

# AIRLINK

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## MORE THAN UNTAMED BEAUTY, A GATEWAY TO UNTOUCHED CULTURE.

KUCHING INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, THE GATEWAY TO GETAWAYS

It all begins at Kuching International Airport (KCH). Rainforest millions of years old, wildlife in its true element, 240 ancient caves, and a culture preserved in time. Plan your route to a legendary site like nowhere else on the planet.



**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 reflects on the airport operator's financial performance for the period ended 30 September 2019 (3Q 2019) and past achievements for the year and how it will strive to overcome the challenging global macro-economic environment and uncertainties ahead.**

## Airport CEO Speaks

**A**s a holistic global airport company managing Malaysia's various aviation gateways and Istanbul Sabiha Gokcen International Airport, I am happy to share that our third quarter results have shown growth in many areas. Thanks to our sustained passengers and aircraft movements, these have been translated into higher revenue and earnings for the group.

Looking at the positive average passenger load factors registered in the third quarter, we are optimistic that our traffic forecast numbers for 2019 can be achieved as we expect to see further improvements in our international passenger movements, particularly coming from our regional international airports in Penang, Langkawi, Kota Kinabalu and Kuching. This is due to more direct connectivity been introduced by airlines such as Qatar Airways, Qingdao Airlines, Royal Brunei Airlines and Scoot.

Low-cost carrier Scoot's maiden seven weekly flight from Singapore to Kota Kinabalu on 3 December 2019, for instance, has not only added to their growing presence in Malaysia but also augured well for our second busiest airport, Kota Kinabalu International Airport, which registered 23% increase in passenger movement for this sector to 220,561 from January to October compared to the previous corresponding period in 2018.

As for the Malaysian aviation industry, we remain upbeat. When IATA is reporting that the air cargo peak season is off to a slow start in October with annual demand down 3.5%, with the support from Pos Aviation Sdn Bhd, we have been having chartered freighter flying Malaysian fruits such as durian and pineapple to Zhengzhou, China since July.

These chartered flights carrying Malaysia pineapples since 14 November 2019, totalling 120 and scheduled for a year, are expected to export at least 2,000 tonnes of such fruit branded as 'Cat King' which is worth RM12 million. They represent the early manifestations of the capabilities of our Air Cargo & Logistics cluster. Covering 1.2 million sq ft of gross floor area, our facilities include a cargo terminal, sorting centre, warehouse, and operations office.

We will be handling another high traffic season this month in view of the Chinese New Year festivities, not too long after the recent November-December school holidays, Christmas and year-end celebrations. As always, we will deliver our utmost in ensuring our passengers' smooth journey and enjoyable experience at our airport.





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## A 'Revolutionary' Aviation Sector Awaits in The 2020s

After two decades of transformation for the aviation industry, CAPA, the Centre for Aviation expects the 2020s to be a "revolutionary" era, with Asia dominating the global airline industry and low-cost carrier (LCC) expansion continuing to change the landscape. Some of these LCC operators will be extending the reach of their services and reshaping their product offerings to meet the demands of the middle-class and the rising first-time flyers.

In its latest issue of Airline Leader, CAPA also anticipates possibly a "very substantial" economic downturn to happen at some point during the first half of this decade. The 2020s will continue to be plagued by the lack of skilled resources coupled with oil prices and other external costs making cost management challenging, thus hampering the growth of the aviation industry.

In Malaysia, the scenario is no different, it will be a challenging market for the airlines with slower growth and profits under pressure expected to continue as depicted in the Malaysian Aviation Commission's (MAVCOM) newly released fifth edition of Waypoint.

Its December bi-annual industry report forecast passenger traffic in 2020 to grow between 5% and 6% year-on-year (yoy), which will translate to between 114.9 million and 116.0 million passengers for Malaysia.

Meanwhile, MAVCOM has also revised its 2019 passenger traffic forecast of between 6.4% and 7% yoy (versus its previous forecast of between 2.9% and 4.1% yoy respectively), which when translated will be between 109.1 million and 109.7 million passengers for the country.

Several factors will be responsible for its 2020 passenger traffic growth projection. Among them is the Visit Malaysia 2020 campaign, a weaker Ringgit and lower oil prices, citing that the United States' (US) Energy Information Administration, in its September 2019 Short-Term Energy Outlook,

forecasts oil prices to average US\$60/bbl in 2020.

