

AIRLINK

CONTENTS - AUGUST 2021

Airport Talk

Airport GCEO Speaks	39
Reshaping Airline Capacity for Recovery	40

Aviation News

Covid-19 Private Screening Facility Opens in KLIA	42
Malindo Air Joins IATA Travel Pass	43

Ethiopian Airlines Operates with Fully Vaccinated Crew	44
SriLankan Airlines to Resume Flights to Moscow	45
Vistara Inaugurates Flight to Tokyo Haneda	46
New Airline Super Air Jet Secures AOC	46
Raya Airways Celebrates New Route to Nanning	47

Vietnam Airlines Resumes More International Flights	48
Air Arabia and ANIF Launches Armenia's New Airline	49

Aviation Interview

Aviation Interview with Alan Pryor General Manager of KL Convention Centre	50
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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 reassures that safety protocols at its network of airports remain heightened to curb the spread of Covid-19 not only for travellers but also for the airport community. The recent setting up of new Covid-19 screening facilities for passengers and a vaccine administration centre at KL International Airport (KLIA) are among its latest initiatives. The airport operator is upbeat about its cargo operations' performance, welcoming yet another cargo airline into KLIA. It ties up another strategic foreign partnership which will bring forward its aspiration to make Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport into a preferred regional aerospace and business aviation hub.

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



So far, 80% of our staff have received their first dose of the vaccine against the Covid-19 virus with the setting up of a centre to administer vaccines in KLIA in July. This has also enabled us to vaccinate some 22,000 members of our airport community ranging from our own airport staff to our stakeholders such as the airlines and ground handlers as well as service providers that include our cleaning contractors. For our arriving passengers, we have tied up with BP Clinical Lab, which has a proven track record, to enable them to obtain their Covid-19 RTK and RT-PCR results within 15 minutes and three hours respectively at our newly launched Covid-19 screening facilities.

Five of these facilities are located at the KLIA Main Terminal and three at the klia2 terminal. For a fee, the services include the passenger being escorted from the arrival gate to the testing area in a comfortable lounge. The lounge's amenities include computers, WiFi Internet access, portable

WiFi rental and telecommunication SIM card as well as food and beverage offerings.

Reviewing our first half performance for 2021, our air cargo logistics sector has been the silver lining with our total cargo operations in Malaysia up 22% to 468,400 metric tonnes compared to the same period last year. We had encouraging cargo growth from our airports in East Malaysia with the top five airports being Tawau, Sibul, Limbang, Kota Kinabalu and Kuching, driven mainly by higher volume of e-commerce transactions.

We recently welcomed Central Airlines from Shenzhen, China with its thrice weekly flights using the Boeing 737F aircraft. Also known as Zhongzhou Airlines, this Chinese cargo airline, based in Zhengzhou Xincheng International Airport, joins Kargo Xpress and GetJet Airlines in starting operations at KLIA this year to help strengthen Malaysia's position as a regional cargo hub, specifically as an e-commerce distribution centre.

Moving in tandem with our Subang Regeneration Plan, our latest collaboration with Teknopark Istanbul is expected to bring in more aerospace innovation and new generation technologies such as robotics, data analytics, machine learning and artificial intelligence. Through our new Turkish partner, sited in the northeast of Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport that is managed by us, we hope to develop a cooperative framework for industrial and technology park development via the exchange of knowledge on best practice models.

Our immediate plan is to hold a virtual forum to convince Teknopark Istanbul's community of over 340 Turkish aerospace and high-tech companies to set up their international hubs here. Our Subang Regeneration Plan is slated to grow our ecosystem by three times, double the number of global and local operators to more than 100 that will create and support a 19,000-strong high-skilled workforce.



A Monthly Publication Of MALAYSIA
AIRPORTS © Aviation Marketing and
Development Division

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Reshaping Airline Capacity for Recovery

The global trend for airlines to survive after the brutal impact on the Covid-19 pandemic is now focused more on maintaining sustainable growth rather than aggressive pricing. The need for airlines to adapt flexibly becomes even more imperative and it will not be a one size fits all solution for everyone.

While there are many airlines struggling due to the disruptions and travel restrictions caused by the Covid-19 crisis, there are also cases of those emerging out of their challenging environment that other airlines and its industry players can learn from. Among them is Singapore Airlines (SIA).

