

# AIRLINK

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## Airport GCEO Speaks

**A corporate leader with diverse experience, he is harnessing the latest technological advances to spur Malaysia Airports to greater heights as a smart aviation regional hub.**

**This month, Dato' Mohd Shukrie Mohd Salleh shares how the airport operator is ever prepared to deal with all eventualities, including the annual Northeast monsoon alongside its efforts to upgrade the facilities at and around the KL International Airport (KLIA) amidst the ongoing coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.**



**A**s a responsible airport operator and caring host, we have been doing extensive preparation in terms of flood mitigation measures at our seven airports in Kuala Terengganu, Kota Bharu, Kuantan, Ipoh, Alor Setar, Penang and Kota Kinabalu, which are likely to be affected by the monsoon season that falls between November and March.

We recently completed the installation of a portable submersible water pump and generator at the Sultan Mahmud Airport in Terengganu to complement its two existing pump houses and to steer excess water into the sea. Although this airport has not been affected by floods before, we believe in taking extra precautions to ensure that its essential services for our valued guests are not compromised.

These efforts are part of our airport customised Flood Emergency Response Plan, where we have also ensured that our airports' drainage system is clear of debris and blockage for excess water to easily flow out from its premise.

Meanwhile, we have also made sure that the drive to KL International Airport (KLIA) is brighter and safer as part of our ongoing enhancement of street lights within its vicinity and to ensure our guests have a seamless journey to and from the airport. This exercise, which started since last October, is almost near completion.

So far, 2,000 street light poles and railing light fittings along the main roads around our flagship airport have been rectified. Working closely with the Public Works Department, we will also be rectifying the wire and guard rails, resurfacing the roads and repainting line markings along these roads.

KLIA is also undergoing a major upgrading of its baggage handling system (BHS) using ultra-violet (UV) technology as it readies itself to serve a larger capacity more efficiently and when travel resumes to normalcy. Exploring new technologies and the latest global practices is part of our commitment to ensure a safe and smooth passenger journey.

The UV bulbs, installed in an enclosed tunnel within the BHS, disinfect the baggage

automatically as it passes through the conveyor system to the reclaim area. Using UV short wavelength, this technology has been proven to effectively eliminate surface contaminants such as mould, bacteria and other microbial biofilms. We are installing four UV tunnels to help mitigate the risk from infectious airborne microbial contaminants for both our passengers and staff responsible for baggage handling.

The latest statistics on our passenger movement last December for our Malaysia operations is a cause for celebration with seven new local flight routes boosting domestic traffic by three-fold compared to the month before, where we saw over a million passengers travelling domestically.

The spike in Covid-19 cases in the country and the recently announced imposition of tighter travel restrictions are expected to impact our passenger movements in the coming months. Nevertheless, I would like to reassure that we, at Malaysia Airports, are always ready and committed to maintain the highest levels of safety at our airports.



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# On-track Preparation for Malaysia's Covid-19 Vaccination Rollout

The worst of the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic in Malaysia is far from over with the Movement Control Order (MCO) 2.0 now extended nationwide except for the state of Sarawak, which comes under Conditional MCO.

States like Kedah, Perak, Negeri Sembilan, Terengganu and Pahang have their MCO running from 22 January until 4 February while the rest had theirs from 13-26 January except for Kelantan, which was placed under MCO from 23-29 January.

Since last October, Malaysia has been in the third wave of the pandemic with the country breaching the 4,000 mark with 4,029 daily Covid-19 cases on 16 January. This was reached earlier than the mid-February timeline projected by the Health Ministry based on its epidemiological modelling.

Epidemiologist Datuk Dr Awang Bulgiba Awang Mahmud reportedly warns, "We need to institute steps that will prepare us for the next wave. If we do not do something about these issues, then the time we are buying with MCO 2.0 will be squandered again."

A week after the government's declaration of a state of emergency on 11 January, Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Mohd Yassin unveiled 22 initiatives under the RM15 billion PERMAI Assistance Package aimed at combating Covid-19, supporting business continuity and looking into the welfare of Malaysians.

Among the initiatives, the government has agreed to provide a special discount of 10% on electricity bills from January to March to hotel operators, theme parks, convention centres, shopping malls, local airline offices as well as travel and tour agencies to help cushion Covid-19's impact on these business sectors.