MAVCOM says major business events such as the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' Summit, which will be held in Kuala Lumpur in November, are also expected to boost passenger traffic growth,

Another contributing factor will be the continuing reallocation of seat capacity by Malaysian carriers to the domestic market, which is projected to grow by 3.2% yoy, albeit lower compared to what is forecast for 2019 at 7.2% yoy.

With tourist arrivals increasing by 19.5% and 6.7% yoy respectively during the previous Visit Malaysia campaigns in 2007 and 2014, expectations are pinned high on international passenger traffic growing in 2020 to boost tourist arrivals.

The aviation commission adds, "Stronger domestic passenger traffic growth relative to international passenger traffic growth could also influence aerodrome operators' earnings in 2020 as passengers pay a lower passenger service charge (PSC) for domestic travel."

As a result, revenue growth from PSC collection may lag passenger traffic growth.

### Cautious capacity expansion by Malaysian carriers

Elaborating further on the slower growth projection for airlines in 2020, MAVCOM, in its Waypoint industry report, says total seat capacity by Malaysian carriers is expected to increase by 2% yoy compared with 4.3% yoy in 2019 with their airfares remaining flat or rising only slightly.

It also observes that the growing development of alternative airport hubs such as Kuching and Kota Kinabalu in 2019 have enabled carriers to allocate more seats to these airports, thus offering passengers a wider choice of domestic destinations.



MAVCOM Executive Chairman Dr Nungsari Ahmad Radhi expects this trend to persist in 2020 with routes within Sabah and Sarawak projected to experience the highest growth of 4.8% yoy.

Naming the top three routes in East Malaysia to be Kuching-Sibu (14% yoy), Bintulu-Kuching (13.4% yoy), and Kuching-Miri (9.9% yoy), Waypoint says this will be followed by routes from East-West Malaysia and within West Malaysia, which are expected to grow by 2% and 1.5% yoy respectively.

In terms of Malaysian carriers' fleet, the industry report says there will be additional eight narrow-body aircraft in 2020 compared to nine in 2019 to support the growth of the domestic market.

MAVCOM's Waypoint also cites rising costs for leading the local carriers to report an average operating profit margin of 0.3% in the first half (1H) of 2019 (1H18: 2.9%) whereby its cost per available seat kilometre (CASK) rose by 5.9% yoy in 1H19 to

17.9 sen while revenue per available seat kilometre (RASK) fell by 2.2% yoy to 15.9 sen.

"The RASK-CASK spread in 1H19 of -2 sen was significantly wider than the 1H18 spread of -0.7 sen. If this trend persists, the profitability of Malaysian carriers will be at risk," it says.

### Other highlights of Waypoint report

Commenting on the overcapacity of airports in Malaysia as highlighted in its December report, MAVCOM explains that an airport is congested only when its infrastructure is incapable of coping with the demand at almost all times (Level 3) or during peak periods (Level 2).

"In Malaysia, only the KL International Airport is a Level 3 airport as classified by the International Air Transport Association. However, nine other airports in the country also face congestion, handling more passengers than their terminals' respective design capacities."

On the recent downgrading of Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia to Category 2 Aviation Regulator 10 by the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), MAVCOM expects its impact to be minimal.

It says existing services that could be affected are the KL International Airport-Daniel K. Inouye International Airport, Hawaii (KUL-HNL) via Kansai International Airport and the code-sharing between Malaysia Airlines Berhad and American Airlines but they are confined to extra services beyond the current ones.

"Collectively, these routes contribute 1.2% of the total seat capacity to and from Malaysia forecast in 2020.

"However, should other civil aviation authorities such as the Japanese, South Koreans and Chinese follow suit by disallowing Malaysian carriers to undertake additional operations to their respective countries, the impact can be greater than that of the downgrade by the US FAA," adds MAVCOM.



## First Malaysian Chartered Freightier for Pineapples Flies to China



**A**fter the phenomenal popularity of Malaysian durians with China consumers, Malaysian pineapple is the next popular fruit to gain traction in China.