Although the SIA group reported S\$4.3 billion net loss for the financial year ended 31 March 2021 after the toughest year in its history, its new transformation programme is said to have made good progress in its first year despite headwinds from Covid-19.

Based on its current published schedules, the group expects its passenger capacity to be around 28% and 32% of pre-Covid levels respectively by June and July this year, serving about 49% of the points flown before the crisis.

Both the Airport Council International (ACI) and International Air Transport Association (IATA) have forecast 2021 traffic to be slightly better than 2020's although it is still below pre-Covid-19 level. ACI expects passenger traffic for global and Asia Pacific to decline 43.6% and 35.1% respectively in 2021 while IATA predicts global traffic will fall by 57% compared to pre-Covid-19 level.

Sabre's White Paper

Interestingly, over the past year, most airlines have published in advance "full" schedules similar in capacity to 2019's levels, according to a new white paper on airline network planning by Sabre Corporation, a leading software and technology provider that powers the global travel industry.

Entitled The Art & Science of Airline Network Planning to Ramp up for Recovery, the white paper outlines pioneering new methodologies that will enable Sabre's airline partners to create more holistic, accurate network plans as their focus shifts from short-term planning to long-term recovery.

Sabre Travel Solutions Chief Services Officer Cem Tanyel says, "From an aviation perspective, the latter half of 2021 is the time to change our outlook from crisis mode with a focus only on the immediate term to again taking on a more strategic view; analysing market and fleet adjustments for the seasons and years to come."

Tanyel, who heads professional services, service delivery, consulting and support, warns that it will not be easy in the current environment due to the difficulties caused by reduced passenger numbers and revenue as well as resulting reductions in crew for some airlines.

"The data airline managers could previously rely on to estimate future demand beyond the next few weeks is no longer reliable," he argues. With Sabre's new approaches, airlines can now leverage on its GDS shopping data in conjunction with historical Global Demand Data and Industry capacity data to predict demand in a manner that works effectively even when prior year results become less representative.

Sabre's alternative 2021 schedules and demand estimations will be more reflective of what is likely to occur. Its white paper shows that airlines' capacity reductions have not been as great compared to earlier in the pandemic, citing that while capacity was reduced by 21% in June 2020, the reduction was just 4% for April and May 2021.

The recent emergence of new Covid-19 variants, the more transmissible Delta variant which has been dubbed 'the new enemy', has changed the global scenario for the pandemic. With more countries now tightening further restrictions on travellers in order to curb the





spread of the virus, aviation's analysis and consulting firm Sobie Aviation founder Brendan Sobie says airlines have been forced to relook their flight arrangements and consider deeper restructuring options.

Debt restructuring of airlines

In Southeast Asia, some of their flag carriers, which had debts prior to Covid-19, saw their situation exacerbated and their operations reduced. This is true of carriers such as Philippine Airlines and Garuda Indonesia. The latter posted US\$2.4 billion net loss in 2020, a figure highlighting the dire financial situation faced by the airline.

Thai Airways International, which suffered its worst ever net loss of US\$4.7 billion last year, has indicated plans to cut its registered capital by 19% as part of a court approved rehabilitation to bring the airline back to profitability by 2025. It also intends to cut its workforce by half and have its aircraft in operation reduced from 102 to 82 as part of its rehab plan.

Independent analyst Sobie says Malaysia Airlines Berhad has made the most progress in terms of its restructuring after going through a UK court. Its RM3.6 billion capital injection is coming from the sovereign wealth fund Khazanah Nasional Berhad over the next five years.

Malaysia Airlines Group Strategy Officer Byran Foong recalls its restructuring was completed after six months of intense action, which addressed its aircraft leasing cost among other things.

"In 2020, we were looking at a recovery in air travel during the first half of 2021," adding that Malaysia Airlines has been forced to push back its recovery plans by a year.

With traffic movements hit by a total lockdown nationwide effective 1 June, the recent daily spike in Covid-19 cases in Malaysia reaching a record high of 13,215 on 15 July and other contributing factors, analysts view with concern the recovery of air travel in Malaysia.

