

# 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 is joyous that KL International Airport (KLIA) has improved its ranking to be the world's ninth best airport for the first quarter of 2021 in the Airports Council International's (ACI) global Airport Service Quality survey for the over 40 million passengers per annum (mppa) category. He also shares the latest developments at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport, popularly known as Subang Airport. They include plans to grow it as a Maintenance, Repair & Overhaul (MRO) hub for Asia Pacific.**

**Dato' Mohd Shukrie Mohd Salleh**  
Group Chief Executive Officer (GCEO) of  
Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad



I am happy that KLIA has moved up a notch in terms of service quality from its 10th placing last year to achieve a 4.99 score over 5.00 in ACI's latest global ASQ survey covering the first three months of 2021. The group's efforts to improve service levels also saw Langkawi International Airport (LIA) being named the world's third best airport in the 2-5 mppa category, scoring 4.97 over 5.00 in ACI's ASQ survey for the same period.

ASQ benchmarks the world's best airports in terms of overall passenger satisfaction for terminal safety, facilities, services, and cleanliness. The encouraging results at both KLIA and LIA in upholding exceptional services and safety measures in the new travel norm will certainly help restore passenger confidence. LIA has been inducted into ACI Director General's Roll of Excellence based on its track record for winning multiple ASQ awards over a five-year period over the last decade.

Meanwhile, at Subang Airport, we are refurbishing the car parks at its terminal as well as the MRO and Helicopter Centre to make them not only bigger and brighter but also safer for the public and the airport community. Besides adding another 200 car park bays to its existing 800 bays, we are also improving the lighting with heavy duty spotlights and enhancing the directional signages for easy navigation.

Additionally, we will be installing the latest technology for video surveillance cameras to ensure the continued safety of users at the airport. Expected to be completed by the third quarter of this year, these initiatives are part of our five-year Subang Airport Regeneration plan to support both our aviation and aerospace sectors.

In growing its MRO component under the Subang Airport Regeneration plan, we have signed a Memorandum of

Understanding with Danish company, Skyways Technics Group, which will enable us to expand the airport as a regional hub offering full-fledged end-to-end MRO facilities such as a line and base air frame MRO hangar, component repair workshops, parts distribution centre and aircraft on ground services.

Currently a tenant at Subang Airport's MRO Centre, Skyways Technics' plans to grow its presence in Asia Pacific and expand its services which are aligned with Subang Airport Regeneration strategy to position the airport as a regional hub for turboprops and meeting the demands for ATR maintenance. We envisage the tremendous opportunities in terms of domestic and overseas investments arising from this strategic tie-up with MRO activities in this region set to grow by 150% over the next 10 years totalling US\$21.7 billion.





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## Future F.I.T. Roadmap for Malaysia Airports' Recovery

As the aviation industry navigates its recovery amid the recent alarming resurgence in Covid-19 cases and higher fatalities in many Asian countries, stricter lockdown measures and longer quarantine period have been imposed, limiting domestic travel even further and resulting in bans on the entry of arrivals from certain countries by various governments.

Fitch Solutions Head of Asia Country Risk Anwita Basu envisions Asia's rebound will not be as strong as in the past, saying that on the average, it will take two years for most markets to recover. They include Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, Macau and Maldives. She also anticipates recovery in travel to be slow as the raging pandemic persists.

Country risks are rising, especially with more than 40% increase in oil prices this year with political uncertainties deterring economic growth in countries like Myanmar and the pandemic raising income inequality and poverty. The slow vaccine rollout in some Asian countries is another concern, adds Anwita.

Certain quarters fear a further lockdown in Malaysia could lead to more unemployment and business closures, significantly dimming the recovery prospects particularly for domestic demand further. This includes domestic travel since the borders for international travel are still not open.

#### Mixed lockdown reactions

Malaysia's latest Movement Control Order (MCO) 3.0 nationwide saw interstate and interdistrict travels banned from 10 May until 7 June. Possibilities of further lockdown and domestic travel ban being extended appear high with the country breaking through the 5,000 mark to achieve an all-time high of 6,806 new Covid-19 cases on 20 May from 4,865 cases just two days before.

With 2,251 cases contributed by Selangor followed by Johor (699) and Kuala Lumpur (660), there have been mixed reactions with the Federation of Malaysian Business Associations (FMBA) urging the government to go for a more complete nationwide lockdown in order to break the infection's chain. FMBA represents 262 business associations or Chambers of Commerce which cover over 950,000 businesses with a workforce of more than seven million people.

The Malaysia Shopping Malls Association (PPKM) is saying 'No' to another lockdown, fearing far more severe consequences and damage to retail businesses and the local economy. Unlike MCO 1.0, all economic sectors have been permitted to operate under the MCO 3.0 but under strict standard operating procedures (SOPs) and this should suffice, asserts PPKM, where Gateway@klia2 and Mitsui Outlet Park (MOP) KLIA in Sepang are among its over 400-strong members.