On 26 November, the first Malaysian chartered freighter for pineapple cargo took flight to Zhengzhou from KLIA. The fourth air shipment of 22 tonnes of local pineapple MD2 via SF Express cargo airlines was chartered by GlobalWind Supply Chain Management (Shanghai) Co. Ltd. with Linghang International (M) Sdn Bhd as the Malaysian agent for the chartered freighter. The momentous event was jointly graced by YB Tuan Sim Tze Tzin, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry Malaysia and YB Tan Kok Wai, Malaysia's Special Envoy to China.

The chartered flight is scheduled for 1 year with an estimated 120 total flights exporting at least 2,000 tonnes of pineapples worth RM12 million in export value.

According to Raja Azmi Raja Nazuddin, group chief executive officer of Malaysia Airports, the organisation is well positioned to facilitate efficient and seamless cargo operations through the implementation of the KLIA Aeropolis Master Plan – specifically through the development of the Air Cargo & Logistics cluster, one of three core clusters identified in the master plan.

Raja Azmi said, "The facility in which you are in today - the KLIA Air Cargo Terminal 1 or KACT1 is one of the earliest manifestations of the Air Cargo & Logistics development. It encompasses 1.2 million square feet of gross floor area and serves as a cargo terminal, sorting centre, warehouse, and operations office. With our vast facilities, we are certainly more than happy to play a role in enabling the growth of our export economy, especially to new markets such as China and the Middle East".

Chairman of Zhengzhou Chen's Sun Fruit and Vegetable Trade Co. Ltd., Chen Xuemei said, "Malaysian pineapples are fresh and succulent compared to pineapples from other regions. If Malaysia maintains its supply and pricing advantage of its pineapples, I believe they will be greatly accepted by our Chinese consumers".

With the agreement of chartered freighters between the two countries, Malaysian pineapple, along with durians have become thriving commodities in the China market and at the same time, it has promoted the KLIA as the cargo distribution hub between China (Zhengzhou), ASEAN, Europe, America, Australia, and Africa.

## BAR Celebrates 2019 at GTower



**M**alaysia Airports hosted a gathering of members of the Board of Airlines Representatives (BAR) for an informal get-together in an evening of camaraderie and networking on Friday, 13 December 2019.

The event was held at the 28<sup>th</sup> floor of GTower Hotel, Kuala Lumpur. All guests were treated to a spectacular night view of the city, scrumptious buffet dinner and refreshing drinks. The evening was a relaxed atmosphere and for those present to get to know one another better outside the norms of work. Malaysia Airports' Group CEO, YM Raja Azmi Raja Nazuddin and General Manager of Airline Marketing, Mohamed Sallauddin Mat Sah was also present at the event.

Speaking to Suresh Singam, the Chairman of the BAR and Head of Regulatory Affairs in Malaysia Airlines, he said, "We look forward to a great year in 2020 despite the soft domestic and international market. This is because, we are optimistic that 'Visit Malaysia 2020' will uplift Malaysia's tourism industry to greater heights. Thus, we have high hopes that the airlines will benefit from the increase in travellers moving forward".

Nikk bin Abdillah, Commercial Manager of Korean Air in Malaysia expresses his enthusiasm for BAR, "Besides the importance of discussing regulatory affairs in BAR, Korean Air fully supports the union's CSR efforts. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November,

BAR engaged with a charity home called KIRTARSH located in Bukit Beruntung, where programmes that included room decoration, food donations, and a free barber service were provided to the underprivileged kids and elderly people in the home".

Nikk further added, "On behalf of Korean Air, I want to commend Malaysia Airports for always doing their utmost best in accommodating to the needs of the airlines. In addition, I hope that BAR continues to remain relevant and become the torchbearer in spearheading the interests of the airlines in Malaysia for the sake of the future of the aviation industry".





## Air Arabia Orders 120 A320

During the Dubai Airshow 2019, Air Arabia set a milestone with one of the region's largest single-aisle aircraft orders of 120 Airbus A320 Family aircraft. The airline is the Middle East and North Africa's first and largest low-cost carrier (LCC) and the order will more than triple Air Arabia's current fleet strength as well as support the carrier's global network expansion strategy.