Foong says the flag carrier is now aligned with the government's recent announcement of a phased recovery approach with interstate travel expected to take place in the fourth quarter of 2021 (4Q21). "We have come out a new plan and revised its forecast to recover 15% to 20% of our 2019 capacity by 4Q21 or the first quarter of 2022."

According to 2019 statistics, Malaysia Airlines occupies 24% market share of the airlines operating at the KL International Airport.

No risk of ATRs' expiry

The Malaysian Aviation Commission (Mavcom), which regulates the capacity in the market via the granting of air traffic rights for both domestic and international routes in the country, recently announced it will continue to ease the condition which automatically revokes unused Air Traffic Rights (ATRs) within six months from the date of its approval.

This flexibility, implemented since 5 June 2020, is to facilitate the administrative and regulatory challenges of airlines besides enabling them to keep their current ATR portfolio active amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

There are also no plans to freeze new air service licence (ASL) or air service permit (ASP) applications, reiterates Mavcom. ASP applies to unscheduled journeys while ASL applies to journeys with a fixed schedule.

For the second quarter of 2021 (2Q21), it has approved 100% of the ATR applications. However, they are 58.3% and 11% down from the first quarter of 2021 and previous corresponding period a year ago respectively.

Of the 10 applications received from April to June, five of the allocations were for international routes and the rest for domestic routes. MyJet Xpress Airlines Sdn Bhd received the highest number of approvals, totalling seven ATRs while AirAsia X, Malindo Airways Sdn Bhd and World Cargo Airline Sdn Bhd each obtained one ATR approval.

World Cargo Airline's conversion of its ASP to ASL from 1 April makes it the latest ASL holder for the cargo segment. Encouraged by the continued healthy growth shown by the cargo segment, Mavcom Executive Chairman Datuk Seri Saripuddin Kasim is optimistic of the sector's endurance and resilience, which he believes will serve as an encouragement for brighter skies ahead.

"As a commercial and economic regulator, the Commission is committed to finding ways to assist industry players in these challenging times so that they can survive the global pandemic and focus on continuing full services in the near future."

Mavcom has also extended the moratorium on the enforcement of the Quality of Service Framework and the Malaysian Aviation Consumer Protection Code 2016, he adds.

Covid-19 Private Screening Facility Opens in KLIA

Passengers travelling through KL International Airport (KLIA) will experience a new Covid-19 screening facility which was launched in July 2021.

This new facility is among several improvements that Malaysia Airports is implementing to enhance comfort and convenience while going through the necessary travel safety protocols at the airport. Passengers can look forward to shorter wait times upon arrival as this new facility will be able to produce the Covid-19 RTK and RT-PCR results within 15 minutes and 3 hours, respectively. There will be a total of eight locations for this screening facility, five at KLIA Main Terminal and three at klia2 terminal equipped with comfortable lounges and seating areas for passengers while they wait for their test results.

“

In doing this, our topmost priority remains the safety aspect, and we are partnering with a service provider that has a proven track record with a robust network of facilities and the highest credibility in health testing services. We have engaged closely with the respective authorities to ensure that the appointed service provider is sanctioned by the Ministry of Health (MOH) to perform such services.

“We are certain that this new facility will go a long way in spurring the demand for travel once borders are reopened. Not only that, but this initiative is also among many we are implementing to ensure that service standards at KLIA remain at the highest level. The new facility is expected to cater to around 40,000 passengers daily which will sufficiently cater to international arrivals at both terminals as the traffic recovers.

”

**DATO' MOHD SHUKRIE
MOHD SALLEH**

Group CEO of Malaysia Airports

Among the facilities and services that will be provided include passenger escort from the arrival gate to the testing area, VIP service, as well as relaxing and comfortable waiting lounges. The lounges are equipped with productivity tools such as computers, Wi-Fi Internet access, portable WiFi rental and telecommunication SIM card, as well as F&B offerings. Passengers are also given options for various payment platforms such as credit card, cash, online transfer, e-payment and insurance claim for their further convenience.

Similar to the current services provided by the MOH, these services are provided for a fee. The cost per passenger will be from RM60 to RM250 for Malaysians and RM90 to RM350 for foreigners. All arriving passengers can utilise these services, however passengers who belong to certain categories namely B40, civil servants, persons with disabilities and students can also continue to utilise the services provided by MOH as per current practice.