## Status of vaccination programme

On the country's vaccination programme, Muhyiddin assures that is on-track. So far, the government has signed three agreements with vaccine manufacturers. Among them is the United States pharmaceutical group Pfizer, which will deliver 12.8 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines for 20% or 6.4 million of the population.

Under the preliminary purchasing agreement signed last November with Pfizer, Malaysia will receive a million doses in the first quarter of 2021 followed by 1.7 million doses the following quarter.

Another 5.8 million doses will be delivered in the third quarter and 4.3 million doses in the fourth quarter. Delivery of Malaysia's vaccine orders with other manufacturers are also staggered.

Hopefully, Malaysia will be able to receive its first batch of vaccines from Pfizer by end-February as mentioned in Muhyiddin's PERMAI speech on 18 January as AFP had reported a few days earlier Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine deliveries to Norway and Europe have been reduced while the company ramps up its production capacity.



According to the Prime Minister, Malaysia's vaccination programme, to be implemented in phases, will take over 12 months. "Malaysia is expected to meet its target of vaccinating more than 80% of its population or close to 27 million people by the first quarter of 2022."

A total of RM3 billion has been allocated for the National Immunisation Programme, with the first batch, comprising frontline workers from the healthcare and security sectors, expected to be vaccinated by early March.

To ensure effective implementation of Malaysia's vaccination programme, Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Khairy Jamaluddin, who co-chairs the Special Committee on Ensuring Access to Covid-19 Vaccine Supply, believes that Malaysia can learn from Singapore and Indonesia since they had already rolled out theirs.

Under this special committee are several smaller committees for the selection of the vaccine, communication, approvals, trade facilitation, finance and storage, logistics as well as transportation and the distribution of the supplies.

### **MABkargo's role**

Malaysia Airlines Bhd's (MAB) main cargo arm, MAB Kargo Sdn Bhd (MABkargo), has been appointed the official cargo handler for the Covid-19 vaccine in Malaysia.

Given MABkargo's track record, aircraft capability, ground infrastructure, qualified personnel and network via commercial, charter or full freighter flights, MAB group chief executive officer Captain Izham Ismail

is confident also of MABkargo's ability to support other governments worldwide in the safe handling, transportation and distribution of the vaccine.

Apart from its three dedicated freighter aircraft, MABkargo also uses MAB's passenger aircraft belly, which can provide a temperature-controlled environment in its cargo holds that is suitable for vaccines that typically require beyond freezing point temperature packaging and handling.

Izham adds, "Our capabilities include aircraft unit load device containers which are specially designed for preservation of frozen products at their required temperatures.

"We also have ground operations which meet the requirements for the safe and secure handling of time and temperature-sensitive products and most importantly, trained personnel for the professional handling of the goods."

He says MABkargo has previously transported time and temperature-sensitive goods besides vaccines and medical products such as human organs and biological samples which require similar handling.

"We have worked closely with governments and non-governmental organisations to transport over 33,000 tonnes of medical equipment and disaster-relief provisions to impacted regions via 1,067 flights using passenger-to-cargo aircraft and cargo in cabin."

Understandably, other industry players such as the Pos Aviation Sdn Bhd will be supporting MABkargo in the vaccine distribution. According to an industry source, a lot would depend on how the logistics for the vaccine distribution will be handled, where the Health Ministry has decided its vaccine hub will be and the hub's readiness.

With regular scheduled commercial flights still down by 50% to 60% in most parts of the world, Aviation Week Network flight analyst and fleet forecaster Daniel Williams foresees the use of smaller feeder aircraft assisting in the vaccine distribution, particularly to the more remote destinations.

This could apply to Malaysia which has a large concentration of rural areas in Sabah and Sarawak. Williams anticipates distribution and logistical challenges for the cold chain delivery of the Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine which requires ultra-cold storage of minus 70 degrees Celsius.

He views the use of package or courier carriers and chartered flights for vaccine shipment as a boon for the aviation industry as they not only provide employment but will also help airlines earn some revenue stream.