Where the aviation sector is concerned, Airports Council International (ACI) World Director General Luis Felipe de Oliveira believes, "As the aviation industry plots a recovery from the catastrophic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the economic fundamentals of our industry serve as a benchmark to assess the recovery and transformation of the airport business, paving the way to return to the pathway of growth."

He adds that when airports incur capital expenditure (capex), a significant portion of it will relate to modernisation of the existing facilities and development of new infrastructure.

"In the wake of the pandemic, new investments are needed to ensure sustainable and resilient airports. Post-pandemic times will require more technologically-advanced, seamless and contactless processes for handling passengers, aircraft movements, cargo and baggage."





### Future F.I.T. strategies

This is certainly true in the case of Malaysia Airports, whose five-year Strategy and Transformation Plan setting out the Group's direction from 2021 to 2025 has been reformulated as Future F.I.T. and approved by its board of directors last November.

Premising on three pillars, namely Financially sustainable, Impact driven, and Technology focused, the Future F.I.T plan, currently being implemented, outlines the airport operator's strategies to be carried out over two phases.

Malaysia Airports Group Chief Executive Officer Dato' Mohd Shukrie Mohd Salleh says under its near-term plan of Survival and Recovery from 2021 to 2022, it will be focusing on building capacity and capabilities in order to capture opportunities in the post Covid-19 pandemic era such as the recovery of air travel as it gains traction.

Under this phase, the airport operator has identified five strategic themes, namely survivability, fixing the basics, horizontal expansion, critical asset replacement and digitalisation.

Under its Airports 4.0 digitalisation initiative, it aspires to transform its airports with the latest technological innovations to improve operations, safety, productivity and airport experience.

It is looking at completing the installation of its Airport Collaborative Decision Making (ACDM) system by 2022, which will not only enable its airline partners to effectively share real-time information for more efficient flight operations but also help its airports to better manage their resources.

### Critical Asset Replacement

Malaysia Airports' Annual Report 2020 reveals that under its short to medium-term focus, RM400 million capex has been allocated for mission critical projects in 2021 in its continuous efforts to improve its critical assets and infrastructure for more effective and safe operations.

Malaysia Airports is currently replacing the ageing fire vehicles at 13 of its airports nationwide to enable its Airport Fire and Rescue Service (AFRS) unit to not only respond efficiently to emergencies but also protect the users at its airports in accordance with the International Civil Aviation Organisation's safety compliance guidelines.

The new Lion 6x6 Volkan vehicles, powered by 750 horsepower engines, will enable its AFRS team to reach the incident site within three minutes after receiving the initial call from the air traffic control tower. Besides the standard 12,000 litre water tank and 1,500 litre foam tank, these state-of-the-art fire vehicles are also fitted with surveillance cameras that provide not only good views of

the surrounding area but also help our team to detect more accurately the heat source with features such as its thermographic imaging sensors.

Dato' Mohd Shukrie expects the delivery of these massive 37.8-ton fire vehicles to its domestic airports to be completed by 2023 over four phases. So far, the manufacturer has delivered five units with Melaka Airport receiving the first unit while the airports in Kota Bharu, Limbang, Ipoh and Kuala Terengganu will be getting the remaining units. Eight other airports in Mulu, Miri, Sandakan, Bintulu, Tawau, Sibul, Lahad Datu and Alor Setar will also be receiving a unit each.

Themed Emerging Stronger Together, Malaysia Airports' latest annual report also indicates that part of its capex will go towards refurbishing its washrooms at the KL International Airport's terminal one besides upgrading its baggage handling system and replacing its aerotrains.

Currently, the Group has completed 80% of its three-year washroom refurbishment involving 225 washrooms with enhanced ambience and amenities with the rest due for completion in June. The airport operator also expects to complete its rehabilitation works on Runway 1, which began last November, by this year.

Under Future F.I.T.'s second Growth and Transformation phase, spanning from 2023 to 2025, Malaysia Airports has laid down the foundation for dynamic post-pandemic progress as it pivots its focus on future business growth prospects and sustainability, asserts Dato' Mohd Shukrie.

# New International Destinations and Additional Domestic Flights Expected to Boost Malaysia Airports



A total of 20 new international destinations and 80 additional domestic flights are expected to boost air travel further for the network of airports operated by Malaysia Airports including its Turkish asset, Istanbul Sabiha Gokcen International Airport (ISG). Some of the new destinations include Hamburg, Basel, Zurich, Sarajevo, Copenhagen, Lyon, and Hannover for flights from ISG with up to 25 weekly frequencies. At KLIA, Malaysia's flag carrier Malaysia Airlines has reinstated destinations such as London and Jakarta. At the same time, it also added 80 additional flight frequencies to its domestic destinations which had increased KLIA's total domestic weekly frequencies by 26.7%.

