

# AIRLINK



## CONTENTS - FEBRUARY 2020

### Airport Talk

- Brighter Prospects Ahead for Asia Pacific's Aviation Sector in 2020 **46**

### Aviation News

- Kazakhstan-Langkawi Special Chartered Flights Boost Visit Malaysia 2020 **49**
- Tourism Malaysia Holds Media & Industry Appreciation Dinner **50**

- Shenzhen Airlines Flies to Penang **51**
- ANA 'POCKETALK' Enhances Airport Communication Services **52**
- Malindo Air Makes Da Nang Third Destination In Vietnam **52**
- Korean Air Celebrates 35 Years of Seoul-Kuala Lumpur Route **53**
- British Airways Explores 3D Printing for Aircraft Parts **54**
- ZIPAIR Unveils New Cabin Ahead of Summer 2020 Launch **55**

- Four Airlines in the Atlantic Joint Business Extensify Network for Summer 2020 **56**

### Aviation Shopping

- National Art Gallery & Malaysia Airports Announces KUL Biennale 2020 **57**

### Aviation Interview

- Aviation Interview with Malkit Singh Deputy Head of GSA for Citilink Indonesia in Malaysia **58**





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## Brighter Prospects Ahead for Asia Pacific's Aviation Sector in 2020

With Routes Asia 2020 looming near in March and the keen interest on Asia Pacific, which is expected to continue to play a lead role in the global economic growth including the aviation sector which has seen tremendous growth in the last few years, there is much to be positive about in 2020 for the region.

Not only are we looking at many more new carriers taking to the skies this year but also many of the airlines taking delivery of more fuel-efficient and longer-range aircraft. Gulf Air, which recently announced the resumption of its daily Bahrain-Kuala Lumpur flights come July, will be served by its flagship Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner.

After a challenging 2019, International Air Transport Association (IATA) Director General and Chief Executive Officer Alexandre de Juniac anticipates global passenger numbers to reach 4.72 billion in 2020, up 4% from 4.54 billion.

Meanwhile, passenger demand is expected to grow 4.1% in 2020 in line with 4.2% growth in 2019. Passenger revenues, excluding ancillaries, are also expected to rise 2.5% to US\$581 billion from US\$567 billion in 2019.

While passenger capacity is forecasted to grow 4.7% in 2020 with aircraft deliveries soaring significantly, load factors are expected to slide slightly to 82% from 82.4% in 2019.

De Juniac adds, "The big question for 2020 is how capacity will develop, particularly when, as expected, the grounded 737 MAX aircraft return to service and delayed deliveries arrive".

IATA's forecast also shows that the global airline industry will produce a higher net profit of US\$29.3 billion in 2020 compared to US\$25.9 billion in 2019, whose figure has been revised downward from its forecast of US\$28 billion made last June.

Highlighting the benefits arising from increased global connectivity, IATA expects the airlines to contribute US\$136 billion to government coffers in tax revenues in 2020, 5.2% increase over 2019 while the number of unique city pairs served by them is projected to grow to 23,162 in 2020, up 4.2% from 22,228 in 2019.

It anticipates global spending by consumers and businesses on air transport to reach US\$908 billion in 2020, up 4.0% in 2019 and equivalent to 1% of the global gross domestic product (GDP). IATA expects the value of the tourism spend associated with air travel will be US\$968 billion, up 7.3% over 2019.

In reviewing 2019's performance, the association says the aviation industry's economic performance was weaker than anticipated during its June forecast, explaining that it aligns with weaker global GDP growth of 2.5% versus 2.7%, and world trade growth of 0.9%, which was down from 2.5% as forecasted.

While these negative developments contributed to softer passenger and cargo demand and corresponding weaker revenue growth, IATA notices that operating expenses did not rise as much as anticipated (3.8% versus 7.4% in June forecast) largely due to lower-than-expected fuel costs.



Despite the slower economic growth, trade wars, geopolitical tensions and social unrest, it says the aviation industry managed to achieve a decade in the black and sees 2019 as being the bottom of the current economic cycle.

