

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 the ever readiness of its network of airports in Malaysia for the reopening of international borders following the successful take-off of the country's first travel bubble pilot project in Langkawi. Moving forward into the last quarter of 2021, the airport operator is optimistic of improved passenger and cargo traffic movements, including at Istanbul Sabiha Gokcen International Airport (ISGIA), especially with the ramping up of Covid-19 vaccinations and its latest strategic partnership with Maxis Bhd for the co-creation of Malaysia's first 5G digital airport.

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



With the majority of Malaysian states and territories progressing between phase two and three of the country's National Recovery Plan, I would like to stress that all our airports nationwide are ready for full swing operation and raring to go to facilitate in the recovery of domestic tourism and travel. In fact, since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic last year, we have not closed any of our airports except for Melaka Airport due to zero flights. We expect domestic air traffic to gain traction once 70% to 80% of Malaysia's population have been fully vaccinated while at Malaysia Airports, our target was to achieve full vaccination by end-September.

At Langkawi International Airport, we welcome the strong support from our local carriers, namely Malaysia Airlines, Malindo Air, AirAsia and Firefly in Langkawi's reopening on Malaysia Day (16 September) as a travel bubble for fully vaccinated domestic travellers. I believe all these concerted efforts resulting in improved passenger and aircraft traffic movements will lend tremendous value to help resuscitate our aviation and tourism

industries, which have been adversely hit by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The positive outlook for countries with high vaccine rollouts such as Malaysia and Turkey have witnessed an increase in air travel. On this note, we are cautiously optimistic that our group performance for the fourth quarter will be better than the previous quarter. The continued recovery of passenger traffic from ISGIA based on our latest data reveals growth of almost 71% growth to 3.2 million over August 2020, thanks to leisure travel during the summer holidays and acceptance of both the European Union Digital Covid Certificate and Turkish Covid-19 certificate. Of the total, 1.1 million came from international passengers, which exceeded the one million mark for the first time since March 2020 while the balance of over two million domestic passengers was close to 90% of the volume handled in August 2019.

Apart from ISGIA's state-of-art Xovis PTS passenger flow management system to help reduce wait time and monitor physical distancing, as part of our group wide Airports 4.0 initiatives, we have also rolled out the Automated Queue Management System

that leverages on 3D sensor technology to manage and reduce passenger wait times to under 10 minutes earlier this year at the KL International Airport. You can expect more technological advances and refreshing terminal concepts to ensure seamless passenger journey through digitalisation and innovation to be forthcoming. They include the Digital Experience Showcase area scheduled for completion by end-2022 and the use of robust technology infrastructure such as 5G gigabit ultra-fast wireless network much as our immediate priority is to ensure the safety of our staff, passengers and airport environment.

We have selected Maxis as our sole telecommunication operator to co-develop a digital transformation roadmap for smart airport operations and manage both Wifi and 5G-related network services and solutions at KLIA's two terminals. 5G will be the catalyst for connecting us to new business and economic opportunities, strengthening our foundation of new technologies and digitalisation of our airport operations. For our passengers, it means a smart travel experience with smart retail and smart security in mind.



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Langkawi, A Testbed for Future Travel Bubbles

As Malaysia's first domestic tourism bubble pilot project for those who have been fully vaccinated, the scrutiny on Langkawi's reopening on 16 September in conjunction with 58th Malaysia Day celebrations has been intense, receiving mixed feedback from the industry players. The first few days of tourist arrivals to Langkawi numbering above 2,500 every day by air and sea is strong testimony of what the reopening of this island resort could do to its local economy and the livelihoods of its approximately 108,400 population whose lives are very much dependent on tourism.



The first day of the travel bubble initiative attracted 3,280 tourist arrivals to Langkawi while the second day saw 14 flights bringing in 2,640 passengers. On the third day, the island resort expected 2,943 tourists, of which 2,100 would fly in by air while the remaining balance of 538 tourists would come by ferry and 305 from the roll-on roll-off vehicle carrier ferry via Kuala Perlis.