According to the group chief executive officer (Group CEO) of Malaysia Airports, Dato' Mohd Shukrie Mohd Salleh, even though both Malaysia and Turkey are still imposed with travel restrictions, the airport operator remains optimistic as the demand for air travel is still prevalent based on the continuous new flight offerings by the airlines.

“

We continue to step up our services to prepare for the return of travellers as we gradually recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. In the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter this year, KLIA continued to excel in the global airport benchmark - Airport Service Quality (ASQ)- and achieved a preliminary score of 4.99 out of 5.00, topping the 4.98 score achieved in 2020.

In addition, we have also enhanced our safety and health standards through the global Airport Health Accreditation programme, whereby ISG was the first airport in the Group to be certified by the Airports Council International (ACI) last month. Six more of our international airports including KLIA are expected to be certified by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter.

”

**DATO' MOHD SHUKRIE  
MOHD SALLEH**

*Group Chief Executive Officer  
(Group CEO) of Malaysia Airports*

With Malaysian borders still closed until now, foreign airlines at KLIA such as British Airways (BA) had to temporarily suspend passenger flights for the LON-KUL route. Nevertheless, the airline decided to maintain its presence in Malaysia by introducing new cargo services

for the same route. Malaysia Airports' partner airlines are forging ahead with their services and evolving with the demand in the new normal. This includes Raya Airways, a leading local cargo airline which had recently expanded its aircraft fleet with a new Boeing 767-200F to increase capacity, frequency, and connectivity due to the boom in the e-commerce sector during the pandemic.

Local airlines remain undeterred and continue to show perseverance in anticipation of the opening of domestic interstate borders. Firefly Airlines (FY) begins their jet operations from Penang International Airport (PEN) last month by utilising Boeing 737-800 aircraft. Malaysia Airports also saw improvements in passenger volume at their airports in East Malaysia, particularly BKI, Labuan (LBU), Lahad Datu (LDU), Sandakan (SDK) and Tawau (TWU) which recorded higher passenger movements compared to January and February 2021.

On the other note, ISG also continues its gradual recovery with a 7.4% growth registered in March 2021 compared to the same month last year, with its domestic sector recording double-digit growth of 11.4%. ISG continues to drive passenger movements for Malaysia Airports group by registering 1.6 million passengers which make up 73% of the total group performance for March.



## Firefly Prepares for Jet Services



**F**irefly's preparatory flight from Penang International Airport to Senai International Airport was a success on 3 May 2021. Flight FY2904 departed at 2.00 p.m. and arrived safely at 3.15 p.m. The airline will be adding up narrow body jets to its fleet in phases, serving the domestic, ASEAN and Asia Pacific markets out of Penang International Airport.

Having announced in mid-December 2020 on the launch of jet services, Firefly mindfully planned the execution of this imminent milestone in consideration with the on-going pandemic. Every step taken in the planning was done with safety and wellbeing of passengers and the airline staff continuously in mind.

Furthermore, the announcement from Malaysian National Security Council to allow students from the higher learning institutions to return home during Hari Raya this year has brought the airline to facilitate student movement. Recognising the impact of the pandemic, Firefly has rolled out a special fare promotion to

“

Together with Malaysia Airports, we have put in place health and safety protocols to safeguard our passengers, flight crew and staff, such as temperature check via the thermal imaging scanner, digital contact tracing, social distancing when queuing and at the seating area, contactless check-in and boarding. Also, having flights from as low as RM69 with free 20kg baggage allowance, we believe it will be more comfortable on the student's wallets.

”

**PHILIP SEE**

*Chief Executive Officer of Firefly*

ease the burden of students who need to travel back home by prioritising health and safety.

To ensure that all Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are met, the airline is committed to ensure that all passengers' flying experience in the new norm is seamless and convenient, both on ground and on board. Firefly conducts aircraft



cabin disinfection, sanitisation and thorough cleaning of the surfaces including seats, floors, armrests, tray tables, overhead luggage bins, walls and lavatory. In addition to that, Fireflyz in-flight magazine has also been removed to avoid any cross contamination.

Philip reiterated that the airline is fully committed to safeguard the health and safety of members of the community and requests the cooperation from all passengers to continue to adhere to SOPs diligently.

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

## Qantas Launches Supermoon Scenic Flight



**C**osmic cocktails and supermoon cakes will be on the menu when Qantas launches a one-off B787 Dreamliner supermoon scenic flight to offer a limited number of passengers a closer viewing of the upcoming supermoon later this month. It was the second and last supermoon for 2021 and also coincides with a full lunar eclipse, making it a rare double phenomenon, with the moon expected to turn red against the night sky.

CSIRO astronomer Dr Vanessa Moss will work with the pilots to design the optimal flight path over the Pacific Ocean and also join the flight to provide insights into supermoons and all things space and astronomy. The flight will depart from and return to Sydney and is the latest in a series of special flights Qantas has operated for travellers eager to take to the skies while the industry recovers.