Depicting brighter prospects ahead for 2020, IATA adds, "Asia Pacific carriers will be helped by the modest recovery in world trade and air cargo, showing a US\$6 billion net profit in 2020 (up from US\$4.9 billion in 2019) for a 2.2% net margin.

"Asia remains the manufacturing centre of the world and revenues from transporting many of those goods are a significant proportion of sales for many of the region's airlines".

IATA also expects China to overtake the United States and become the world's top passenger market in six years while India moves to number three spot in eight years. Both India and China will account for nearly half of the air passenger growth worldwide over the next two decades.

IATA's latest global passenger traffic's moderate results for November 2019 show international passenger demand up 3.1%

compared to November 2018, with Asia Pacific contributing around half of the growth to the annual industry-wide performance.

Despite disruptions in Hong Kong, slowing demand in India and China and less supportive business confidence in several key economies, the region's airlines' performance has been relatively stable. Spurred by a growing middle-class with a propensity to fly, the momentum for Asia's aviation market has shown no sign of letting up.

To boost tourist arrivals from China and India, the Malaysian government announced on 29 December 2019 visa waiver for tourists from these two key markets ahead of the roll-out for its Visit Truly Asia Malaysia 2020 campaign. With the visa waiver, tourists from these two countries are now able to enter the country for up to 15 days using the electronic travel registration and information system or via travel agencies in their respective countries.

Tourism Malaysia, which targets to attract 3.26 million Chinese and 683,000 Indian tourist arrivals in 2020, received 2.41 million and 539,167 tourists from these two countries respectively from January to September 2019.

AirAsia recently announced it will be commencing its thrice weekly Penang-Chengdu flights on 8 March. Currently, AirAsia X and Malindo Air offer daily and four weekly flights respectively connecting Kuala Lumpur and Chengdu.

International traffic growth, which has been commendable in previous Visit Malaysia Year campaigns, is expected to get a similar boost this year and benefit from new routes, direct connectivity and additional frequencies by new and existing airlines into the country.

For 2019, Malaysia Airports saw 20 airlines recording double-digit growth and 16 new destinations operated by existing and new airlines. The main contributors of its international traffic volume included Scoot, Emirates, China Southern Airlines, Jetstar Asia and Qatar Airways.

The airport operator expects to maintain the momentum this year with the new Taiwan-based Starlux Airlines commencing its maiden Taipei-Penang flight on 23 January 2020, Turkmenistan Airlines reintroducing its Ashgabat-Kuala Lumpur service using its Boeing 777-200LR aircraft on 2 February 2020 and Gulf Air resuming its service to Kuala Lumpur on 2 July 2020 from Bahrain.



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# MORE THAN AN ISLAND, A GATEWAY TO LEGENDARY TREASURES.

LANGKAWI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, THE GATEWAY TO GETAWAYS

It all begins at Langkawi International Airport (LGK). Journey into the laidback archipelago of 99 islands and get lost in the wonders of Langkawi UNESCO Global Geopark. Plan your route to a world of rich experiences and natural splendour.

## Kazakhstan-Langkawi Special Chartered Flights Boost Visit Malaysia 2020

Special chartered flights by Kompas Tour from Almaty, Kazakhstan to the duty-free resort island of Langkawi provide the early boost to the Visit Malaysia Year 2020 campaign.

The first of the charter flights in December was welcomed by Datuk Musa Yusof, Director General of Tourism Malaysia, Dr. Hezri Adnan, Chief Executive Officer of Langkawi Development Authority (LADA) and Mohamed Sallauddin Hj Mat Sah, General Manager Airline Marketing of Malaysia Airports.

On receiving the flight, Datuk Musa said the initiative would boost the number of tourists from Kazakhstan to Malaysia, which registered 13,912 visitors as of September 2019, an increase of 33.6% over the same period in 2018.

Datuk Musa added, "The Kompas Tour special chartered flight is a collaboration between Tourism Malaysia, Malaysia Airports, Langkawi Development Authority (LADA), Embassy Alliance Travel (M) Sdn Bhd and Kompas Tour, which is one of the leading travel agencies in Central Asia".