NASARUDDIN ABDUL MUTTALIB

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of
Langkawi Development Authority

Flight schedules on 19 September show 21 return flights to Langkawi by Malaysia Airlines, AirAsia, Malindo Air and Firefly. Supportive of the government's efforts to reinvigorate the national economy through the travel bubble initiative, AirAsia Malaysia CEO Riad Asmat says the airline will be resuming its 90 weekly flights to and from Langkawi, departing from Kuala Lumpur (63 times weekly), Penang (14 times), Johor Bahru (seven times), Ipoh (three times) and Kota Bharu (three times).



Malindo Air, on the other hand, is mounting six daily flights to Langkawi, of which five are from Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport (SAAS) and one from the KL International Airport (KLIA). In order to create a safe travelling experience for both its crew and passengers, its CEO Captain Mushafiz Mustafa Bakri assures that its staff are fully vaccinated while its aircraft are equipped with high-efficiency particulate air filters which can remove more than 99.9% of microbes in the air. Besides the aircraft's cabin air being refreshed every two to three minutes throughout the flight, other safety precautions such as enhanced cabin cleaning and rigorous disinfecting are also observed.

Malaysia Airlines, which brings in around 700 passengers daily through its five daily flights to Langkawi, is looking at promoting to its passengers the island's tourist attractions as well as food and beverage outlets on the airline's social media platforms in order to drive more traffic and footfall to these places and businesses as part of the recovery efforts not just for the aviation sector but also the tourism related sector. The national carrier hopes to kickstart this campaign from 22 September to 31 October.





Last minute compulsory swab test

The Health Ministry's mandate just a day before Langkawi's reopening that it is compulsory for travellers to be tested for Covid-19 before their trip at public/private healthcare facilities or departure at the airports or ferry terminals not only reversed Tourism, Culture and Arts Minister Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri's earlier announcement that no such tests are required but also left many stumped, with the Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations calling on the government to subsidise, if not bear, the cost of the test, for the locals.

According to Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin, the polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) or Rapid Test Kit-Antigen (RTK-Ag) swab tests must be conducted 48 hours before departure and the results presented at the airports or ferry terminals for inspection.



Self-test saliva kits purchased by tourists and brought to these ports of entry at the designated screening areas to undergo the Covid-19 detection test are also accepted. Otherwise, they can buy them from the private sector provider at the screening areas.

Despite the hue and cry from the industry players on the timeliness of the Health Ministry's mandate, the swab test has been effective in detecting positive Covid cases, thus ensuring the safety of everyone and facilitating the success of Langkawi tourism bubble pilot project. The first day of the travel bubble programme saw five Covid-19 positive cases identified among those who underwent the RTK-Ag, of which three were detected at SAAS and one each at KLIA and Penang International Airport.

Since these travellers were asymptomatic, they have been issued a 10-day home surveillance order. Meanwhile, the airlines, ferry consortium operators and hoteliers in Langkawi have agreed to allow these travellers to defer their flight, ferry ride and stay dates. According to Malaysian Association of Hotel Kedah/Perlis chapter vice-chairman Razmi Rahmat, the majority of the five-star hotels on the island enjoyed between 60% and 80% bookings on the second day of the travel bubble while some of those hotels sited next to the beach were fully booked. Hopefully, when the Kuala Kedah ferry service to Langkawi resumes on 23 September after the cessation of the Enhanced Movement Control Order in Kuala Kedah, bookings for the four-star and below hotels, which now hovers around 40%, will pick up.

With the reopening of Langkawi, the hotel guests can have access to facilities such as surau, swimming pool, gymnasium, lounge and halls. Holiday makers to the island resort are now allowed to engage in beach activities (such as water sports, snorkelling and scuba diving) besides other leisure, recreational, social and special interest activities like golfing, cycling, bird watching, angling and yachting. Family edutainment centres, recreation/extreme adventure/nature and theme parks, farms, aquariums, zoos as well as art, culture and heritage venues such as museums, libraries and galleries are also now open to them.