Chief Customer Officer Stephanie Tully said Qantas is committed to coming up with

unique flying experiences, especially while travel options are limited. "We have been absolutely overwhelmed with the popularity of our special flights. The recent mystery flights sold out within 15 minutes with hundreds of people on waiting lists and they keep telling us they want more," she added.

“ We are very excited to now be doing a supermoon scenic flight and the 787 has the largest windows of any passenger aircraft so it's ideal for moon gazing. We think this flight has great appeal for anyone with a passion for astronomy, science, space photography, aviation or just keen to do something a little 'out of this world'.

**STEPHANIE TULLY**  
Chief Customer Officer of Qantas

The three-hour flight will depart from Sydney and begin with a scenic flyover of Sydney Harbour before climbing above any potential cloud cover and atmosphere pollution to a cruising altitude of 43,000 feet – the maximum cruising altitude of a Dreamliner – for supermoon and full lunar eclipse viewing.

The flight will operate with net zero emissions, with 100% of emissions carbon offset.

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





# IFC and Indigo Partners Support Low-cost Carrier Cebu Pacific



**T**he Philippines' leading airline Cebu Pacific (CEB) has taken another big step towards securing its future as a key low-cost provider of domestic and international travel after raising fresh funds from the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the IFC Emerging Asia Fund, and Indigo Philippines LLC, an affiliate of Indigo Partners LLC, which have invested US\$250 million in CEB in the form of convertible bonds.

The investment will provide CEB with a longer liquidity runway to help the company withstand the effects of the pandemic until economic activity and travel demand recovers. It will also help maintain trade and the competitiveness required to provide affordable transportation in an island nation where maritime transport alone cannot address the connectivity needs of people, goods, and services.

“

We view Indigo, IFC, and IFC Emerging Asia Fund not only as capital providers but also long-term partners in driving improvements in the business, as well as accelerating our sustainability agenda. This will further strengthen CEB as we recover, so we may continue fulfilling our commitment to improve the lives of people in the communities we serve for a long time to come.

”

**LANCE GOKONGWEI**

*President and Chief Executive Officer of Cebu Pacific*

As an archipelago of over 7,600 islands and a major tourist destination, the Philippines relies heavily on air travel. Tourism generated 12.7 percent of the country's gross domestic product in 2019, while remittances, which depend on the movement of Filipino workers abroad, generated a further 8.9 percent. As the largest domestic airline in the Philippines and one of its leading international carriers, CEB will play a critical role in the country's recovery post-Covid-19.

Air travel is an important contributor to the global economy. Air transport supported 87.7 million jobs worldwide prior to the pandemic, including 11.3 million direct jobs and 44.8 million tourism-related jobs, according to a report by the Air Transport Action Group. It contributed \$3.5 trillion to the world economy in 2018, while air freight carries 35 percent of global trade by value. However, Covid-19 has had a devastating impact on the sector, resulting in grounded fleets, significant financial losses and a loss of customer confidence. This makes long-term and experienced partners critical to helping airlines get back on track.

“We are delighted to partner with CEB, a market-leading carrier and one the region's best-performing airlines,” said Jean-Marc Arbogast, Country Manager for the Philippines at IFC. “Maintaining low-cost travel services is essential in an island nation like the Philippines, and airlines will play a critical role in driving the country's economic recovery. CEB will play a leading role in that recovery, providing connectivity and jobs, preventing disruptions in supply chains, and supporting the tourism sector at a time when it's needed most.”

“Indigo is excited to invest in CEB, and work with their team to take advantage of the many growth opportunities ahead as travel demand increases post-pandemic,” said Bill Franke, Managing Partner of Indigo Partners. “We have a great deal of respect for what the Gokongwei family has achieved with the airline, and we look forward to a strong partnership.”

## Extension to Air New Zealand and Air China Alliance



**A**ir New Zealand has extended its strategic alliance partnership with Air China for another five years, as both carriers reiterated their commitment to work together as the airline industry recovers from the coronavirus pandemic.

Air New Zealand Chief Executive Officer Greg Foran made the announcement on 3 May at the China Business Summit, Auckland and welcomed the extension, saying it will help New Zealand rebuild

“Our alliance with Air China has delivered, and will continue to deliver, real benefit to New Zealand – including greater choice, extra seats and more flights into New Zealand. It’s a great example of how we can build sustainable air connectivity to and from New Zealand.

**GREG FORAN**

Chief Executive Officer of  
Air New Zealand

together. “China is an incredibly important market for Aotearoa, and for Air New Zealand. The renewal of our strategic cooperation with Air China will be a vital boost for our tourism industry as it recovers from the severe impact of Covid-19.

Foran told the summit that although Covid-19 has affected passenger travel, the trade and business cooperation between China and New Zealand has remained relatively stable.