Malaysia Airports have appointed BP Clinical Lab to provide the services and facilities at KLIA after a stringent open tender exercise. BP Clinical Lab has over 38 years' experience in the medical healthcare industry and has a proven track record in providing services to many government agencies such as MOH and Social Security Organisation (SOCSO).



Malindo Air Joins IATA Travel Pass

Malindo Air will commence trials on the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Travel Pass – a mobile app to help passengers easily and securely manage their travel in line with any government requirements for Covid-19 testing or vaccine information.

The first selected passengers on one of their flights will trial the digital health credential soon to verify and share their pre-travel Covid-19 test status with Malindo Air. The trial is a step towards making travel more convenient, enabling travelers to manage Covid-19 related documentation digitally, safely, and seamlessly throughout the travel experience.

In the future, travelers may also be able to share vaccination certificates with authorities and airlines to facilitate travel.

“

We are very pleased to partner with IATA and become one of the region's pioneers in trialing this long-awaited initiative in real time. The ability to process passengers' Covid-19 relevant data for travel digitally will be the way forward. We will support the introduction of other initiatives to further enhance customer experience.

”

**CAPT MUSHAFIZ
MUSTAFA BAKRI**
CEO of Malindo Air



The trial is being done on selected Malindo Air flights and the airline hopes to eventually roll this out on all international routes. Eligible passengers are being personally invited to download the app and enroll for the digital travel pass ahead of their travels. In Kuala Lumpur, Malindo Air has partnered with selected Health Care labs which are authorised to securely send test results to passengers via the app.

“We are proud to partner with Malindo Air to trial IATA Travel Pass and demonstrate that digital health apps can securely, conveniently and efficiently help manage passenger travel health credentials. This is a vote of confidence and credibility for IATA Travel Pass and a positive step forward towards restarting international aviation. But for the tool to be as effective as possible we also need support from governments on the acceptance of Travel

Pass at the borders,” said Nick Careen, IATA's Senior Vice President Airport, Passenger, Cargo, Security.

Digital health certificates will be a key feature in air travel moving forward. Establishing trusted, secure solutions to verify the health credentials of travellers will be critical in facilitating smooth air travel and safeguarding public health. The IATA Travel Pass consists of four modules – a global registry of health requirements, a global registry of testing centres, a lab app to securely share test certificates with passengers, and a contactless travel app which enables passengers to create a digital passport and manage their travel documentation digitally.

For more information, please call 03 – 7841 5388 or visit www.malindoair.com

Ethiopian Airlines Operates with Fully Vaccinated Crew



Ethiopian Airlines, Africa's largest carrier, has started operating flights with fully vaccinated crew against Covid-19 to keep travelers safe in light of the pandemic.

“

We are pleased to operate flights with fully vaccinated crew – a significant step in protecting our employees' and customers' health safety. We are encouraged by the increasing number of passengers travelling for business, VFR and tourism supported by the confidence of vaccination across the world. We have been squarely focused on working very hard to ensure the safety of our staff and passengers since the pandemic broke out and this is another testament to our continued commitment. We have bought and imported more than 37,000 vaccine shots for our employees and stakeholders.

”

TEWOLDE GEBREMARIAM
Group CEO of *Ethiopian Airlines*

Ethiopian has been rigorously implementing Covid-19 precautionary measures including the launch of its own testing and isolation center and digitisation of its operation among others. It has been at the forefront in the fight against the pandemic carrying essential medical supplies and vaccines across the globe as well as repatriating stranded people back to their home.

Ethiopian Airlines has become Africa's top airline in passenger and freight traffic in retaining its leadership position in the continent.



According to the African Airlines Association's (AFRAA) report, Ethiopian has been ranked first by passenger and cargo traffic in 2020. Ethiopian carried 500 thousand tons of freight and 5.5 million passengers through its main hub, Addis Ababa Bole International Airport.

Tewolde GebreMariam reiterated, “We are honoured to continue our leadership even during the Global Pandemic Crisis which has devastated the aviation industry. This is a manifestation of our resilience and agility. We are excited about the role we played in the fight against the pandemic by continuing our much-needed air connectivity within Africa and with the rest of the world without any flight suspension. We are saving lives through air transport of medical supplies and vaccines.”