The Langkawi travel bubble pilot project has led to a clamouring for other islands in Malaysia to be reopened and the easing of interstate travel restrictions with the reduction of Covid-19 cases in the Klang Valley, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka and Kedah. The National Security Council will be deciding on this matter soon based on the reports submitted by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture and state authorities as they review and monitor the situation in Langkawi, which had a massive immunisation exercise undertaken among its population since June to prepare the island to receive tourists.

Indeed, if implemented well and supported jointly by all parties involved alongside the practice of wearing face masks and maintaining physical distancing by everyone, Langkawi's success can be emulated with confidence by other local tourist destinations eager to reopen.

Tourism Malaysia and LADA Gained International Recognition

The joyous month of Malaysia Day celebration has started positively as Malaysia won two out of 25 categories presented at this year's virtual PATA Gold Awards, namely through Tourism Malaysia for the Print Marketing Campaign category and Langkawi Development Authority (LADA) for the Heritage category.

Tourism Malaysia's 2021 Desk Calendar with its "Dive into Your Dream – Malaysia 365 Days" theme reminds its users of Malaysia's picturesque natural beauty, from its dazzling blue seas, multi-colour sunsets, and mystic rainforests. The idea is to inspire the users of their next holiday in the country, away from the bustling city scenes and into the secret world of Malaysia's off-the-beaten-track destinations.

The calendar also portrays Tourism Malaysia's effort in embracing digitalisation by incorporating its digital platforms through QR codes and offering download options for each picturesque landscape displayed each month. The QR codes paired with every picture will bring users to dedicated articles on the locations along with recommendations for tourists. The downloadable pictures, on the other hand, allow users to utilise the calming sceneries as their desktop wallpapers, posters, and wall calendars.

Similarly, LADA has deservedly won the Heritage Award through its "Langkawi UNESCO Global Geopark: The Diverse Heritage of Kubang Badak Biogeotrail" project. Being the first UNESCO Global Geopark in Southeast Asia, Langkawi is not only home to idyllic beaches but also a community of rich culture and heritage. On the southwest part of the island, one can find Langkawi's Kubang Badak Biogeotrail. The project has brought forth the geological, biological, and cultural wonders of Kubang Badak Village.



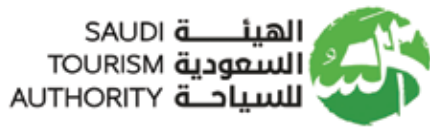
LADA has successfully brought to light the importance of biodiversity and how the local community responsibly rely on natural resources as their source of income, alongside their rich Malay-Thai culture that can be traced back to the 18th century. Carrying the influences of their Thai ancestors, Kubang Badak villagers are well-versed in the Thai language. Both the authorities and the community have worked together in conserving the environment and educating the public while practising responsible geotourism.

For more information, please visit www.tourism.gov.my



Source: Tourism Malaysia

Photo of Kubang Badak Biogeotrail courtesy of Langkawi Development Authority (LADA)



Saudi Tourism Authority Invests in Southeast Asia Commercial Office



The Saudi Tourism Authority (STA) has opened a commercial office in Malaysia covering the Southeast Asia region as part of its strategy to engage the tourism trade in key source markets and raise awareness of Saudi, the authentic home of Arabia, as travelers around the world dream of exploring exotic destinations once more.

“STA is focused on enhancing its ability to deliver a truly global scale offering by investing resources today in the network that will drive our business for the future. We are building an integrated global team of professionals to showcase Saudi’s diverse offering of cultural adventures, world class heritage sites and authentic Arabian hospitality

FAHD HAMIDADDIN
CEO of the Saudi Tourism Authority

The Malaysia office will be responsible for trade and consumer marketing activities, expanding the reach and relevance of Saudi’s tourism offer and working with tour operators, travel agents and other industry stakeholders to build awareness and drive conversion in line with STA’s strategy and mission.

The Southeast Asia representative office is being set up with the support of the region’s leading aviation & destination marketing representative company, AVIAREPS Malaysia as its in-market representative covering the Southeast Asia region.