He is also happy to note that package carriers have not been greatly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic due to the shift in demand towards online shopping. This is evident from the success of the recent Black Friday, Cyber Monday, Double 11 and 1212 online campaigns.



# STARLUX Airlines Launches Inaugural Flight to KUL

Taiwan’s newly founded airline STARLUX Airlines, with its very first flight to Penang, Malaysia on 23 January last year, officially launched its inaugural flight flying between Kuala Lumpur and Taipei on 5 January 2021.

STARLUX has been adjusting its schedule and choosing to open new routes to important business destinations in response to market demand during the pandemic. It strives to cater to the gradually recovering travel market, providing business and student travelers, as well as cargo customers safe and reliable service.

Outbound and inbound flights are scheduled twice weekly on Tuesdays and Fridays.

With regard to the newly added routes, STARLUX will continue safety precautions and measures to prevent Covid-19. These measures include full cabin and amenities cleaning and disinfection on every flight, cabin crew wearing disposable waterproof gowns, surgical masks, waterproof gloves and eye protection equipment.

Malaysia Airports, the operator of KL International Airport (KUL) welcomes STARLUX as the third airline flying the Taipei-Kuala Lumpur route. The new airline further enhances KUL’s extensive connectivity of over 60 airlines serving more than 120 direct destinations. KUL continues to be diligent in the implementation of various safety measures to boost passenger confidence as air travel slowly returns to normalcy.

STARLUX airlines is positioned as a premium boutique airline. Its A321neo aircraft has 188 seats, including 8 in business class and 180 in economy class. Each seat in business class is equipped with a 15.6-inch 1080p inflight entertainment system screen and can transform into an 82-inch fully flat bed. Passengers sitting in economy class can stretch out with a generous 31-inches of legroom and enjoy a personal entertainment system featuring a 10.1-inch 720p screen, which is the first on narrow-body aircraft in Taiwan.



The business class meals are specially prepared by the one-star Michelin Taiwanese restaurant - Longtail, while economy class features Taiwan-based meat brand “Hutong Roasted Meat” to create luxurious roasted meat with rice. There is also the one and only signature “Home in the air” cabin fragrance.

With its hub at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport, STARLUX Airlines now flies to Macau, Penang, Bangkok, Osaka, Tokyo and Kuala Lumpur. The airline initially operates routes in Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia and will gradually develop its trans-oceanic routes to North America starting in 2022, growing steadily toward becoming one of the world’s leading airlines.

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

# Malaysia Airlines Launches New Online Platform

Malaysia Airlines' frequent flyer programme Enrich is pleased to announce the launch of Enrich's new online shopping platform called Enrich Shoppe on 12 January 2021. Powered by RebateMango, Enrich Shoppe provides a fun, easy and quick way for Enrich members in Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Philippines to earn Enrich Miles for purchases from over 500 famous e-commerce brands such as Tumi, Sephora, Michael Kors, Watsons, JD Sports, Uniqlo, Cotton On, and many more.

This partnership adds significant value and provides convenience for Enrich members to instantly earn up to 10X Enrich Miles earned for every USD1 spent on Enrich Shoppe. These acquired Enrich Miles can be utilised to redeem for flights, hotel stays via Enrich Hotels and Temptations' inflight duty-free products, as well as a variety of lifestyle vouchers, exclusive dining vouchers or add more comfort to their next travel by redeeming them for seat upgrades and Golden Lounge Access.

“

Online shopping has become the better alternative these days, especially now in light of the current restrictions and the second phase of the movement control order in Malaysia, hence we embarked on this collaboration with RebateMango to meet customers' preferences. This partnership is a great opportunity for customers to enjoy a safe and seamless shopping experience with their favourite brands from the comfort of home and to be rewarded with Enrich Miles for the four million Enrich members when they shop with Enrich Shoppe. As we continue to provide more options and flexibility to earn Enrich Miles, we believe this latest addition will be rewarding for our members. If you are not a member yet, sign up as an Enrich member now which is absolutely free of charge to start enjoying many exclusive benefits by Enrich!

”

**LAU YIN MAY**

*Group Chief Marketing and  
Customer Experience Officer  
Malaysia Airlines*

Paul Koh, the co-founder of RebateMango said, "Once again, we are able to integrate a valuable partner in the rewards space and enhance their offering to members in a cost-effective and non-tech-heavy way. We are delighted to launch with Malaysia Airlines and look forward to their members being able to earn more Enrich Miles whenever they shop online!"