Ethiopia also topped the list in the most connected countries in Africa due to Ethiopian Airlines' large number of direct flights within the continent.

For more information, please visit www.ethiopianairlines.com or call 03 – 2141 2190

SriLankan Airlines to Resume Flights to Moscow

SriLankan Airlines seeks to resume air connection between Sri Lanka and Russia by resuming operations from Colombo Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) and Moscow Domodedovo Airport (DME). Flights between the two cities will restart from 31 July.

“The resumption of services connecting Colombo and Moscow is a link that will not only facilitate travel but will be the impetus for building closer bilateral business connections between the two countries.”

ASHOK PATHIRAGE
Chairman of SriLankan Airlines

The flight resumption to the capital of Russia comes after a break of six years. “We believe flying back to Moscow would create a window of opportunity for both countries and travelers to experience the historic heritage of the people of Sri Lanka and Russia,” Pathirage said.

The flag carrier plans to offer regular once-weekly service every Friday at 10.30pm local time with its Airbus A330-300 aircraft configured to carry 269 passengers in Economy and 28 travelers in Business Class seats. The company currently operates six A330-300 jets with a single plane in storage. The overnight flight UL533, which will take more than eight hours, will land at Domodedovo Airport (DME) in Moscow at 4.30am local time.

“This is a significant air link for SriLankan Airlines as we connect to the largest country in the world. This operation would offer a new and easy travel path in connecting the Russian Federation and surrounding countries,” said Vipula Gunatilleka, CEO of SriLankan Airlines.

The oneworld alliance member introduced a link to Moscow in 2011, operating from BIA to DME via Dubai International (DXB). The year-round route became nonstop in October 2013 and remained a fixture of SriLankan’s network until March 2015.

For more information, please visit www.srilankan.com or call 03 – 2697 2100



Vistara Inaugurates Flight to Tokyo Haneda



Vistara, India's full-service carrier inaugurated its non-stop flights on 7 July between Delhi and Tokyo Haneda. The inaugural flight departed Delhi at 0300 hours and landed in Tokyo (Haneda) at 1450 hours. Under the air bubble agreement between India and Japan, Vistara will fly once a week between the two cities using its Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner.

“ We are delighted to take India's finest airline to Japan and provide an unmatched flying experience to our customers that exemplifies modern Indian hospitality with the highest global standards in safety, hygiene and operations. We look forward to further strengthening our presence on this new route in the coming months. ”

LESLIE THNG

Chief Executive Officer of Vistara

TATA SIA Airlines Limited, known by the brand name Vistara, is a 51:49 joint venture between Tata Sons Limited and Singapore Airlines Limited (SIA). Vistara brings together Tata's and SIA's legendary hospitality and renowned service excellence to offer the finest full-service flying experience in India.

Vistara commenced its commercial operations on 9 January 2015, with an aim to set new standards in the aviation industry in India and it today connects destinations across India and abroad.

The airline has a fleet of 48 aircraft, including 37 Airbus A320, three Airbus A321neo, six Boeing 737-800NG, and two Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft, and has flown more than 25 million customers.

For more information about Vistara, please visit www.airvistara.com

New Airline Super Air Jet Secures AOC

Indonesia is welcoming Super Air Jet (SAJ), a new low-cost carrier backed by Lion Air Group. The airline intends to launch operations in the market at a time when the aviation industry has been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Start-up carrier Super Air Jet (SAJ) was awarded an Air Operator Certificate (AOC) on 25 June, according to Indonesia's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

The Transportation Ministry has issued an air operator's certificate (AOC) for the new airline, allowing SAJ, which currently has three Airbus A320-200s, to operate the aircraft for commercial purposes.



“ With the completion of the certification process, Super Air Jet has fulfilled all technical and safety requirements. ”

NOVIE RIYANTO

*The Ministry's Air Transportation
Director General*

Established in March 2021, the low-cost carrier will focus on the domestic and millennial market as shared by the airline's Chief Executive Officer Ari Azahari.

The carrier intends to fly from Jakarta's Soekarno-Hatta International (CGK) to 10 domestic destinations - Banjarmasin (BDJ), Batam (BTH), Denpasar, Bali (DPS), Lombok, Mataram (LOP), Medan Kualanamu (KNO), Padang (PDG), Palembang (PLM), Pekanbaru (PKU), Pontianak (PNK), and Surabaya (SUB).