The signing ceremony in November was attended by Air Arabia's Chairman Sheikh Abdullah Bin Mohammed Al Thani and Guillaume Faury, Chief Executive Officer of Airbus. Adel Al Ali, Group Chief Executive Officer of Air Arabia said at the ceremony, "Air Arabia's fleet growth strategy has always been driven by commercial demand and we are glad to announce one of the region's largest single-aisle orders with Airbus to support our growth plans. This new milestone underpins not only our solid financial fundamentals but also the strength of our multi-hub growth strategy that we have adopted over the years while remaining focused on efficiency, performance and passenger experience".

He added, "The addition of the A320neo, A321neo and A321XLR complements our existing fleet and allows us to expand our service to further and newer destinations while remaining loyal to our low-

cost business model. We look forward to working with Airbus and receiving the first delivery".

Air Arabia's current fleet consist of 54 Airbus A320 & A321neo-LR. While the A320neo builds on the A320 product line's position as the world's most advanced and fuel-efficient single-aisle aircraft family, the A321neo variant provides extended range for the A320neo family's longest fuselage version.

Air Arabia is the first Middle Eastern airline to operate the A321neo-LR with three aircraft currently in service and another three scheduled to join the fleet in 2020.

Air Arabia operates daily flights between Sharjah and Kuala Lumpur. The airline currently operates flights to more than 155 routes across the globe from four hubs located in the Middle East and North Africa.

Air Arabia is represented by Oscar Holidays as their General Sales Agent in Malaysia.

For more information, please call 03 – 2691 7100 or email [sales@gsamalaysia.com.my](mailto:sales@gsamalaysia.com.my).

## Air New Zealand Crowned as Airline of The Year

Air New Zealand has been named 2020 Airline of the Year by AirlineRatings.com. This is the sixth time the airline has received the top honour in the website's Airline Excellence Award. The airline was honoured for its record-breaking performance, multi award winning in-flight innovations, operational safety, environmental leadership and motivation of its staff.

AirlineRatings.com editor-in-chief Geoffrey Thomas said, "Air New Zealand is a clear industry leader which is remarkable when it is up against much larger global carriers. The airline is committed to excellence in all areas of its business with its employees across the globe consistently delivering exceptional customer service".

Air New Zealand Acting Chief Executive

Jeff McDowall said, "Our 12,500 employees both on the ground and in the air are committed to offering the best travel experience on the 17 million customer journeys we facilitate every year, so it's fantastic to have these efforts recognised by such an esteemed global judging panel. We'd also like to thank our customers for their ongoing loyalty to Air New Zealand".

He added, "While we are extremely proud to receive this award, 2020 marks Air New Zealand's 80<sup>th</sup> year and we are focused on delivering some great new initiatives, as well as launching our non-stop Auckland-New York service in late October".



In addition to being named Airline of the Year, Air New Zealand has also won the AirlineRatings.com award for Best Premium Economy for the sixth time in a row.

For more information, please call 03 – 2715 5020

## EVA Teams Up with Ferragamo, Jason Wu for Inflight Amenities

EVA Air is teaming up with Italian luxury brand, Salvatore Ferragamo and internationally renowned fashion designer Jason Wu for its latest inflight amenities.

The airline is introducing new Salvatore Ferragamo amenity kits for all Royal Laurel and Premium Laurel Class business passengers in both hard case and soft bag designs in December and continuing its collaboration with Jason Wu to create a second-generation of inflight sleepwear.

In the first quarter of 2020, it will begin offering brand-new Premium Economy Class amenity kits created by Belgian bag and accessory brand Kipling, giving its passengers refined amenities and comforts.

EVA President, Clay Sun said, "EVA is consistently dedicated to delivering the most comfortable and luxurious passenger services possible. We choose top global brands that complement our high standards and work in cooperation with them to create world-class amenities and service items as part of our

never-ending mission to innovate and deliver increasingly better flying experiences for our passengers".

For more information, please call 03 – 2162 2981





## ANA Expands Global Network with Five New Cities

All Nippon Airways (ANA), Japan's largest 5-Star airline is expanding its international network by adding five cities: Istanbul, Milan, Moscow, Shenzhen and Stockholm, flying from Tokyo Haneda International Airport.

The operations scheduled to start in the summer of 2020, with tickets going on sale in mid-December 2019. The addition of these routes bring the total number of international cities served by ANA flights to 52 and expand ANA's presence at Haneda Airport.

