and Sarawak to heighten awareness about the campaign under *Sembang Santai Tourism Malaysia bersama Media*, with six programmes have been planned throughout 2019.

### Domestic tourism plays a significant role contributing double-digit growth in 2018 to the local economy with its 78.2 million domestic tourists and total expenditure of RM60.4 billion. What is Tourism Malaysia's message to the locals on spending holidays in their own country during Visit Truly Asia Malaysia 2020? What are some of the incentives and/or special events that have been created for them?

While we encourage Malaysians to travel within their own country to explore its nature, culture and people, it is worrying to see that 68.2% of them preferred to stay at their relatives' house rather than at hotels or other paid accommodations. We are working hard to change this with the help of various associations and instill in them that Malaysia has so many beautiful, unique and thematic hotels and accommodations to offer that fits their budget.

The promotional programmes to gain public support for the campaign next year include Tourism Malaysia Travel Fair; Augmented Reality Cuti-Cuti Malaysia Treasure Hunt Sabah; Surfcasting Tour, A Journey to Visit Malaysia 2020; MARVEL Run Malaysia 2019 and our domestic sales missions.

### Tourism Malaysia had a tripartite collaboration with Malaysia Airports and Condor Airlines last year on the Frankfurt-KL route during the winter season. What were the total number of arrivals from this seasonal flight arrangement? Were the passengers all German nationals or mixed from other European countries?

Malaysia recorded 51,209 tourist arrivals from Germany since Condor Airlines started its winter operations in November 2018. Owing to overwhelming response for direct flights connecting Germany to Malaysia, we continued our collaboration with the airline for the summer season from May to October.

### Can we expect more of such arrangements with other parties/airlines?

Of course. This year alone we partnered with new airlines such as Air Busan and Air Arabia to enhance connectivity to Malaysia.

### What strategies does Tourism Malaysia have to woo the high-yield Middle Eastern tourists to Malaysia as there has been a drop in their arrivals and a change in the profile of those travelling from groups or families to more frequent independent travellers (FITs) and couples?

The increase in seats capacity to Malaysia from the Middle East (ME) following Air Arabia's direct Sharjah-KL flights in July and Qatar Airways' Doha flights to Langkawi via Penang this October has opened new possibilities for us to grow the ME and surrounding markets.

We are expanding the market volume to Malaysia by targeting Air Arabia's vast network to the primary, secondary and tertiary cities within the ME. In Qatar Airways' case, Penang and Langkawi will be the drawcard for the Europeans to travel to Malaysia.

We are optimising the different market segments such as millennials travelling with their close friends, partner or spouse and young families. They usually travel as FITS or use online travel agency as they are more IT savvy. Since the ME has a younger population, millennials are an important market segment to focus on and grow.

We are also eyeing the expatriate market, especially in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries as they make up between 40% and 90% of the population. Tourism Malaysia is expanding the market beyond the ME by taking advantage of the United Arab Emirates and Qatar's position as important global airport hubs with good connections to Europe, North Africa and the United States as the majority of these destinations are not covered by our local carriers.

Our strategies are executed through smart partnership with airlines and tour operators under the joint promotion or Joint International Development Tourism Programme with Malaysia Airports.

### On the personal front, what is your ultimate vision for the tourism industry in Malaysia?

Bring our tourism industry to greater heights as the industry is very dynamic. For the country to remain attractive and as a 'top-of-mind' destination, the concerted efforts of all Malaysians are vital. To quote the French poet Anatole France, "To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe".

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