“Southeast Asian nations have a strong affinity with Saudi as a destination and many of the region’s travelers have already experienced the country’s legendary hospitality while visiting the country on pilgrimage.” said Kelvin Ong, Vice President, Southeast Asia for AVIAREPS group. “We have already formed a dedicated STA team based in Malaysia to cover the region,” he added.

“Opening a dedicated office to serve this market creates an opportunity to expand the appeal of Saudi as a compelling leisure destination by sharing with travelers the diverse landscapes, bustling cities, abundant attractions and storied historical sites that make Saudi unique. We are confident that Saudi’s diverse offering will be appealing to all demographics from the region,” said Shazlin Ahmad, country manager for STA in Southeast Asia.

“We have already begun outreach into Southeast Asia’s tourism trade ecosystem and the response has been very positive. We are actively seeking opportunities to co- invest with partners who are keen to add Saudi as an exciting new destination in their portfolio.”

Since opening its borders to international tourism in September 2019, Saudi rapidly established itself as the fastest growing tourism destination in the world, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council. Despite the global shutdown of leisure tourism in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, STA continued to invest to prepare the destination for a return to normalcy.

For more information, please visit www.sta.gov.sa/en/

MAHB Launches Private Covid-19 Screening Facility in KLIA

International passengers arriving at KL International Airport (KLIA) can now experience its new private Covid-19 screening facility that promises safe, convenient and efficient testing procedures. This Health Screening Centre started operating on September 19, 2021 and is able to provide Covid-19 RTK, Rapid Molecular PCR and RT-PCR results within 15 minutes, 1 hour and 3 hours respectively, resulting in shorter wait times for passengers. This testing facility is available at five locations in KLIA Main Terminal and three at klia2.

These 8 locations will start operating in stages with the first one starting at Gate G1, KLIA Main Terminal. All locations feature comfortable lounges for passengers to relax while waiting for their test results.

“This new facility aims to ensure that the highest standards of services are maintained with the implementation of new travel SOPs. We hope to further restore the confidence of passengers flying via our airports by enhancing the level of comfort and convenience throughout their journey.”

**DATO' SERI DIRAJA
DR ZAMBRY ABD KADIR**
Chairman of Malaysia Airports

“We have engaged the services of BP Clinical Lab, a top-class medical healthcare provider to run the Health Screening Centre which has been sanctioned by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and National Security Council. We will not compromise on the safety of our passengers.



“Enabling this new facility is part of our continuous efforts to host joyful connections whilst upholding all safety measures aimed at curbing the spread of Covid-19.

“With the recently implemented Langkawi domestic travel bubble by the government, we look forward to the lifting of international travel restrictions in the near future. The private Covid screening facility will certainly facilitate safe travel practices for the higher passenger volume when travel resumes”.

ERL To Resume Train Services from September 13, 2021

Express Rail Link Sdn Bhd (ERL) has resumed its train services from September 13, 2021 following the announcement made by the Prime Minister, Yang Amat Berhormat Dato' Sri Ismail Sabri bin Yaakob, to allow Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Selangor to move to Phase Two of the National Recovery Plan.

KLIA Ekspres and KLIA Transit will run as a combined service from 6.00am to 10.10pm every day. Trains will run at hourly intervals during the operation hours. The schedule will be adjusted accordingly later to suit the growing passenger ridership.

With the service resumption, ERL is offering again a Free Weekly TravelCard for every purchase of a KLIA Transit Monthly TravelCard with a registered MyKad. The promotion will start immediately and will run until November

30, 2021 to encourage more people who are going back to their office or workplace to start using public transportation again for their daily commute. The Monthly TravelCard provides huge savings for commuters as it is heavily discounted, up to 83%.

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

In prioritising the health and safety of all customers and staff, ERL has also urged all its staff to be vaccinated with the Covid-19

vaccine as it gears up for the service resumption.