Senior Vice President of ANA, Seiichi Takahashi said at the announcement in November, "There is growing demand to visit Japan, and ANA will increase its international service just as Haneda Airport also expands to adapt for inbound Japanese tourism. These new routes will increase the ease and convenience for passengers flying to Japan from across the world, a significant benefit of our dual hub strategy".

As part of its expanded summer schedule for 2020, ANA will also offer new non-stop service from Haneda Airport to Qingdao, Delhi, Houston, San Francisco, San Jose, Seattle and Washington D.C.

ANA is also increasing the frequency of the Haneda - Los Angeles and Haneda - Sydney routes. The Delhi, Houston, Los Angeles, San Jose, Seattle and Washington D.C. routes will be relocated from Narita Airport to Haneda Airport.

Haneda Airport is one of two primary airports that serve the Greater Tokyo Area along with Narita Airport, acting as a gateway for international travellers who want to reach other parts of Japan.



Following the "Inspiration of Japan" high quality of service, ANA has been awarded the respected 5-Star rating every year since 2013 from SKYTRAX. ANA is the only Japanese airline to win the prestigious designation seven years in a row.

In addition to that, ANA has been recognised by Air Transport World as "Airline of the Year" three times in the past 10 years - 2007,

2013 and 2018, becoming one of the few airlines to win this prestigious award multiple times.

ANA currently operates double-daily flights between Tokyo (Narita Airport and Haneda Airport) and Kuala Lumpur.

For more information, please call 03 - 2032 1331



## Scoot Launches Route to Kota Kinabalu



Scoot makes Kota Kinabalu its 8<sup>th</sup> Malaysian destination from Singapore after Ipoh, Kota Bharu, Kuala Lumpur, Kuantan, Kuching, Langkawi, and Penang.

Its inaugural flight from Singapore to Kota Kinabalu was welcomed with a special water cannon salute ceremony as the Airbus A320 aircraft touched down at Kota Kinabalu International Airport (BKI) on 3 December.

Scoot's Chief Commercial Officer, Calvin Chan said, "We are delighted to add daily Kota Kinabalu services to our growing network in Malaysia, connecting travellers from Sabah to Singapore and onward to over 60 destinations worldwide, including Athens and Berlin in Europe. Customers can look forward to great value fares, and a memorable transit experience at the award-winning Changi Airport as well as Jewel. At the same time, we hope this route will also boost local tourism as Sabah has much to offer, from beautiful islands to the majestic Mount Kinabalu".

Group Chief Executive Officer of Malaysia Airports, Raja Azmi Raja Nazuddin said, "We are pleased to welcome Scoot from Singapore to Kota Kinabalu today. BKI recorded an increase of 23% in passenger movement for its BKI-SIN sector from January to October 2019 compared to the same period last year. We anticipate a further increase in passenger movement through the inception of Scoot's new service to the capital city of Sabah. Sabah has a lot to offer and the new flight service by Scoot will complement our efforts in supporting the Visit Malaysia 2020 campaign".

General Manager of Sabah Tourism, Noredah Othman said, "We are certainly looking forward to welcoming Scoot passengers to Kota Kinabalu! While Singaporean arrivals do make up the top 10 arrivals for Sabah, this route has the potential to reach other key markets such as Australia, Japan, India and

China, of which we may have limited or no direct access to. Furthermore, arrivals to Kota Kinabalu via Singapore has been growing over the past years".

Scoot is currently the largest foreign low-cost carrier in the Malaysian market, in terms of the number of destinations served. Malaysia is one of Scoot's key markets, and Kota Kinabalu is the second destination Scoot has launched this year, four months after the Kota Bharu-Singapore route which was launched in July. The launch of daily services between Kota Kinabalu and Singapore further underscores Scoot's commitment to growing its presence in Malaysia.

Scoot is represented by AVIAREPS as their General Sales Agent in Malaysia.

For more information, please call 03 - 2148 8033





To support the Visit Malaysia 2020 campaign, Tourism Malaysia has launched the VM2020 Website in December 2019, which can be accessed at [vm2020.malaysia.travel](http://vm2020.malaysia.travel).

Director General of Tourism Malaysia, Datuk Musa Yusof said at the launch, "With an enhanced digital experience and experiential content, we hope to entice



more international and local tourists to visit the various destinations in our country, in support of Visit Malaysia 2020".