He explained that the flights from



Kazakhstan to Langkawi would not only bring tourists from Kazakhstan but also from its neighbouring countries in Central Asia such as Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

Meanwhile, Dr. Hezri said the strategic cooperation carried out by Tourism Malaysia and Kompas Tour had boosted the number of tourists from Central Asia.

In 2017, Malaysia and Kazakhstan have agreed on 11 areas of cooperation to enhance bilateral ties which include, among others, information and communication technology, islamic banking and financial services, tourism and higher education.

Kazakhstan is Malaysia's fourth largest trading partner among the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries.

In 2018, Malaysia-Kazakhstan bilateral trade stood at US\$478 million (RM2 trillion), out of which 73% comprised of Kazakhstan's exports to Malaysia, while the remaining 27% is made up of imports from Malaysia.

Tourism Malaysia hopes that in light of the Visit Malaysia 2020 campaign, more visitors from the region will discover and enjoy the various beautiful and historical destinations across the country.





## Tourism Malaysia Holds Media & Industry Appreciation Dinner



In a night of glitz and glamour, Tourism Malaysia held a dinner to show their appreciation for the commitment and cooperation of the Malaysian media and industry players in supporting the tourism industry in Malaysia. The sharply dressed event was held in The Glasshouse, Seputeh on 13 December.

The event was also held in light of the launch of the 'Visit Malaysia 2020' campaign. The space was arranged tastefully with decorations and adornments in a theme of white and blue as guests flocked in with dresses matching to the theme.

Datuk Musa Hj. Yusof, Director General of Tourism Malaysia said, "The Visit Malaysia Year 2020 is just around the corner and as one of the agencies under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts & Culture Malaysia, Tourism Malaysia was given a mission to promote the Visit Malaysia 2020 campaign throughout the world. I am

pleased to say that we are on track to deliver the best Visit Malaysia campaign ever in the history of Malaysia with targets of 30 million tourist arrivals and RM100 billion tourist receipts".

The Director General added, "Moving forward next year, I wish to share my hopes and aspirations. The success of Visit Malaysia is not about Tourism Malaysia's efforts alone but as well, that of the whole nation's. As such, I hope that next year, we will continue to receive the support of all media players and industry friends to ensure a successful Visit Malaysia 2020 year".

The event was also attended by YB Tuan Muhammad Bakhtiar Wan Chik, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia who spoke about Malaysia's abundance in natural and cultural heritage as an invaluable asset towards capturing traveller's interest and growth in the Southeast Asia region. Among the top online searches for travel to Malaysia

are from Korea, Indonesia, China, Thailand and Singapore.

YB Muhammad Bakhtiar also added, "As we continue to focus on high-value tourism such as ecotourism and cultural tourism, in particular, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) welcomes the newly announced inscription of Silat to UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, which celebrates a history tracing back to the early days of the Langkasuka Kingdom. This remarkable recognition is significant for the art of Silat, which now joins the ranks of Dondang Sayang (2018) and Makyong (2005), declared a Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity".

Tourism Malaysia also presented the Visit Malaysia 2020 video and treated guests to a scrumptious dinner along with entertainment, a lucky draw, as well as the announcement of the winner of Best Dressed Award.

## Shenzhen Airlines Flies to Penang

Malaysia Airports continues to position Penang International Airport (IATA Code: PEN) as a preferred hub by welcoming Shenzhen Airlines' inaugural flight last December.

The then former Group Chief Executive Officer of Malaysia Airports, Raja Azmi Raja Nazuddin said, "With the increasing number of business and leisure travelers traveling between Malaysia and China, this new service by Shenzhen Airlines is very timely. It is the fourth Chinese airline operating in Penang and we are confident to continue developing the tourism and business industries for the state. I am delighted to share that our current international passenger movements stand at 3.5 million and 444,507 are from China alone."

The momentous occasion was graced by Yeoh Soon Hin, State EXCO for Tourism, Arts, Culture and Heritage; Lu Shi Wei, Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in Penang; Ooi Chok Ya, Chief Executive Officer of Penang Global Tourism and Zainuddin Mohamed, Senior Manager Airline Marketing of Malaysia Airports.