“Our Shanghai route has the highest proportion of cargo on any network we fly. Last year we carried 2,600 tonnes of exports to Shanghai – up 23 percent on the year before. We’re proud to bring PPE into New Zealand and take the best of Aotearoa’s premium fresh produce – seafood, red meat, dairy, fresh fruit and vegetables – to Shanghai.”

Pre-pandemic, China was New Zealand’s second-largest international visitor market (450,000 in 2019) and one of the most valuable in terms of holiday visitor spend (\$1.5 billion).

The alliance agreement was first put in place in 2015 and will be extended to March 2026, having been approved by regulators in New Zealand and China.

Through the strategic alliance, services can be easily booked through either airline. Air New Zealand and Air China customers enjoy reciprocal frequent flyer benefits, such as earning and spending loyalty points and lounge access. Air New Zealand customers also receive better access to Air China’s comprehensive domestic network while for Air China customers, the alliance will enhance their customers’ access to New Zealand’s regions.



# Gulf Air Begins IATA Travel Pass Trial

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is partnering with the Kingdom of Bahrain and Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, to commence the trial of the IATA Travel Pass starting from 7 May 2021 on Gulf Air flights from Bahrain to London, Athens and Singapore.

Passengers holding a biometric passport and flying to these destinations will be able to trial the app which helps passengers easily and securely manage their travel in line with any government requirements for Covid-19 testing or vaccine information. Gulf Air passengers will be able to create a 'digital passport' allowing them to match their travel itineraries with the Covid-19 health requirements of their destination country and validate compliance.

Bahrain is one of the first governments to participate in a trial of the IATA Travel Pass with its national carrier to help pave the way for the re-establishment of global connectivity while managing the risks of Covid-19.

IATA has authorised American Mission Hospital, Bahrain Specialist Hospital, Royal Bahrain Hospital and Royal Hospital for Women and Children to securely send the test results to passengers via the app. The IATA Travel Pass app will have an integrated registry of travel requirements to enable passengers to find accurate information on travel and entry requirements for all destinations regardless of their itinerary. Eventually it will also include a registry of labs — making it more convenient for passengers to find testing centres and labs at their departure location which meet the standards for testing and vaccination requirements of their destination.



“Gulf Air is proud to partner with IATA as one of the first airlines in the world to commence the trials and we look forward to initiating it on three routes starting from today. We strongly appreciate the support received from the concerned authorities to ensure the success of the trial which will allow passengers to fly with confidence.”

**CAPTAIN WALEED AL ALAWI**  
Acting Chief Executive Officer of  
Gulf Air

Nick Careen, IATA Senior Vice President for Airport, Passenger, Cargo and Security said: “Managing multiple pieces of paper for Covid-19 health requirements for travel is inconvenient for passengers, unmanageable for airlines and airports and overwhelming for border authorities. We are proud to work with Gulf Air to trial IATA Travel Pass, through this live trial we hope to demonstrate that governments can efficiently manage travel requirements with complete confidence in the identity of the passenger and the veracity of the travel credentials. This is an

important step in enabling international travel during the pandemic, giving people the confidence that they are meeting all Covid-19 entry requirements.”

Passengers flying directly from Bahrain to London, Athens and Singapore will be notified with instructions on how to sign up to be part of the trial. Economy class passengers will receive access to the Gulf Air Falcon Gold check-in area and Falcon Gold Lounge at Bahrain International Airport while passengers in Falcon Gold cabin will receive free WiFi on board their flights as a token of appreciation for their participation. The airline boasts, being one of the few airlines that never stopped flying in 2020, continuously works closely with the government authorities across its network to resume operations as demand for travel grows. The airline boasts a flexible and agile network by immediately adapting to government guidelines and civil aviation directives and has been responsive to continuous changes and updates.

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

## Scoot Becomes World's First Low-Cost Carrier Awarded Diamond Status



**S**coot has been awarded the Diamond status in the APEX Health Safety powered by SimpliFlying global audit of airlines, becoming the first low-cost carrier (LCC) in the world to be accorded this highest attainable standard on 7 April.

The audit was jointly conducted by the Airline Passenger Experience Association (APEX), one of the world's largest international airline associations, and aviation strategy firm SimpliFlying. Assessing the health safety measures adopted by Scoot in response to the Covid-19 pandemic against a 58-point checklist across 10 stages of the customer journey, the review spanned check-in and other pre-departure processes, inflight measures as well as postflight.

Only airlines that reach hospital-grade standards of health and safety, scoring at least 200 points above the baseline Gold standard, are awarded the Diamond status. The standards are based on independently verified, validated, and certified airline health safety measures.

“Scoot is committed to providing customers with the highest level of confidence when they travel. Since the start of Covid-19, we have enhanced procedures and implemented measures across the customer journey, ranging from increased cleaning and distancing, deploying contactless check-in and inflight ordering, and trialling of digital pre-departure test verification tools amongst other initiatives. Scoot is proud to be the world's first LCC to receive the highest Diamond status, and we're heartened by this affirmation of our efforts to safeguard the health and safety of our customers and staff.”