To date, 99% of all ERL staff, including 100% of its frontline and operations staff, have been fully vaccinated with the remaining few unvaccinated due to health and medical reasons. This is also in line with the government's effort to vaccinate all workers in essential services such as public transportation, and in reaching the goal of herd immunity. With full vaccination and stringent daily cleaning of its trains and stations, the public can be assured of a safe and comfortable experience when taking the train services.

For the full train schedule and updates on the precautionary measures being taken by ERL, please visit www.KLIAekspres.com.

AirAsia Announces Key Initiatives to Support Langkawi Travel Bubble



The Langkawi travel bubble which has been well-received by Malaysians since its announcement in early September will be a catalyst towards the revival of tourism and the AirAsia Group intends to play a strong role in further solidifying the return of travel.

AirAsia Malaysia has resumed its flights to and from Langkawi with 90 weekly flights departing from Kuala Lumpur (63x weekly), Penang (14x weekly), Johor Bahru (7x weekly), Ipoh (3x weekly) and Kota Bharu (3x weekly).

Riad Asmat, CEO AirAsia Malaysia said: "Since the government's announcement of the Langkawi travel bubble's SOP recently, we have seen very strong uptake for seats to Langkawi, especially with the RM12 low fares and RM99 SNAP deals by AirAsia. This clearly indicates a strong pent up demand for travel and AirAsia is committed towards working with the government, Tourism Malaysia, LADA and all tourism industry players to make this a success with more than 90 weekly flights to Langkawi."

“ Our self-check-in system on the airasia Super App is our latest innovation that integrates data from certified healthcare providers to seamlessly verify a guest's travel eligibility based on their test certificate and/or vaccination certificate. Our comprehensive travel procedures ensure the safety and wellbeing of our guests and employees as a result of our ongoing and continuous close cooperation and engagements with health and aviation authorities at the local, regional and international levels. This is certainly a step forward in our digital-led transformation journey and we cannot wait to welcome everyone safely on board again. ”

RIAD ASMAT

CEO of AirAsia Malaysia

Amanda Woo, CEO of airasia Super App said: "We are pleased to join hands with Langkawi Development Authority (LADA) to reinvigorate the economic and tourism recovery in Langkawi starting with the introduction of a new duty-free shopping experience for travellers with islandwide delivery. The digitalisation of duty-free shopping in Langkawi through our airasia super app will power Langkawi up as Asean's first online duty-free shopping destination,

and this is just one of the many things we look forward to collaborating with LADA in the long-term".

"By the end of September, for the first time in Malaysia, customers can now order Langkawi duty-free products online and have them delivered straight to their hotel within the same day, via Teleport's 6-hour express service. To create convenience for our customers, they can select their preferred delivery time or engage concierge services by our partner hotels to receive on their behalf. We will offer free delivery for all purchases, as well as special discounts to airasia guests at our partner hotels during our launch campaign."

Nasaruddin Abdul Muttalib, Chief Executive Officer, Langkawi Development Authority said: "We believe AirAsia's initiative to mount new routes will help boost Langkawi's potential as a premier island destination among domestic tourists. We hope their arrivals will help us to achieve our economic goals, other than to also ensure Langkawi remains as the top-of-mind holiday retreat for worldwide tourists."

For more information, please visit www.airasia.com

Fly Arna is Armenia's New National Airline

The Armenian National Interests Fund (ANIF) and Air Arabia Group announced on September 1, that the new national airline to be launched by their joint venture company will be named 'Fly Arna.'

Following a comprehensive review, the name of the airline was chosen as 'Fly Arna' – with the word 'Arna' being derived from the name "Armenian National Airlines" by combining the first two letters of the words "ARmenian" with the first letter of "National" and the first letter of "Airlines".

More than 800 participants suggested the 500 names via email and on ANIF's social media pages. The name was chosen to be most inclusive and reflecting the spirit of the joint venture company to transform the aviation sector of the country.

"I thank everyone for their active participation in the contest. It is both inspiring and a sign of a shared vision of a successful endeavour we all aspire for the project," said David Papazian, CEO of ANIF. "Despite the current challenges of the pandemic, we are confident of the new opportunity that exists for "Fly Arna" to deliver a winning proposition that will benefit the nation and our people."