As one of China's gateways to the world, Shenzhen is one of China's most developed cities and one of the fastest-growing cities in the world. The city is proudly on the list of UNESCO Creative Cities. Shenzhen Airlines was founded in November 1992 and started operations on 17 September 1993. The airline is headquartered in Shenzhen and

has been a member of Star Alliance since 2012. To date, Shenzhen Airlines owns nearly 220 aircraft and has one of the youngest fleets worldwide.

Shenzhen Airlines covers nearly 300 routes around the world, with nearly 700 outbound flights and more than 80 cities.

Being the 20th passenger airline operating in PEN, Shenzhen Airlines offers a 4-time weekly flight on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, utilising its Boeing 737-800 aircraft.

For more information, please call 03 - 2166 1999.





## ANA 'POCKETALK' Enhances Airport Communication Services

**P**OCKETALK®, All Nippon Airways (ANA)'s advanced interactive translator is the latest effort by the airline toward reducing barriers and creating a more connected world.

From December 2019, the first POCKETALK® devices are being featured at the lobby and boarding gates of Osaka International Itami Airport and a total of 200 devices will be featured across all 50 domestic Japanese airports.

POCKETALK® is a portable real-time language translator that will enable ANA ground staff in domestic airports to communicate with all of its passengers instantly and naturally - no matter what language they speak. It has the ability to translate up to 74\* languages including various dialects and commonly used idiomatic phrases. By using this device, ANA staff will be better equipped to communicate with passengers in situations where a linguistic barrier may have previously existed.

Senior Vice President of ANA, Masaki Yokai said, "ANA is constantly looking for opportunities to improve the passenger's travel experience, and that includes taking steps to make our service at airports as

inclusive and convenient as possible".

He added, "Our commitment to service and Japanese hospitality has inspired us to look at innovative ways to use technology to enhance the passenger experience. Providing POCKETALK® to our staff will simplify communication with global travellers and allow them to better meet passenger needs".

For more information, please call 03 - 2032 1331



*\*Out of 74 languages, 55 languages are translated into speech and text, while the other 19 languages are translated into text. (As of November 2019)*

## Malindo Air Makes Da Nang Third Destination In Vietnam

**M**alindo Air has added Da Nang as its third destination in Vietnam from Kuala Lumpur after Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

The Kuala Lumpur-Da Nang route commenced with frequency of three times weekly from 1 December 2019 until 8 December 2019; and then increased to four times weekly from 9 December to 12 December 2019; six times weekly from 13 December 2019 to 19 January 2020 with the frequency eventually increasing to daily flight from 20 January 2020 onwards.

CEO of Malindo Air, Captain Mushafiz Mustafa Bakri emphasised that the launch of direct flight to Da Nang from Kuala Lumpur is a strong reflection of Malindo Air's continued efforts to strengthen the airline's regional foothold.

He continued, "We are delighted to launch direct services from Kuala Lumpur to Da Nang, a renowned historical city with several UNESCO



World Heritage Sites, including the Imperial City of Hue, the Old Town of Hoi An, and the My Son ruins".

Mushafiz said, "We are offering accessibility to more travellers with seamless connectivity via Kuala Lumpur from countries such as Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Thailand, Singapore, Australia and Malaysia".

For more information, please call 03 - 7841 5388

## Korean Air Celebrates 35 Years of Seoul-Kuala Lumpur Route



**K**orean Air celebrated its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Seoul-Kuala Lumpur route with a special ceremony held at KL International Airport on 16 December 2019. Korean Air launched its flights to Kuala Lumpur in 1984 from Gimpo Airport (Seoul) to Subang Airport (Kuala Lumpur) via Singapore using the three-engine McDonnell Douglas DC-10 with a frequency of two flights per week.