RebateMango has already seen success in its standalone B2C platform, which currently is live in Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Philippines, with plans to expand further. Members of the RebateMango platform can choose from a choice of rewards such as cashback, air miles and points from some of the most popular brands. This reward choice is unique and is a significant differentiator to other platforms in this region.

The integration that RebateMango offers to partners does not only provide them with scale in-retailer offerings but also significant cost-savings in human resources to manage an online shopping platform. A key value proposition of RebateMango's Retailer API is the B2C platform that RebateMango already runs. This sets them apart from other loyalty providers who may not provide primary customer service support, retailer offers management or transactional rewards calculations. The integration is simple, and the solution also allows the partner to focus on what really matters, which is ancillary revenue.

To celebrate the launch, Enrich members may look forward to earning Double Enrich Miles from 8 January to 28 February 2021. Members can start shopping from their preferred online stores at Enrich Shoppe and then log in to their Enrich account to get automatically rewarded.

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





# China Airlines Sets 777F in New Era of Cargo Operations

The fleet of 21 freighters will pave the way for a new generation of air cargo services for the airline in the post-pandemic era. The demand for freighter aircraft from vaccine transport and the general freight market should help boost cash flow for China Airlines Cargo Services.

China Airlines celebrated its 61st anniversary recently on 16 December 2020 with its first Boeing 777F ready to enter service. The new 777F twin-engine freighters being introduced by China Airlines will bring greater performance and fuel efficiency to the carrier’s freighter fleet, paving the way for the launch of next-generation air cargo services in the post-pandemic era.

China Airlines Chairman Su-chien Hsieh said that the freighter fleet played a crucial role as the Covid-19 pandemic brought the global airline industry almost to a standstill. The carrier not only put all 18 of its 747-400 freighters into service but also increased weekly freighter flights by 20%. It also put the belly hold of its passenger aircraft to good use and pioneered the use of passenger cabins for carrying cargo.

Cargo revenues between January and November in 2020 were increased by 83% over the same period in 2019 as a result, becoming a lifeline for China Airlines during these trying times.

Hsieh also noted that the six 777F on order are slated to be delivered between 2020 and 2023. The first 777F arrived in Taiwan on December 1 and a further two will be delivered before the end of January 2021. The three 777F will give China Airlines Cargo Services an edge over the competition.

The first China Airlines 777F has the aircraft number B-18771, an aircraft number of a 747F retired in 2004 which symbolizes the passing of the baton between generations. The new freighter will carry on China Airlines’ legacy of being the sixth largest air cargo carrier in the world and will take the airline to even greater heights. To give the new fleet its own distinctive look, an all-new livery was developed that retains “CARGO” in corporate colors and carries on the China Airlines spirit through the plum blossom. The freighter will soon be assigned to operate freight routes in Asia and North America as soon as it has completed its preparation and validation.

The 777F features twin engines that translate into 20% lower fuel consumption and a range longer than the 747F. It can therefore be flown on trans-Pacific routes with fewer payload restrictions and better hold utilisation. The aircraft is equipped with fully temperature-controlled cargo holds and the main cargo hold can be fitted with cargo pallet restraint systems used for carrying semiconductor machinery and engines. China Airlines is the first carrier in Taiwan to be certified by the IATA Center of Excellence for Independent Validators in Pharmaceutical Logistics (CEIV Pharma) for temperature-controlled cold chain logistics.

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

## Emirates Launches its New A380 with Premium Economy to London

Emirates has announced on 3 January 2021 that it will deploy its latest flagship A380 aircraft featuring new premium economy seats and luxurious enhancements across all cabins to London Heathrow.

Starting from 4 January, passengers flying between Dubai and London Heathrow can experience Emirates' latest A380. Operating as EK003/004, the aircraft is scheduled to depart Dubai daily at 14:30hrs, arriving at 18:20hrs in London Heathrow. The return flight departs London at 20:20hrs and arrives in Dubai the next day at 07:20hrs.