Adel Al Ali, Group Chief Executive Officer of Air Arabia, said: "The new name represents the aspirations of the people of Armenia and is the result of a national

competition, underlining how the joint venture company prioritises the interests of the community. "Fly Arna" will mark the beginning of a new era for Armenia's aviation sector, and also create significant value to the economy by boosting the tourism, hospitality and business sectors."

"Fly Arna" will operate as a low-cost passenger airline with Yerevan's Zvartnots International Airport (EVN) as its base. The company will apply for the Air Operator Certificate and more details about the launch date, fleet, and destination network will be announced in due course.

Lakson Group and Air Arabia Starts Pakistan's New Airline

Lakson Group, one of Pakistan's leading business conglomerates and Air Arabia Group, the Middle East and North Africa's first and largest low-cost carrier (LCC) operator, announced their decision on September 5, to form a joint venture (JV) to launch "Fly Jinnah", Pakistan's new airline. The proposed JV will see the establishment of a low-cost passenger airline serving domestic and international routes from Pakistan.

Iqbal Ali Lakhani, Chairman of Lakson Group, said: "We are excited to partner with Air Arabia in launching Pakistan's new low-cost carrier. "Fly Jinnah" will serve Pakistan's travel and tourism sector and will play a constructive role in contributing to the nation's economic growth." He added: "This partnership also reflects our commitment to support the development of Pakistan's air transport sector while providing the citizens and visitors of the country with a new option of value-for-money air travel. Air Arabia enjoys a track-record of reliable and efficient operations, and we look forward to working closely towards launching and developing the new airline."

Sheikh Abdullah Bin Mohammed Al Thani, Chairman of Air Arabia, said: "We are delighted at Air Arabia Group to partner

with Lakson Group on this joint venture to launch Pakistan's new low-cost carrier. We are confident that "Fly Jinnah" will add value to the air transport sector of Pakistan and directly contribute to the local economy through job creation and the development of the travel and tourism sector. We thank Lakson Group and the Government of Pakistan for their trust and we look forward to work hand-in-hand to develop the new airline, which will serve as a new value-for-money air travel option for the country."

"Fly Jinnah" will initially be based in Karachi serving a range of domestic routes across Pakistan and then will expand its route network internationally. The new carrier will follow the low-cost business model and provide its customer base with a reliable operation and value-driven product.



Korean Air Operates 10,000 Cargo-only Passenger Flights

Korean Air has successfully operated 10,000 cargo-only passenger flights as of August 1. The airline launched its first cargo-only passenger flight on the Incheon-Ho Chi Minh route in March 2020 and has operated these flights on 65 routes to North America, Europe, Southeast Asia, China and Japan, transporting 400,000 tons worldwide. Approximately 40 tons are transported per round trip (20 tons one-way).



Through close cooperation with the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport and aircraft manufacturers, Korean Air has increased its cargo capacity by utilising overhead bin space by using "cargo seat bags," a safety device that can load cargo on passenger seats, and removing seats to enable cargo floor loading.

Korean Air is also actively responding to emergency pandemic related demands, and the cargo-only flights are mainly transporting pandemic relief goods such as Covid-19 diagnostic kits, protective clothing and masks. More than 100 cargo-only aircraft were deployed to India, where Covid-19 cases were soaring, to transport pandemic relief supplies, and a charter flight was operated to deliver Covid-19 diagnostic kits to Baltimore-Washington International Airport, U.S, in April 2020. Korean Air is currently transporting pandemic related supplies to Indonesia, Singapore, Germany and Canada.