In his speech during the ceremony, Korean Air's country manager for Malaysia, Mr. Jeon Young Do, said that this event was also held in conjunction with Korean Air's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Korean Air began as a small Asian carrier with only eight aircraft on 1 March 1969. Today, after decades of developing new routes, service innovation, and continuous investment, Korean Air has become a leading global airline, flying to 127 cities in 44 countries.

"We are truly grateful to Malaysia Airports not only for hosting this event, but also for being one of our best airport operator partners. Malaysia Airports has provided us with the best services during the past

35 years. Korean Air has turned 50 this year and we hope the next 50 years to come will be filled with success and prosperity".

The then former Group Chief Executive Officer of Malaysia Airports, Raja Azmi Raja Nazuddin said, "For the past 35 years, Korean Air has been a trusted and preferred airline of our passengers. We are confident that our partnership will continue to spur the tourism industries of both countries as preferred holiday destinations, especially with the rising entertainment industry in Korea over the years. It is also Visit Malaysia 2020 for the nation, so this celebration is timely. We look forward to many more years working with Korean Air".

During the event, Korean Air arranged a parade by flight attendants in vintage uniforms, exhibiting the changes in the airline's uniform design over the past five decades.

'The historical uniform teams,' who wear ten types of vintage uniforms as well as the current uniform, have flown on important routes from each region, such as Los Angeles, Tokyo, Beijing, Hong Kong, Singapore,

Paris and Sydney as part of Korean Air's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.

Korean Air also showcased their newly launched safety video starring SuperM, a global K-pop group. The safety video features a mix of five music genres: hip-hop, R&B, electronic, deep house and synth pop. The video aims to capture the attention of a wide range of passengers through the mixing of various genres into one song.

At the end of the event, a cake-cutting ceremony was held. A cake with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary emblem was specially prepared for the ceremony by Aerodarat, Korean Air's ground operator in Kuala Lumpur. The number 50 symbolises Korean Air's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the featured Taegeuk design represents the iconic symbol of the Korean flag.

Korean Air currently operates daily flights to Kuala Lumpur with Boeing 747-8i, seating 368 people.

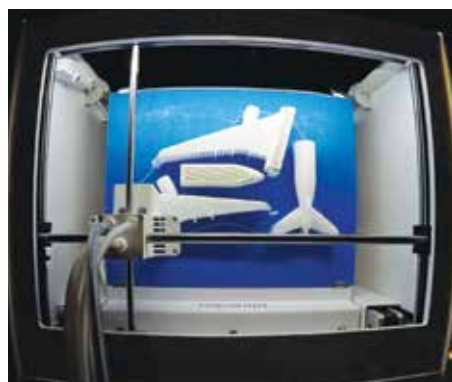
For more information, please visit [www.koreanair.com](http://www.koreanair.com)



## British Airways Explores 3D Printing for Aircraft Parts

British Airways' initiative to explore the possibility of using 3D printers to create aircraft parts in the future is part of the airline's flightpath to net zero carbon emissions by 2050. These printers would be located at airports around the world to reduce delays for customers and emissions caused by transporting items.

Non-essential cabin parts would likely be the first on the list to be generated, including pieces of tray tables, entertainment systems and toilets. While these components do not impact the safe operation of the flight, they can reduce the number of seats or toilets available for customers and cause delays as engineers wait for the parts to be flown to wherever the aircraft is.



Announcing this in December, Ricardo Vidal, Head of Innovation at British Airways said, "We work with start-ups and innovation partners from around the world to explore and implement the very latest technologies, from artificial intelligence to speed up turnaround times to biometrics, helping us to deliver a seamless airport experience for customers. 3D printing is yet another advancement that will keep us at the forefront of airline innovation".

According to British Airways, 3D printing is an essential step towards the sustainable future of aviation, as the printers can produce parts that, while as strong and durable as traditional components, weigh up to 55 per cent less. Every kilogram removed saves up to 25 tons of CO2 emissions during the lifespan of an aircraft.

It's research into the future of the customer experience suggested that within the next decade, biological scanners gathering

travellers' physiological and nutritional needs could suggest food and drink to meet individual requirements and print these on board the aircraft. In addition, the research predicts that jet lag could become a thing of the past, with 3D printers producing personalised health supplements.