**CAMPBELL WILSON**

*Chief Executive Officer of Scoot*

“Scoot's leading steps for health safety including safe distancing measures in place across the customer journey and provision of care kits demonstrate the highest level of passenger care,” APEX CEO Dr. Joe Leader stated. “For the dozens of customer-centric

steps taken in the care of travellers, we are honoured to award Scoot the Diamond status of the APEX Health Safety powered by SimpliFlying.”

“Scoot has raised the bar for health and safety among LCCs by being the first LCC in the world to certify for a Diamond standard. Measures such as vaccinating all front-facing staff, adjusting its onboard services to a contactless one that can be accessed from one's personal devices, and coming up with a 24/7 running Covid-19 risk assessment framework make the airline stand out among others,” said SimpliFlying CEO Shashank Nigam. “Taking these above and beyond measures in ensuring health safety will help Scoot bolster trust among travellers,” he added.

In an airline safety rating by Airline Ratings, an international airline safety and product rating review website, Scoot also scored a full seven stars in both safety and Covid-19 compliance.

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



## SriLankan Airlines Launches Flight to Nairobi

**S**riLankan Airlines, the flag carrier of Sri Lanka and a member of the prestigious oneworld alliance, has commenced flight operations to Nairobi in Kenya, its second destination in East Africa after flying to the Seychelles.

Scheduled flights commenced on 22 April 2021 between Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) and Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (NBO), East Africa's largest and busiest airport.

SriLankan Airlines operates its flights to Nairobi every Thursday using an Airbus A330 configured for 269 economy and 28 business class seats. The frequency of operation will be once a week. Flight

UL1715 departs Colombo at 10:45 hrs, landing at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport at 14:40 hrs, with the return leg UL1716 leaving Nairobi at 04:40 hrs and returning to Colombo at 13:55 hrs.

“

We are delighted to launch flights to the capital of Kenya, as SriLankan Airlines expands to the African region. We hope to see many people visit Kenya and explore the world's stunning wildlife by offering seamless connectivity through its global route network in addition to establishing a strong presence in Kenya.

”

**ASHOK PATHIRAGE**  
Chairman of SriLankan Airlines



Vipula Gunatilleka, CEO of SriLankan Airlines said, "This new route will allow SriLankan Airlines to tap into sizeable traffic flows from East Africa to ISC, China, Far East and Australia. We expect to see strong loads to China and India, though the schedule allows connectivity to key destinations across the route network."

For more information, please visit [www.srilankan.com](http://www.srilankan.com) or call 03 – 2697 2100

## ERL Offers KLIA Transit TravelCard Promotion

**E**xpress Rail Link Sdn Bhd (ERL) is offering a free Weekly TravelCard for every purchase of a KLIA Transit Monthly TravelCard with a registered MyKad from 1 May to 31 July 2021. The Monthly TravelCard provides savings for commuters as it is heavily discounted, with savings of up to 83%.

Effective 1 May 2021, ERL is switching the TravelCard from a smart card ticket to MyKad platform in line with the national Go Cashless initiative. With the implementation, KLIA Transit users can use MyKad directly at the gate and enjoy a more seamless user experience. They just need to register online at <https://mykad.KLIAekspres.com>, activate and reload their MyKad. With MyKad, they can opt for auto-activation and auto-reload for greater convenience.

The switch will also affect those who are eligible for KLIA Transit Concession Fares such as Malaysian senior citizens, students, disabled persons and airport/airline staff. Registration can also be done in person at the ERL registration booth at any KLIA Transit stations (except KLIA2).

“

The Buy 1 Free 1 promotion targeting daily commuters was first introduced during the Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) period last year. We are offering it again now to encourage more people who are going back to their office or workplace to start using public transportation again for their daily commute.

”

**NOORMAH MOHD NOOR**  
Chief Executive Officer of ERL



A free KLIA Transit Weekly TravelCard Reload Voucher will be given for every purchase of a Monthly TravelCard with a registered MyKad during the promotion period from 1 May 2021 to 31 July 2021. The Reload Voucher is valid for the same travel sector as the Monthly TravelCard purchased and can be redeemed until 30 September 2021.

Customers can still get the TravelCards or Concession Fares at the ticket counter until 31 May 2021. However, from 1 June 2021 onwards, they can only use MyKad to enjoy the savings. Non-Malaysians are eligible to get the TravelCards and Concession Fare for airport/airline staff only by registering in person at the station with their passport details.

"ERL continues to practise strict safety measures during this pandemic. We recently added more services during weekday peak hours to minimise congestion onboard as we want to make sure our passengers feel safe when travelling on our trains," Noormah added.