Emirates unveiled its latest A380 with brand new premium economy seats that offer a generous seat pitch of up to 40 inches, in addition to new economy class seats similar to those installed on its latest Boeing 777-300ER game changer aircraft. Enhancements to its popular A380 First and Business Class including its signature Shower Spa and

Onboard Lounge, and refreshed colours and fittings across all cabins.

Until more Premium Economy seats enter its inventory, the airline intends to offer these as spot upgrades for its valued customers on a discretionary basis. All other signature Emirates A380 First, Business and Economy cabins are available for reservation on [emirates.com](http://emirates.com) or via travel agents.

The airline has safely and gradually restored its network over the past months, bringing back signature experiences onboard and on the ground with comprehensive measures in place for the health and safety of its customers and employees.

Emirates currently serves London Heathrow with 5 daily flights of which 4 are operated with an A380. The airline also operates 10 flights a week to Manchester, and daily flights to both Birmingham and Glasgow.



Emirates serves 99 cities across the world, offering travellers convenient access to Dubai and onwards to popular destinations in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East.

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





# Amadeus and Star Alliance Unite to Make Touchless Travel More Accessible

**A**t a time when it is crucial to reduce new travel frictions caused by responses to Covid-19, and to increase traveler confidence, Amadeus and Star Alliance announced on 14 December 2020, a milestone partnership that will allow travelers enrolled in Star Alliance Biometrics or in Amadeus Traveler ID the benefit of accessing a growing number of airports where identity verification can be utilised during their journey. By joining forces, Amadeus and Star Alliance are creating a more global, frictionless, and touchless journey for the millions of frequent flyers enrolled in the respective programs of its member airlines.

Star Alliance Biometrics allows passengers to pass through curb-to-gate touchpoints within airports, such as check-in kiosks, bag-drop, and boarding gates, which traditionally require both passport and boarding pass, by using a secure identity management solution featuring facial recognition technology, allowing for a touchless experience at airports, an important safety feature in times of Covid-19.

At the same time, Amadeus' secure and agnostic identity data exchange and verification solution, Traveler ID, enables a simplified experience across the entire travel chain by connecting a passenger's digital ID to any online and biometric portal at opportune moments of the traveler journey. In the future, these passengers will be able to use their Traveler ID to also access existing or new airports that have implemented the Star Alliance Biometrics solution.

In both programs, travelers consent to share their biometric data with the stakeholders of their choice in full accordance with data privacy regulations.

"The best part of this trustful partnership is how we are building upon our individual strengths and working together to deliver a more seamless and safe travel experience," said Christian Draeger, Vice President Customer Experience, Star Alliance. "It increases our operational ability by speeding up airport processes and immediately benefits those who have already enrolled in our program. Through collaboration between the Star Alliance Biometrics and Amadeus Traveler ID solutions, we have a winning proposition that will encompass all aspects of the customer journey."

"The Traveler ID solution is agnostic, meaning that all types of travel companies can work with us for a variety of digital identity needs, from enrolling travelers, to organising the collaboration of multiple providers to orchestrate the end-to-end identity verification process. Ultimately, our objective with Traveler ID is to help the industry deploy frictionless travel throughout the whole passenger journey. We can only achieve this through collaboration with travel industry partners, which is why we are so pleased to work with Star Alliance to bring this vision to life," added Monika Wiederhold, EVP Airlines Central & Eastern Europe, Amadeus.

# Qantas and Japan Airlines to Form Joint Business to Drive Tourism Recovery



**Q**antas and Japan Airlines (JAL) announced on 23 December 2020 plans to form a new joint business, designed to better serve customers travelling between Australia, New Zealand and Japan and support the tourism industry's recovery when international flying resumes.

The airlines have submitted an application for authorisation to regulators in Australia and New Zealand, with a decision expected within six months. Subject to this regulatory approval, it is anticipated that the joint business would commence operations around July 2021, when Qantas has said it expects its international network to gradually restart.

Under the proposed five-year agreement, the airlines would deliver substantial benefits for customers and help accelerate the recovery of the tourism, trade and corporate travel links between Australia and Japan, including an expanded codeshare relationship and optimised schedules on flights between Australia and New Zealand and Japan, opening up more connections to more destinations beyond the major city gateways. Qantas customers would have access to 14

new codeshare destinations in Japan and JAL customers would have access to 15 new codeshare destinations in Australia and New Zealand.