British Airways' list of top ten predictions for how 3D printing could be used by airline's in the future include: cutlery; products for amenity kits, such as toothbrushes or combs; tray tables; aircraft windows; inflight entertainment screens; seats; baggage containers; circuit boards for electrical components; flight deck switches and, aircraft shells.

British Airways operates daily flights between London and Kuala Lumpur.

For more information, please call 03 – 7712 4747



## ZIPAIR Unveils New Cabin Ahead of Summer 2020 Launch

ZIPAIR Tokyo Inc. revealed the much-anticipated cabin interior of its Boeing 787-8 aircraft last December, as the carrier prepares to launch its international flights on 14 May 2020 between Tokyo-Narita and Bangkok-Suvarnabhumi Airport.

The interior of the cabin features a contrast of dark tones and the corporate color of harmony gray. These colors were selected in the design to provide a sense of serenity, allowing passengers to relax on long-haul flights. For entertainment, the carrier will primarily offer a fee-based option to browse the internet and stream movies on the passenger's smartphone or tablet. As such, the aircraft will not be equipped with personal monitors on each seat.

A total number of 290 seats will be available whereby 18 seats are designated for the

ZIP Full-Flat, while the remaining are the standard economy seats.

As the name suggests, the Business Class product features a 180-degree reclining seat and spaciouly designed area with privacy in mind. The cover of each seat is made with genuine leather, allowing one to relax and enjoy the flight experience, while being equipped with reading lights and charging equipment.

Meanwhile, the carrier's Economy Class product utilises artificial leather on each seat, while featuring an ample seat pitch and width measuring 79 centimeters and 43 centimeters, respectively. In addition, when one reclines, the backrest and seat move simultaneously providing more space for passengers sitting behind each seat.

The Boeing 787 Dreamliner aircraft has a cruising range comparable to that of larger

aircraft and is 20% more efficient than the conventional aircraft. The superior noise performance plays a critical role in operating quieter flights to destinations around the world and with advanced technologies; the aircraft provides an unrivaled passenger experience.

ZIPAIR Tokyo Inc. is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Japan Airlines.





## Four Airlines in the Atlantic Joint Business Extensify Network for Summer 2020



The airlines in the Atlantic Joint Business, American Airlines, British Airways, Finnair and Iberia, are opening additional routes across the Atlantic for the Summer 2020 season. In total, 8 new routes will be added for next summer. With these additions, the four airlines will together offer over 14,500 additional seats on a total of 105 routes, with over 1,000 weekly frequencies between both continents.

The new routes include:

- Chicago O'Hare – Budapest; Chicago O'Hare – Prague; Chicago O'Hare – Krakow
- Philadelphia – Reykjavik Keflavik
- London Heathrow – Portland
- Madrid – Washington Dulles
- Paris Orly – Las Vegas; Paris Orly – Boston

Since 2013, Finnair has partnered with fellow oneworld alliance members American Airlines, British Airways and Iberia to provide customers with more flight choices, better connections and better pricing on

transatlantic routes through its Atlantic Joint Business (AJB).

"The Atlantic Joint Business provides our customers with unparalleled choice and flexibility when they travel between North America and Europe," says Ole Orv r, Chief Commercial Officer at Finnair. "Customers can mix and match flights from any of our AJB airlines, have access to even more destinations and take advantage of our oneworld global support centres in some of the main US and European hubs".

In 2020, Finnair will fly to five Trans-Atlantic destinations, including year-round services to New York JFK and Los Angeles LAX as well as seasonal flights to Chicago O'Hare, San Francisco and Miami. Finnair has significantly increased its US capacity in recent years by adding over 88 % of seats on the transatlantic corridor since 2015. Last September, Finnair announced David Posey as its first ever US

Signature Menu Chef. Chef Posey curated Nordic-inspired dishes for Business class customers on flights departing from the United States to Helsinki.

By bringing their network of flights together, the partnership offers customers in the North Atlantic the most competitive choice, with British Airways, Finnair and Iberia operating in Europe and American Airlines in the USA.