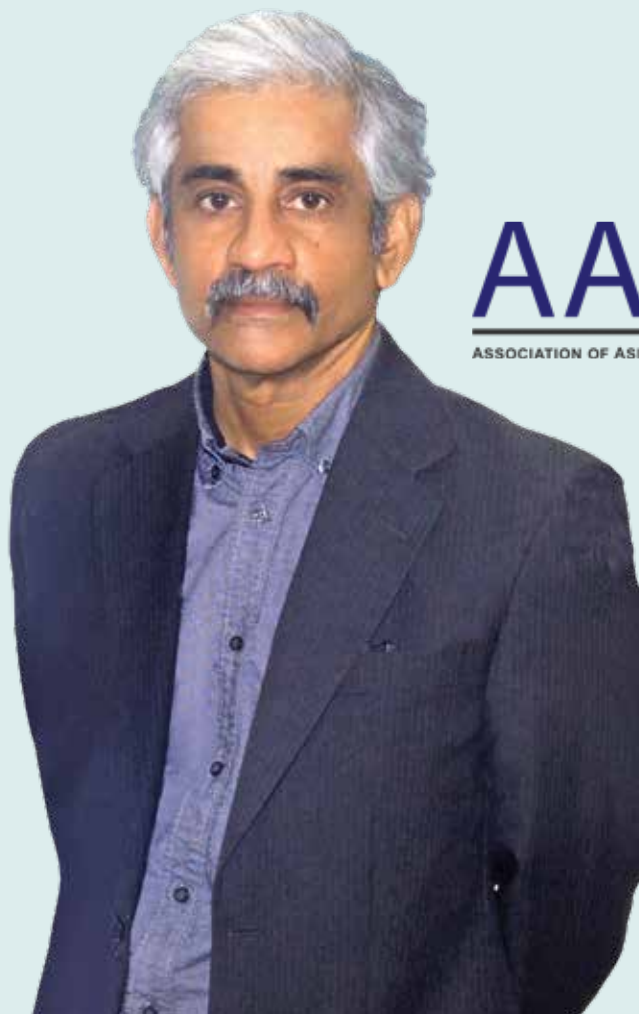
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## Aviation Interview with Subhas Menon

Director-General of Association  
of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA)

Subhas Menon joined the Association of Asia Pacific Airlines in March 2020 in what he called a 'baptism of fire', with over 35 years' experience in international aviation having served in a wide spectrum of roles including international & government relations and country & regional management. The aviation veteran shares with us how he continues to hold the fort for AAPA as Asia-Pacific airlines continue to navigate the pandemic.



**AAPA**  
ASSOCIATION OF ASIA PACIFIC AIRLINES

### **Please describe the significance of AAPA for its members.**

AAPA is a B2B organisation and we primarily serve the interest of our airline members. In other words, we are a collective spokesperson for the Asia-Pacific airlines. It is also AAPA's role to facilitate a common forum for our members to address areas of open interest and government relations. We constantly engage with governments and address issues that affect the airlines, address government policies and regulations.

For example, Covid-19 is an issue that affects all the airlines, consumers, businesses, so we have been constantly discussing via forums in order to mitigate it. In normal circumstances, we jump on a plane to meet organisations, but during these days, it is harder for us as communicating face-to-

face is of the utmost importance to us in facilitating discussion.

### **What are the momentous achievements of AAPA since its inception?**

AAPA has been around in various forms for 60 years and has been a medium for representing airlines from a small and now to a large degree. In my opinion, the overall success of the Asia-Pacific aviation industry before Covid-19 has been an achievement for AAPA. Before Covid-19, the Asia-Pacific region was the fastest growing region for the aviation industry. It has also weathered many different crises such as SARS, Bird-flu, and the Asian Financial Crisis. All in all, the aviation industry in general is very resilient and sophisticated, and many of these achievements have been realised as

a result of technological advancement and the great support that airlines have through organisations and their governments.

The Asia-Pacific market is quite different from the other markets. Firstly, it is not contiguous, there are no other alternative transport networks such as rail and coach like Europe or the American continent. We are a very diverse region and not only that, we are very vibrant; the Asia-Pacific market is full of new developments and fast-growing, unlike matured markets like Europe and North America.

In 2020, we have been advocating to governments to keep their borders open; we urge governments to establish bilateral agreements for travel and tourism. Last year, we also advocated for support and subsidies for the airlines as well as exemptions from



charges to airlines so that they can continue operating. Overall, I would say that our airlines have been successful in staying afloat, as many of the airlines are operating vaccine and cargo flights.

**March 2021 recorded as the best month in air cargo demand since 2019, helped by the rising business confidence and e-commerce growth. What measures is AAPA taking to keep this momentum going?**

The airlines are blessed with minimal restrictions in terms of air cargo. I commend the diversity and adaptability of the airlines to quickly take advantage of the current situation. Some airlines have retrofitted their airlines as well in order to accommodate air cargo demand. Some of the forms of cargo that have increased in demand include WFH home products, medical supplies, humanitarian aid, and vaccines.