In addition to the enhanced frequent flyer benefits, Qantas and JAL customers will enjoy higher Qantas points and JAL miles on routes under the joint business as well as the choice to upgrade using points or miles on each airlines' other services. The joint business also includes more premium travel opportunities, with Qantas able to offer customers a greater number of Business and Premium Economy seats on flights operated by JAL.

Qantas Group CEO Alan Joyce said the joint business would play a vital role in reviving trade links with the world's third largest economy and deliver significant benefits for customers travelling between Australia and Japan.

"Around half a million people visited Australia from Japan in 2019. We want to see that tourism resume and grow even further by making it easier for Japanese travellers to visit," said Joyce.



The joint business means we'll be able to build on our existing relationship with JAL through **oneworld** to offer more routes, better flight connections and more benefits to frequent flyers. It also helps us diversify our portfolio of joint businesses amongst Australia's key trading partners. It will be a win for our customers, a win for trade and a win for the one million people who work in tourism across Australia.



**ALAN JOYCE**

*Group Chief Executive Officer, Qantas*

Japan Airlines President Yuji Akasaka added: "For over 50 years, JAL and Qantas have operated flights between Japan and Australia, demonstrating our mutual commitment to support and strengthen the diplomatic relationship built by the two countries.

"We believe that a joint business with Qantas will make for a quicker recovery between both countries with the ability to expand connectivity within each carrier's respective domestic network, providing more customer choice and travel growth opportunities."



# Air New Zealand to Begin Quarantine-Free Flights to Brisbane

**A**ir New Zealand announced recently that it will operate its first quarantine free flight from Auckland to Brisbane. Passengers travelling on this flight will not be required to quarantine on arrival in Brisbane. Before customers travel to Australia, they are required to complete the Australia Travel Declaration form stating they have been in New Zealand the preceding 14 days.

Air New Zealand Chief Customer and Sales Officer Leanne Geraghty says flight NZ147 will depart Auckland at 7:40am with passengers on board not required to quarantine on arrival in Brisbane.

“Flights from Auckland to Brisbane will operate similarly to the flights we have been operating to Sydney and Melbourne – with quarantine-free flights for people whose travel originates in New Zealand, and quarantine flights for people who do not meet the Safe Travel Zone criteria and are required to quarantine on arrival in Australia.

“Our teams have been working closely with authorities in Australia to ensure all agencies are satisfied that processes are in place to confidently accept quarantine-free flights, and we thank customers for their patience while we’ve worked with various agencies in Australia to ensure we can keep everyone safe.

“We currently operate five return flights per week between Auckland and Brisbane. Three of these services will be quarantine-free flights, while the remaining two will be quarantine flights. Quarantine flights are not able to be booked by people beginning their journey in New Zealand.”

Air New Zealand will directly contact customers if their booking is affected by these changes. Customers who booked via a travel agent (including online travel agents) will be contacted by their booking agent.

Passengers planning to travel interstate beyond Queensland will need to ensure they have checked state and territory travel restrictions and have the appropriate exemptions/approvals to travel as these continue to change.

This is a one-way arrangement and those returning to New Zealand will still need to quarantine for 14 days on return, provide payment for quarantine and register their managed isolation accommodation requirements via the New Zealand Government’s Managed Isolation and Quarantine website.

For more information about Air New Zealand, please call 03 – 2715 5020 or email [airnz@discover-kul.com](mailto:airnz@discover-kul.com)





## SAUDIA Receives Diamond Status for Health Safety

**S**audi Arabian Airlines (SAUDIA), the national flag carrier of Saudi Arabia has been awarded the Diamond status by APEX Health Safety (powered by SimpliFlying) for the airline's efforts in ensuring the highest standards of cleanliness and sanitation across its operations on 13 Jan 2021.

The APEX Diamond Status from the Airline Passenger Experience Association (APEX) is an accolade which recognises industry leadership and stewardship in ensuring that the airline is deploying stringent measures in safety and protection from Covid-19.