The new airline is in the process of receiving route permits and standard operating procedures for passenger service from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation of Indonesia.

Raya Airways Celebrates New Route to Nanning

On track with its network expansion plans to increase destinations within the Asia-Pacific markets, Raya Airways recently marked the entry of its freight delivery services into the city of Nanning, the capital of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in China. This also records Raya Airways as the first Malaysian freight service provider operating to this destination.

“

We are thrilled to expand our logistics solutions and time-definite services into China, one of the world's largest and fastest growing air-cargo markets. With Nanning being the gateway to Asean and increasing cross-border e-commerce goods being transported from China into the Southeast Asian markets, this route expansion is timely and will support the increasing demand of cargo services from consumers and merchants, while offering us with an opportunity to create and provide a seamless logistics network driven by efficient service.

”

MOHAMAD NAJIB ISHAK
Group Managing Director
of Raya Airways

“As one of the key enablers in the supply chain ecosystem, our role is to establish connections and options for our customers. Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, freight transportation has become increasingly significant, and it is



integral that we continue to strengthen our expansion plan into new markets. We look forward to introducing more new routes in the months ahead as we increase our interconnecting network of destinations to support businesses during this pandemic,” Mohamad Najib added.

Raya Airways will serve Nanning four times per week with an average weekly load of 30 tonnes and a maximum capacity of up to 40 tonnes, utilising its Boeing 767-200F aircraft. This new freight route will carry all shipments that Raya Airways specialises in, namely cross-border e-commerce products and consumer goods, including perishable items.

Emboldened by a rapidly developing logistics industry, Raya Airways aims to expand its network to more destinations within Asia-Pacific, including within China and other countries later this year.

For more information, please visit www.rayaairways.com or call 03 – 7884 9898



Vietnam Airlines Resumes More International Flights



Vietnam Airlines is resuming more international routes as the airline starts preparing for the reopening of the country. The carrier is now bringing back more regular flights to points in Australia, Europe, and Asia starting July.

For Australia, Vietnam Airlines will be flying between Ho Chi Minh City's Tan Son Nhat International Airport (SGN) and Sydney International Airport (SYD) with two flights per week from 15 July. A second flight to Australia will run once per week from SGN to Melbourne Airport (MEL) from 20 July.

Meanwhile, Europe will see Vietnam Airlines service with some relatively specific dates in mind. Frankfurt Airport (FRA) will see flights from Hanoi's Noi Bai International Airport (HAN) on 25 and 28 July, and 21 August. The airline's London Heathrow Airport (LHR) nonstop service from HAN will be launched on 14 August and 2 September.

Closer to home, Vietnam Airlines will be flying between Hanoi and Tokyo Narita International Airport (NRT) with two flights per week from 17 July. The Tokyo Narita to Ho Chi Minh City route is also set to resume. Lastly, the airline has also scheduled the

Ho Chi Minh City (SGN) and Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport (BKK) route to take place from 1 August.

Vietnam Airlines will be flying both Boeing 787 and Airbus A350 aircraft for international flights.

Meanwhile, Vietnam Airlines has also officially implemented the trial of the IATA Travel Pass on two flights from Narita Airport to Da Nang. This step is to concretise the agreement signed in May between the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and Vietnam Airlines.

Eligible passengers need to be above 18 years old and obtain a negative Covid-19 result from any eligible clinics based on the IATA lab registry. Passengers wishing to participate can register on Vietnam Airlines website at least 3 days before departure date, download the IATA Travel Pass application to their mobile phones, create their digital passport and enter their flight information.

For more information, please call 03 – 2031 1555 or visit www.vietnamairlines.com



Air Arabia and ANIF Launches Armenia's New Airline

The Armenian National Interests Fund (ANIF) and Air Arabia, the Middle East and North Africa's first and largest low-cost carrier (LCC) operator, announced on 14 July the signing of an agreement to launch Armenia's new national airline. The agreement will see the establishment of an independent joint venture company that will operate as a low-cost passenger airline with Yerevan's Zvartnots International Airport (EVN) as its base.

The new national airline will serve the strategic vision of Armenia's fast-growing travel and tourism sector as well as contribute to the country's economic growth, while providing Armenians with a reliable and value for money air travel.