The campaign targets to serve the international and domestic travellers with valuable information on Malaysia's tourist attractions, including recommended destinations, 'must-try' meals, travel itineraries, and things to do in Malaysia.

Through the website, users are informed about Malaysia through diverse informative articles which are categorised



into adventure, wildlife, nature, islands and beaches, waterfalls, caves and forests, food, and family, among others. Other features include deals and packages as well as events and happenings over the year 2020.

A unique feature of the website campaign is the "Insta Worthy" section which is powered by user-generated content (UGC). Travellers who tagged with Tourism Malaysia's official Instagram page (@malaysia.truly.asia) and include #VisitMalaysia2020, #MalaysiaTrulyAsia and #CutiCutiMalaysia hashtags' posted Instagram photos and videos have an opportunity to be featured in this section.

A chatbot will include FAQs and is expected to provide an enhanced user experience across the website. Besides that, industry players will be introduced to an online form submission as an efficient platform for all merchants to submit their special deals and packages to be promoted in the VM2020 website.

The campaign also aims to boost community engagement and extend the implementation of UGC by developing a platform for travel experiences and recommendations submission.

Other information such as deals and packages as well as events and happenings in the year 2020 are also featured in the website.

## Uzbekistan Airways in Designers' Gala Evening

The 'Malaysia - Central Asia Fashion Designers' gala evening that was held in Kuala Lumpur last November served as a platform for the presentation and promotion of Uzbekistan's tourism potential and opportunities for Uzbekistan Airways.

Malaysian fashion designer Datuk Jimmy Choo was also present during the gala evening.

The glitzy evening was an event for the Embassy of Uzbekistan and the airline to establish new contacts and attract potential tourists to Uzbekistan.

The evening was organised with the Malaysian jewellery company 'Rafflesia Pearl' and with the assistance of the Embassies of Central Asian countries. In addition, the event included the works of designers from



five Central Asian countries - Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan were shown.

Uzbekistan was represented by a young, talented and promising designer Kamola Rustamova, better known as Azukar Moreno. As part of the event, Uzbekistan Airways presented the whole range of its services in air



transportation, including information about the aircraft fleet, route network, new destinations and services on board the aircraft.

For more information, please call 03 - 2078 6488

## SHOPLAH 50-50 at Malaysia Airports

For the month of December 2019, Malaysia Airports introduced 'SHOPLAH 50-50'. With the tagline, "Shop Like a Hero. Be Rewarded Like One Too", customers were only required to spend RM50 at any participating outlet at KLIA or klia2 and receive a complimentary RM50 e-voucher for their next duty-free shopping spree.

Customers were encouraged to use their mobile phone to download the MYAirports App. The application was designed seamlessly for customers to use it in a few simple steps for them to redeem their e-voucher.

Up until 31 December 2019, the e-voucher could be redeemed at any participating outlet with a minimum spending of RM500 in a single receipt. Participating duty-free outlets include Eraman, Dimensi Eksklusif, Valiram, The Zon, and Be Duty Free.



In addition to this campaign, customers can download the MYAirports app and stand a chance to win RM1000 worth of e-vouchers, valid only for first-time registrants.

'Shop Like A Hero' campaign or #ShopLAH was announced on October 2019 to spearhead the company's commercial reset strategy that envisions its airports as vibrant,

luxurious, and exciting destinations. The revamp includes the introduction of new retail zones that simplifies the shopping experience at their airports. The retail space are divided into a fashion avenue; duty-free, retail-tainment and dining zones. At the same time, Malaysia Airports very own chain of retail outlets named "Sense of Malaysia" provides customers with a sense of place when it is launched in the second quarter of 2020.

Already on the cards for this campaign is the establishment of new retail and dining options in Langkawi International Airport (LGK) and KL International Airport (KUL), as well as retail-tainment attractions such as HIMPUN 2019, Dior Backstage, Hershey's Flotilla and Licence to Win (LTW). There will be more planned in the following months in its other international airports including Kota Kinabalu International Airport (BKI), Kuching International Airport (KCH), and Penang International Airport (PEN).