Speaking about the latest award presented to SAUDIA, Chief Executive Officer Captain Ibrahim S. Koshy said: "SAUDIA places the safety of its guests and team members with highest importance and is committed to exemplary, rigorous sanitisation protocols for every step of the journey."

Captain Koshy continued: "Safety is paramount. Our team is dedicated to

excellence and is ready to provide SAUDIA's signature hospitable service onboard while following the coronavirus safety measures which the airline has instituted."

"SAUDIA's rise to become a 2021 APEX Five Star airline has now been further advanced by reaching the pinnacle Diamond-level of hospital-grade health safety for the wellbeing of every customer," APEX CEO Dr. Joe Leader stated.

"With APEX's 42-years serving as a global non-profit dedicated entirely to advancing airline passenger experience, SAUDIA's commitment to customer care has never shined as brightly as proven now by SimpliFlying exhaustive, scientifically-based review. SAUDIA has raised the bar for health safety standards in the industry by initiatives such as the brand partnership with Dettol and sanitisation of lavatories after each use. Taking such hospital-grade in ensuring health safety goes a long way in bolstering trust among travellers," said Shashank Nigam, CEO of SimpliFlying.

SAUDIA's health and safety protocols include the following:

**Digital boarding passes:** All guests flying with SAUDIA are required to display a digital boarding pass at check in and boarding counters.

**Full sterilisation after every flight:** SAUDIA utilises UVC ultraviolet rays to sterilise its aircraft seats, to provide all means of safety and prevention for its guests and employees. New technology works by launching ultraviolet rays to sterilise cabin surfaces within ten minutes, in a fully medium-sized cabin. UVC sanitising protocols are in full effect after every flight.

**Employee testing and kits:** SAUDIA screens all frontline staff and cabin crew members prior to each flight. The airline's cabin crew wear full PPE kits onboard, which includes disposable gloves; face masks; eye shield/goggle; and medical gown.

**Social Distancing onboard:** Cabin Crew and check-in team members are mindful to maintain social distancing at all the time with other Crew Members, Ground Staff and guests.

**Personal Kits:** All guests flying with SAUDIA receive a Dettol hygiene kit for comfort throughout their journey.

**Onboard cuisine:** All food and beverages distributed onboard are sealed. Cutlery and plate ware is all disposable and is presented to passengers within a safety packet.

In recent years the airline has invested significantly in its fleet of 144 narrow and widebody aircraft and operates one of the youngest fleets in the skies, with an average aircraft age of 5 years. The airline route network includes more than 95 destinations across four continents to all 28 domestic airports in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

For more information, please visit [www.saudia.com](http://www.saudia.com) or call 03 – 2166 4488



# Aviation Interview with Mohamad Asif Abd Talib

**Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Pos Aviation Sdn Bhd**

Mohamad Asif’s love for airplanes has drawn him into the aviation industry. He holds a degree in aerospace engineering and has over 20 years of experience with various industry portfolios under his belt. He joined Pos Aviation in December 2020 as Chief Operating Officer and was appointed as Acting CEO on 1 January 2021 following the retirement of former Pos Aviation CEO Woo Kam Weng.

**What are some of the milestones in your career path leading to your current position?**

My career started in leading the Malaysia Airline System’s (MAS) ground support equipment before moving up to ground handling management, where I was tasked in purchasing and selling ground equipment to various airlines. Following which, an overseas assignment in Beijing as a business analyst developed my decision-making abilities, where skills in decision making based on data analysis were acquired. This skill has been very useful during my career especially at the management level.

As I progressed as the national carrier’s vice president of Restructuring Management Office, I was involved in the restructuring and transition of MAS to Malaysia Airlines Bhd (MAB). I was then appointed as the Head of Aircraft Services for MAB’s subsidiary, which specialised in ground handling services. My subsequent exposure to the airline’s operations has changed my logical and structural thinking as an engineer, thus equipping me with the ability to strategise beyond engineering at any given situation.



**Under your leadership, how do you plan to steer Pos Aviation as it navigates through this unprecedented novel coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic?**

The pandemic has driven us to review our operations and explore alternative measures to conduct the business in this new environment and to cater to evolving customer needs and marketplace. The way forward is total efficiency and productivity while focusing on excellent customer service as the catalyst for further business growth.