Within the partnership, there are over 140 transatlantic flights a day, giving customers a wealth of choice when travelling across the Atlantic. Together they offer convenient flight schedules at competitive fares from eight hubs throughout North America and three hubs in Europe. American Airlines and British Airways have approximately 75 flights a day from London to the USA. In addition, the partnership has 102 nonstop flights from North America to Europe; 34 gateways to North America and 24 gateways to Europe.



## National Art Gallery & Malaysia Airports Announces KUL Biennale 2020

The National Art Gallery announced the second instalment of KUL Biennale, an exhibition created to further establish the progression of the local and international visual arts scene. KUL Biennale 2020 is scheduled to be held and exhibited to the public from 1 September 2020 till 28 February 2021.

Joining in the announcement of KUL Biennale 2020 at Langkawi International Airport recently was YB Tuan Muhammad Bakhtiar Wan Chik, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia together with Ismail Ani Arope, Chairman of KUL Biennale 2020 and Mohammad Nazli Abdul Aziz, Senior General Manager of Commercial Services, Malaysia Airports.

Following this momentous partnership, KL Biennale has been re-named KUL Biennale, hence *udara* (aviation) is included in the theme of 'Tanah Air (Sa)Udara' - with (Sa) being placed before the word *udara* which

when combined becomes *Saudara*, translating to 'brotherhood'.

With an inspiring theme touching on environmental and social matters, the curatorial direction is focused on local and bordering issues associated with negotiations in politics, economics, geography, culture, beliefs, flora and fauna.

KUL Biennale 2020 will see the participation of 100 artists from Malaysia and South East Asia countries including Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, Singapore, Brunei, Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and others. Apart from these 100 artists, participants will also consist of visual artists, art lecturers and collectors, as well as industry experts who will be showcasing a variety of art pieces such as drawings, sculptures, installations, murals, and interactive performance arts.

In addition, the National Art Gallery will organise parallel programs around Kuala

Lumpur to complement KUL Biennale 2020 which include Collateral exhibitions from selected private galleries, and an Art Symposium targeted towards local and international art enthusiasts as well as primary and secondary school students to be held at the National Art Gallery Auditorium.

Apart from building Malaysia's identity and profile as a must-visit destination on the global art map, the initiative took place in conjunction with Visit Malaysia 2020, with various art exhibitions planned to be on display in five locations under Malaysia Airports, starting with Langkawi International Airport.



# AVIATION INTERVIEW WITH MALKIT SINGH

## Deputy Head of GSA for Citilink Indonesia in Malaysia

Malkit Singh is one of the more prominent figures in the aviation industry. Having been in this line of business for over 35 years, he is certainly a sailor that has conquered the seven seas. And despite this, he is still traversing into uncharted waters by starting his own company that currently represents Citilink Indonesia as their General Sales Agent in Malaysia. Airlink finds out what it takes to stay on top of your game in the aviation arena.



### As the Deputy Head of a GSA (General Sales Agent) for an international airline, what are the main challenges that you face?

As Citilink Indonesia is relatively new to Malaysia, the airline has to work strategically to grow its market share on routes between Malaysia and Indonesia despite stiff competition from both full-service and low-cost carriers (LCC) in the region.

Being an LCC, Citilink's unique selling proposition (USP) is their free checked baggage allowance which includes hot meals and drinks on most of its routes which is in contrast to other LCCs. The challenge therefore, is reaching out in innovative ways to the travelling public, especially the middle class, and offering them perks beyond what other LCCs delivers.

In spite of the fact that Citilink is in heavy competition with other airlines that fly the same routes, I believe that we are able to leverage on our USP by advertising in all possible media channels.



Another challenge includes optimising both traditional and new distribution channels to secure a respectable market share on the routes operated by Citilink. Even though travellers are getting more comfortable dealing online for their travel needs, traditional distribution channels still have a significant role. The challenge here is having a balance between upholding expectations of the traditional channels and providing adequate options for travellers who wish to plan their journey by themselves.