# AVIATION INTERVIEW NOOR AZMI JAMALUDDIN

Country Manager Malaysia for Royal Brunei Airlines

Noor Azmi Jamaluddin is a true veteran of the aviation industry. Having worked for Royal Brunei Airlines (RB) since 1994, he knows the airline from the back of his hand. In his experience, he has weathered storms and rode high waves with the airline. But this soldier does not plan to rest on his laurels. He recently shares with Airlink RB's plans for expanding their empire in Borneo and how Malaysian travellers can discover that RB is set apart from the rest.



**Royal Brunei Airlines launched 'RB Link' which is a regional service connecting travellers across Borneo and linking Sandakan, Bintulu, Tawau and Sibul to the rest of the world. What were the reasons and strategies behind this expansion?**

The RB Link aircraft operation will be a key enabler of increased tourism, trade and movement of people within BIMP-EAGA and will further strengthen Brunei's economic ties with many cities and towns in Borneo. RB's investment in developing air traffic in BIMP-EAGA also shows the commitment of Brunei to contribute to regional development and paves the way for people to connect to their destinations easier to which today, is challenging between different cities in the Island of Borneo.

**What is your vision for the airline and RB Link moving forward?**

We are proud to launch RB Link flights, gateway to Borneo and beyond. This is our latest innovation in improving the products and services across our network and expanding our "home market" to 21 million potential customers. RB Link flights operated by our partner - Malindo Air will initially connect four new towns and two existing cities across Borneo Island and link them to our global network of 29 international destinations via our hub - Brunei International Airport.

The markets in the targeted towns in Borneo are currently underserved. When planning this game-changing initiative we took on

board the needs of our guests for enhanced seamless connectivity and affordable services. By providing RB Link services, we are confident air travel will boom in the region, allowing the various towns and its stakeholders to reap the benefits of enhanced air connectivity.

**Malaysia is culturally similar to Brunei in many ways. Does this make it easier for you to make RB appealing to the Malaysian traveller?**

Yes, the background similarity has helped RB to be positioned as one of the preferred carriers within the region. With the expansion of route networks, it creates value for Brunei Darussalam, RB, Brunei International Airport and Malaysian travellers who are seeking seamless connections.

**What sets RB apart from its competitors?**

Team RB's focus on delivering a signature RB customer experience everyday with warm Bruneian hospitality, which is recognised by our guests and reflected in multiple awards that the national airline has received. Providing a signature RB experience and doing little things well is part of our service strategy and is our competitive advantage over other airlines. RB is truly a world-class boutique airline.

**How has RB been performing for the past few years?**

RB has been awarded by the Airline Passenger Experience Association (APEX) - a Five-Star rating for the Major Airline category. The award was presented on September 2019 at the award ceremony held in Los Angeles, USA. APEX rating program is based solely on certified passenger feedback and insights. We are very pleased to share that RB has climbed twelve places to be at number 66<sup>th</sup> position on the world's Top 100 airlines on the Skytrax ranking of global airlines. Our goal is to be a four-star Top 50 airline in the



world and the team is working hard towards achieving this goal. The enhanced network and signature RB service will assist us in achieving the various corporate goals set for Brunei's national airline.

**What is your general outlook on the future of the aviation industry in Malaysia?**

The aviation industry is a very challenging market for airlines globally, set back by intense competition and volatile demand. Nevertheless, the Asia-Pacific region including Malaysia is set to be expanded in terms of passenger traffic growth in the near future.

**In your opinion, what is the most important trait for a Country Manager to possess and why?**

Given the complexity of the aviation industry, a Country Manager needs to maintain its appropriate engagement characteristic and always be effective to the company and team.

One of the main traits that a Country Manager need is 'to think out of the box and be creative'. Because the aviation industry

is constantly changing, we always have to be on our toes. We have to constantly re-evaluate the market and reassess our initiatives in order to stay abreast with the dynamics of the market trends. There is always a better way to keep the Company ahead of competitors and stand out to travellers as well as the trade.

**Being a Country Manager for an airline can be quite hectic, what do you do to unwind?**

I do enjoy simply just taking a day off to spend time with my family or travel. I find that when you travel, you will be rejuvenated by new energy and a new perspective from the places you visit. This helps in generating fresh ideas which I share with my team upon resuming back to work. In the aviation industry, no day is the same; it is such a dynamic environment. That's why it is important for me to travel, and by broadening your mind, we can broaden new sets of skills that will always prove to be useful in the future.





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