In the process of transporting pandemic relief products, Korean Air

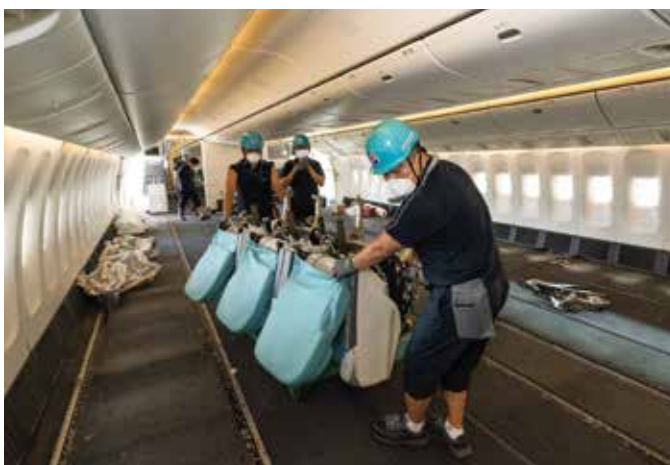
recorded its longest-distance flight - cargo flight KE8047, which flew 13,405 km for a duration of 14 hours and 42 minutes from Incheon Airport to Miami Airport (U.S.) on June 12, 2021. To meet urgent demand, the airline continues to increase its capacity even if it means flying on new routes.

Cargo-only flights have also been contributing to resolving recent logistics challenges faced by many companies struggling due to shipping supply shortages. Korean Air has increased its cargo capacity to support urgent export and import logistics by maximising its flight operations through using available passenger aircraft. While the airline's cargo volume transported using passenger aircraft sharply dropped to 16,000 tons per month right after the Covid-19 outbreak, in 2021, this number has recovered to more than 40,000 tons per month, close to pre-pandemic levels.

Korean Air is also actively supporting logistics for small- and medium-sized consignors. Last year, the airline operated charter flights for small- and medium-sized companies exporting goods to Indonesia and Japan in cooperation with the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy and Korea International Trade Association. The carrier has also secured space for small- and medium-sized companies on regular cargo flights bound for Los Angeles, U.S this year.

"We expect cargo-only passenger flights to play a more vital role in the second half of the year, when the volume of import and export cargo typically increases," said a Korean Air representative. "As a Korean flag carrier, Korean Air will continue its efforts to create a stable logistics environment for imports and exports by actively securing cargo capacity."

For more information, please visit www.koreanair.com



Jetstar Asia Takes Off to Phuket Again



Jetstar Asia recommenced services to the popular leisure destination Phuket on September 3 from Singapore's Changi Airport, welcoming on board a mix of local and international travellers. Announced in July, Jetstar Asia will commence operations twice a week every Friday and Sunday to Phuket as part of the Thai Government's 'sandbox scheme', where travellers fully vaccinated against Covid-19 are able to visit Phuket without the need to quarantine.

“

It was great to resume services to the stunning Thai island, with the launch representing an important milestone in the rebuilding of Jetstar Asia's network.

As we see border restrictions start to ease, it is fantastic to be able to take advantage of important initiatives like the Phuket sandbox scheme and to play a pivotal role in rebuilding the tourism industry across the region.

CLIVE ASHMORE BUTLER

*Head of Commercial
Jetstar Asia*

“We know low fares travel will drive the aviation industry's recovery and as a leading low-cost carrier we are committed to seeking opportunities that allow us to provide our customers with more options to reconnect with families and friends or simply to take a much-needed holiday.

“It's also great to see increasing numbers of transit passengers connecting between our partner airlines' services out of Europe and the Middle East, and Jetstar Asia's network to key destinations in Southeast Asia.

“To provide our customers additional peace of mind when travelling with us, we introduced Jetstar's Fly Flexible and Fly Well programs, as well as confirming all Jetstar Asia team members will be fully vaccinated by October 1.”

Patsalin Swetarat, Director of Tourism Authority of Thailand Singapore Office also believes in helping boost the confidence of the traveling public.

“We are pleased to share that up to 70 percent of the tourism workforce has been fully vaccinated and Phuket hotels, restaurants and tourism services, who are 'SHA Plus', have been certified as Covid-safe as well,” Swetarat said.

“As we welcome Jetstar Asia and their passengers back to Phuket, the launch is timely as we introduce the 'Phuket Sandbox 7+7 Extension' program where fully vaccinated travellers can reduce the mandatory stay in Phuket to only 7 days instead of 14. The remaining 7 nights can be spent in Ko Phi Phi, Ko Ngai or Railay in Krabi, Khao Lak or Ko Yao in Phang-Nga, or Ko Samui, Ko Pha-ngan or Ko Tao in Surat Thani.”