David Papazian, Chief Executive Officer of ANIF, said: "We are excited to launch a new national low-cost carrier for Armenia that will contribute significant value to the economy and energise our travel and tourism sector. This builds on our commitment to partner with top global entities on transformational projects that catalyse our crucial economic sectors. Air Arabia has a well established track-record in launching and operating successful LCCs, and its know-how will be a differentiating strength of the new airline."

“ We are delighted at Air Arabia Group to partner with ANIF on this joint venture to launch Armenia's new national low-cost carrier. We see tremendous potential for Armenia in building its airline sector, which will add sustained value to the economy through job creation and the development of the travel and tourism sector. We thank ANIF and the Civil Aviation Committee for their trust and we look forward to working hand in hand to develop the new airline, which will serve as a value-for-money air travel option for Armenians and visitors to the country. ”

ADEL AL ALI

*Group Chief Executive Officer
of Air Arabia*

Tatevik Revazian, Chair of the Civil Aviation Committee of Armenia, said: "Our vision for Armenia is to significantly improve air connectivity and as a result bring economic growth and jobs to the country. Having a strong national low-cost airline is essential for the development of Armenia's air transport sector, especially as a tool to recover faster from the Covid-19 crisis. This partnership between ANIF and Air Arabia Group to launch a new airline reflects this vision. We are confident that the expertise Air Arabia brings to the JV will support the seamless launch and growth of the carrier. We look forward to the success of Armenia's new national airline."

The name of the airline will be decided by the people of Armenia through an open competition. Based in Yerevan, the new company will adopt the low-cost business model adopted by Air Arabia.





Aviation Interview with Alan Pryor

General Manager of
KL Convention Centre



A man of firm authority and strategic thinking, Alan Pryor is just the right guy to steer KL Convention Centre out of the pandemic. By adapting and leveraging to the acceleration of digitalisation, the MICE industry has plenty for the public to look forward to. A man who stumbled onto the MICE industry and never looked back, Mr. Pryor has full confidence in the resilience of the industry and looks forward to it bouncing back in full force post-pandemic.

How has KL Convention Centre demonstrated itself as an important infrastructure asset during the pandemic?

The Centre is a purpose-built venue that is specifically designed to effectively accommodate the congregation of a large crowd, structurally and logistically optimising accessibility, safety and security to facilitate a smooth flow of movement in a highly regulated and controlled manner with stringent compliance and adherence to the new norm Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

Answering the call of duty as a mega Vaccination Centre has allowed the Centre to leverage these strengths, which usually catered to business events and corporate functions, towards a noble cause in service of the nation, city and its people, in aid of their immunisation journey, demonstrating the real value and benefit purpose-built venues complemented by a team of experienced and knowledgeable team, can contribute to achieving national objectives.

The pandemic has made a permanent change to all industries. How has KL Convention Centre been transforming the way it conducts its business?

'We can't go to war alone.' We started by establishing partnerships and collaborations on risk and profit-sharing basis with industry bodies, key players of the supply chain, and long-time clients for the collective success of the industry which expedited the resumption of business events, kick-started the first live entertainment events, and brought in some of the first consumer exhibitions to the Centre since the pandemic began as well as pave a smooth visitor journey while attending events through comprehensive step-by-step guidance.

We transformed our brick and mortar halls and meeting rooms into hybrid and virtual studios, and dedicated a qualified team of technical experts to advice and deliver to any virtual and hybrid event needs, ranging from set or event production and technical design to live broadcast and streams, making the Centre a One-Stop Virtual Solutions Hub for clients' and organisers' digital event pivot.

We have further leveraged virtual technologies to make the venue remotely available and accessible for site-visits where clients and organisers have the options of pre-arranging a live guided tour of the Centre or embark on self-exploration. The Centre is also the first venue in Malaysia with a Digital Concierge, powered by Artificial Intelligence and synced with our website content, tasked to welcome and help visitors navigate within the site and respond to queries.

One of our core product offerings is food and beverage and when we could no longer serve event participants due to event restrictions and postponements, we opened up new food outlets and crafted festive special promotional spreads for safe home celebration, reaching new customer base via online food ordering and delivery platforms. When events were allowed to resume in small scales, we went on to kick-start offsite caterings, at Sepang F1 Circuit and Glenmarie Business Park, as part of revenue diversification and product expansion.