The airlines have certainly taken the lead in doing what they can to keep the supply chains going. For example, during the Suez canal incident, air cargo demand surged as well, and during this time airlines were there to fill in the gaps of the crippled shipping industry. All credit goes to the airlines for always being on the ball.

**What is AAPA's plan for its members in 2021?**

Asia-Pacific airlines have it rough as Asian countries have prioritised an elimination strategy in Asia that is to form their strategy around decreasing Covid-19 cases at all cost, in contrast to a mitigation strategy in Europe that adopts a more lenient approach in terms of containing the virus. Currently, smart technology solutions are a great way to mitigate the current situation, e.g. digital travel pass by e.g. IATA.

When borders reopen, the industry must redouble its efforts to recover. We also advocate that cabin crews, ground crews and aircraft ought to be placed on standby after putting in cold storage for so long; airlines need to be ready when the recovery takes off.

We will continue to work to our best efforts in establishing a dialogue between governments, organisations and other parties. Last but not least, we want governments to prioritise travel tourism.

I would like to point out that IATA's and other organisations' digital travel pass has been very welcomed. Its four modules: the first is a repository of all the formal documents before getting on the plane; second one is a repository of approved testing centres; third one is a platform for testing centres and labs to send certificates of vaccination and tests; and the last module helps the passengers to obtain official documents from border agencies.

**As cross-border travels and general global abatement of Covid-19 cases take place, how important is it for organisations like AAPA to encourage the full recovery of the global aviation industry?**

It is imperative that we watch all developments like a hawk and stay on our toes; an isolationist policy does not do any country any good. We need to prioritise travel tourism and speed up vaccinations. To illustrate the severity of the issue, some countries have vaccinated 30-60% of their population, however right now, most countries in Asia have only vaccinated less than 10% and some below 5%. Recovery cannot take place if only rich countries recover and achieve herd immunity. A global recovery can only be achieved when all countries have executed their vaccine rollouts to the best of their abilities.

**Please tell us your personal experience working for AAPA since last year and the opportunities and challenges in spearheading the association.**

I joined AAPA in March 2020 and it certainly was a baptism of fire; it was a challenge for me but I was glad to play a part as I have been in the industry for 35 years. Whatever I learned or gathered in the past has not been enough, and it is a totally different ballgame. The issues haven't been very serious for the airlines, however, there have been minor differences only in terms of dynamics between airlines and their governments.

The biggest difficulty is that we can't even get on a plane and we are in the aviation industry! In terms of communication, this has been a difficult one. But the aviation industry is a very resilient one, having weathered many crises, so I am confident that we will get through this one as well.

**In your opinion, what measures should the government and organisations take in order to facilitate a full global recovery for aviation?**

The primary priority is travel and tourism, this is extremely important to the Asia-Pacific economy. Airlines are ready as this is imperative for the economy to recover smoothly. A big challenge faced by the aviation industry is the diverging policies between countries, therefore bilateral agreements are critical in order to facilitate travel bubbles. This is why AAPA strongly supports the Digital Travel Pass as that is the only way to navigate the travel process in the new normal where there is a multiplicity of restrictions.

I have to admit there is a level of impatience and anxiety around the travel and aviation industry as we want the case numbers to come down. We also hope that our public health facilities are able to hold up before it becomes out of control. If health facilities cannot hold up, then we have lost the plot. Vaccinations are absolutely key for all parties.

**What drives your passion for the aviation industry?**

I was born and bred in Singapore. During the 70s, I saw the Concorde Supersonic jet near where I was living, and I thought that it was such an amazing invention and that it would be amazing to be involved in the aviation industry. When I was in my early 20s, Singapore Airlines operated the Concorde and they made a huge order of Boeing 747s and for me, that was an important moment that inspired love for the aviation industry.

What is beautiful about the industry is that it absolutely enriches humanity, through travel we can remove all our prejudices; we understand different cultures when we get on a plane to go somewhere far away. In addition, when I began my career in the aviation industry, the Asia-Pacific industry had just started growing rapidly. Lastly, I also want to say that airports in the world play an extremely important role in the global recovery to make sure the whole travel process is Covid-safe. Having gone through KLIA, it is a great airport and I want to commend all the efforts that Malaysia Airports is taking in order to facilitate a Covid-free process for passengers and doing all they can including upgrades in gearing up for when the industry recovery will inevitably take place.



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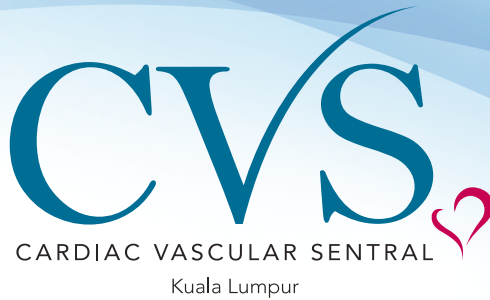
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