Since the onset of the pandemic, we have been constantly monitoring and evolving the business to adapt to the current changes such as the shift in consumer behaviour, enabling us to tap into the growing demand of ecommerce through offering ecommerce solutions within the country and the Asia Pacific region. The services include providing our expertise in warehouse management to e-commerce players and offering our warehouses as their regional distribution hub. We are also increasing efficiency and proficiency through upskilling of our employees, including those from the ground handling services.

**Digital transformation is said to be Pos Aviation's new norm. Please elaborate.**

Pos Aviation will leverage on automation to swiftly resolve or eliminate issues to facilitate a smooth flying experience for airlines, couriers and travellers alike. Examples include web check-in and baggage drops. Automation has improved our operational processes by reducing risks, minimising errors and expediting transactions via proximity sensors that minimises physical touch.

Furthermore, the use of tracking devices optimises resource allocation and robotics technology helps us to enhance loading capabilities. Thanks to resilient teamwork shown by our employees, customer service remains our winning point. Although technology has enhanced our above the wing processes and made them efficient, there is always room for improvement. For instance, we are also looking at investing in technology

for below the wing services, especially ground support services.

**As an independent ground handling company, how many commercial airlines does it currently serves?**

We serve 56 airlines, including chartered flights. Our services include ground handling, cargo handling, aircraft maintenance and engineering, inflight catering, ecommerce and more.

**What was the total cargo handled in 2020 and its contribution to the company's total business revenue?**

The pandemic has been a push factor for cargo movements, resulting in much higher tonnage handling systemwide last year compared to 2019. Our cargo division contributed 44% to our total revenue in 2020.

**How do you view the rather resilient cargo handling business amidst the pandemic?**

With the increasing focus on aviation cargo, we intend to build a strong team that could quickly adapt to the changing business landscape. As airlines convert their passenger aircraft to carry more cargo, the processes inside cargo warehouses will require a quick turnaround time. Hence, we are currently exploring ways in training our staff to support this efficiently.

**How has Pos Aviation's inflight meals production been disrupted by Covid-19 with so many flight services grounded over the past year?**

Our inflight meal delivery to KL International Airport last year dropped more than 70% compared to 2019 due to the closure of international borders. However, we managed to source for new contracts to provide crew meals to freighters and repatriation flights. We are also looking at penetrating sectors previously dominated by our competitors via strategic partnerships and promoting new products like eat-before-you fly and pre-sealed snack bags for passengers. Besides re-evaluating our processes, we will also explore alternative markets beyond the aviation industry.

**Pos Aviation entered into a strategic alliance last year with SIA Engineering Co Ltd (SIAEC) to strengthen its maintenance, repair and overhaul services. Kindly update its progress.**

The progress is going well. We have recently reinitiated our discussion with SIAEC, which has a proven track record and a large customer base, which would enable access to new markets and growth beyond Malaysia. Our engineers and technicians will also benefit from the exchange of knowledge and technology.

**Logistics represents an important component of Pos Aviation, which is part of the Pos Malaysia Group. What are the synergistic benefits?**

The synergy offers integrated logistics support for both Malaysia and the region, making us a strong force in air cargo logistics, enabling us to grow e-commerce through our collaboration with Alibaba's subsidiary Lazada, Shopee Singapore and Thai-owned Pomelo Malaysia.

As a cargo terminal operator, we facilitate ground handling and customs clearance by leveraging on our group's Pos ACE, Pos Logistics and Pos Malaysia for the last mile delivery. With the tremendous growth potential, our 486,000 sq ft KACT1 warehouse, would provide us the advantage to develop another warehouse at our present 150,000 sq ft car park.

**What is Pos Aviation's current staff force?**

We have 2,352 employees across nine airports nationwide: Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Langkawi, Kota Kinabalu, Kuching, Ipoh, Kota Bahru, Kuantan and Miri. They are ready and equipped with multiple skills to meet the needs of our customers, especially when flight movements are gradually restored.

**Work apart, how do you unwind?**

I like to spend an hour on certain mornings for a quick round of tennis or a few laps in the swimming pool. I also indulged in a massage chair recently to help me relax. Apart from that, I also believe in taking short breaks or power naps for a quick recharge.



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