In ensuring these transitions were taking place in a smooth and effective manner, we sustained a training and development programme throughout the working from home phase with structured up-skilling and re-skilling modules to help our team meet the evolving demands of the industry and adapt to present challenges, changes and conditions. Our entire workforce is now trained to provide both back-end and front-end operational assistance.

Impact on the MICE industry during the pandemic has been significant. What are your plans for KL Convention Centre post-Covid?

First and foremost, all our focus and efforts will be poured into successfully delivering all confirmed events which kept being postponed since the beginning of the pandemic.

We will be working very closely with all clients and organisers to help them achieve their event objectives, continue to strengthen our digital product and solutions offerings and invest in developing a strong in-house team to cater to clients' hybrid and virtual needs from pre-production to production and post-production stages.

Furthermore, we will also work towards solidifying the expansion of our F&B business, revamping its product and service offerings based on customer behaviour and buying pattern analysis, and tailoring dining experiences to suit the event and audience profile.

Plans have been made to resume our building and infrastructure maintenance, refurbishment and upgrade to continue to provide a pristine event environment with enhanced and refreshed interior look and feel.

What is your outlook for the MICE industry and what are things that the public can look forward to in the future?

For the industry, the pandemic is bringing forward or expanding the work industry organisations are doing around personalisation and big data. With the growing mix of remote attendees, it is going to become even more important to

understand who our audiences are, what their needs are, what their persona and sentiment is. It is no longer about just getting the right speakers and the right food for coffee and lunch breaks. There needs to be a whole new level of engagement and to do that we need to understand more about who we are talking to, or who we want to find to talk to.

We believe that working from home and a level of reluctance to return to face-to-face meetings is going to stay with us for some time. We see the further enhancement and adoption of virtual or hybrid solutions as we continue to understand more about how to engage the two separate audiences, those at the venue, and those participating remotely, with the events running simultaneously or more likely separately to allow focus on each audience with tailored content for both. An extension of this is the production value, how good is the technical production of the virtual/hybrid components? There will be a shift to TV/Movie quality production to retain engagement online and for that there will be a shift of some AV companies and venues into this space.

For the public, the future event attendee and visitor will have more autonomy and deciding power in how they choose to attend an event and in curating their own event content where each participant will form his/her own unique experience tied to the event.

Do you hold any other roles in Malaysia's MICE industry and how do you plan to make a difference in them?

I am the Chairman of the Business Events Council Malaysia and as the collective voice of the business events supply chain, leading the industry's government advocacy and lobbying efforts throughout the Covid-19 pandemic which are focused on the safe re-opening of our sector.

We are working to drive safe certification adoption by the supply chain, providing shared information on best practice and placing a great focus on the development of dedicated communication to engage our target audiences and to maintain market presence so we are fully prepared with a safe and accessible business events proposition for Malaysia. This will ensure we are well prepared once domestic, regional and global travel commences.

Our strategy is aligned to the National Recovery Plan set out by the Government and we are working with Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau to promote Malaysia's market presence and to continually uphold our stringent SOPs, consistently demonstrating the industry's capabilities to deliver safe, professional, regulated and successful meetings and events. We are also up-keeping our engagement with strategic partners' industry associations through collaboration and partnerships in advocating and implementing stringent compliance to deliver a "Safe Malaysia" business events destination proposition.

What is your professional background and how did you come to be in the MICE industry?

My professional path had begun in the hospitality industry, getting exposed to various aspects of hotel operations and management. Along the way, I attended an interview at the Ladbrokes Hilton for a Food & Beverage Manager position, instead was offered an operations position in a conference and exhibition centre and I have not looked back since.



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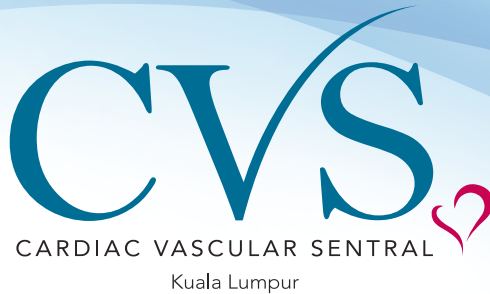
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