### What are your plans and vision for Citilink Indonesia in the upcoming years?

Citilink Indonesia is the LCC arm of Garuda Indonesia. It is an award-winning LCC, voted 4-star LCC by Skytrax. This is a befitting complement to a 5-star status to Garuda Indonesia (also rated by Skytrax). As an award-winning airline, Citilink has only one direction - to move forward and eventually be on par with the parent company, Garuda Indonesia.

### The aviation industry is rapidly changing and is said to be increasingly challenging for airlines to circumvent. What are the initiatives that you plan to implement to overcome this?

To me, challenges are opportunities to prove yourself that you deserve a place in the forefront as a prime option for customers. We will continue to identify the issues and explore opportunities so that we can accommodate our customer's needs.

In regards to marketing, we will focus on packaging Citilink as an airline that has an excellent flight safety record, on-time departures, convenient flight timings, premium loyalty programme benefits, and competitively priced. To us, first impression is everything and we want our customers to keep coming back.

On the other hand, we place a huge priority on frontline hospitality and fast customer service. With genuine care of our customers, I believe our frontline team are instrumental in turning Citilink into a success.

### In your own opinion, what is your standpoint of Citilink Indonesia and its future in the aviation industry as one of the low-cost carriers in this region?

I believe Citilink has great potential to grow as a premier LCC in the region as the airline is essentially a different product altogether from other LCCs.

Citilink's loyalty programme has now been integrated with Garuda Indonesia. This means that the vast global network of Garuda Indonesia is now a seamless option for Citilink customers. It is our hope to grow this loyalty programme in Malaysia so that our customers can get the best deals for their travels.

In addition, Citilink also has the Corporate Partner programme, tailored for companies and organisations travelling with us where members enjoy exclusive airfare offers. We believe that this product has great potential in the Malaysian market, which will ultimately contribute to our load factor with our existing flights between Malaysia and Indonesia.

With continued focus on air travel security, safety, best hospitality, and fast service recovery, the airline will stand out to be among the preferred short-haul LCC in the region.

### Citilink Indonesia have launched 4 international routes to Malaysia: Surabaya – Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta – Kuala Lumpur, Denpasar (Bali) – Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta – Penang. Can you tell us more about these routes and what the carrier offers?

Citilink Indonesia currently uses the Airbus A320 aircraft with a 180-seat economy class configuration to connect Indonesia and Malaysia with a total of 32 flights weekly, made up of 11 weekly flights from Kuala Lumpur-Jakarta, daily flights for Penang-Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur-Surabaya and Denpasar-Kuala Lumpur. That is equal to 5760 seats offered weekly in each direction.

The free allowance for checked baggage per seat-occupying passenger on these routes is 10 kg and another 7kg for hand-baggage. This also includes a complimentary inflight hot meal.

As an award-winning carrier, we strive to further excel our hospitality attributes, flight safety and security. Our parent company, Garuda Indonesia also has a wide global network to provide seamless connectivity to meet the long-haul travel needs of our customers.

### How long have you been in the industry and what kind of expertise do you have in this line of business?

I am proud to say that I have been in the aviation industry for over 35 years and counting. I started working in the finance department in Malaysia Airlines. From there, I moved around several departments (including Corporate Planning and Revenue Management) before getting posted to Penang for two years. Subsequently, I was posted to New York, USA for 7 glorious years before calling it a day.

Soon after, I was employed by Air Mauritius for 5 years, Qatar Airways for one year, and then Oscar Holidays for two years, to which were the General Sales Agent (GSA) for Sri Lankan Airlines. Finally, I decided to leave and start my own GSA company called MS Elite Global, which is proud to have Citilink Indonesia as its first airline to represent.

Thus, I can very much say that I have the wherewithal in the industry. By the same token, I believe that networking is extremely important in this industry and it is safe to say that I am well-established within the Malaysian aviation circles.

### What do you love about the aviation industry that drives your passion for it?

The beauty of the aviation industry is that it is very vibrant and dynamic. It is, however, a double-edged sword as throughout your career, you will experience many peaks but there will also be many troughs. The trick is to always prepare for incoming weather.



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