The Jetstar Group was recently named Asia Pacific's best low-cost airline in 2021 by AirlineRatings.com. Jetstar Asia currently flies to ten key destinations in Southeast Asia.

For more information, please visit www.jetstar.com



Qantas Group Outlines Strategy for Restarting International Flights

The Qantas Group provided more detail on preparations for restarting its international flights, with plans linked to the vaccine rollout in Australia and key overseas markets on August 26. For the current projections, Australia is expected to reach National Cabinet's 'Phase C' vaccination threshold of 80 per cent in December 2021, which would trigger the gradual reopening of international borders.

Similarly, key markets like the UK, North America and parts of Asia have high and increasing levels of vaccination. This makes them highly likely to be classed as low risk countries for vaccinated travellers to visit and return from, under reduced quarantine requirements, pending decisions by the Australian Government and entry policies of other countries.

Flights to destinations that still have low vaccine rates and high levels of Covid infection will now be pushed out from December 2021 until April 2022 – including Bali, Jakarta, Manila, Bangkok, Phuket, Ho Chi Minh City and

Johannesburg. Levels of travel demand – and therefore, capacity levels – will hinge largely on government decisions on alternative requirements to mandatory hotel isolation for fully vaccinated travellers.

Assuming current projections hold, and the 80 percent vaccine threshold is met in December, Qantas and Jetstar plan to trigger a gradual restart as outlined. In total, 10 of Qantas' A380s with upgraded interiors are expected to return to service by early 2024, with timing dependent on how quickly the market recovers. Two A380s will be retired.

“

The prospect of flying overseas might feel a long way off, especially with New South Wales and Victoria in lockdown, but the current pace of the vaccine rollout means we should have a lot more freedom in a few months' time.

”

ALAN JOYCE

Group CEO of Qantas

“It's obviously up to the government exactly how and when our international borders reopen, but with Australia on track to meet the 80 per cent trigger agreed by the National Cabinet by the end of the year, we need to plan ahead for what is a complex restart process.”

Qantas has recently extended its Fly Flexible policy, offering customers who book international flights before February 28, 2022 with unlimited 'fee free' date changes when travelling before December 31, 2022.

Qantas has also extended credit vouchers for bookings made on or before September 30, 2021 to enable travel until December 31, 2023. Jetstar customers issued with a voucher due to Covid-19 disruptions are able to use their voucher to book flights until at least December 31, 2022, for flights up to the end of 2023.

For more information, please visit www.qantas.com



Aviation Interview with Noredah Othman

Chief Executive Officer of Sabah Tourism Board (STB)



Having moved from the rank and file within STB, Noredah Othman, 53, has chalked up almost 31 years with this 45-year-old organisation, amassing experiences in varied fields such as leisure travel, public affairs, event management, marketing communications and support services like information technology. Her managerial responsibilities involved marketing Sabah, the land below the wind, to the United Kingdom (UK), Europe, Australia, New Zealand and the United States. Her recognition in promoting Sabah's nature-based tourism saw her recently appointed as Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) executive board member.

Having been with STB for over 30 years, what are some highlights of your career?

The past 30 years of service feels like yesterday for me perhaps because I have always loved my job and my passion for tourism has not wavered at all. Promoting tourism is not as easy as many may think but it definitely is exciting and at most times challenging, especially during the current global conditions.

My most memorable highlights were the opportunities to interact and meet dignitaries from the world over. I had the privilege to organise events for two of our Kings, other royalties and important guests. When I was the communication manager from 1991-2005, I had the opportunity to handle film crews and production houses from BBC, National Geographic and Discovery that brought personalities such as Sir David

Attenborough. In 2015, I was the lucky recipient of a PATA scholarship for the Executive Development for Tourism programme held in the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

What are the strategies to speed up the recovery of Sabah tourism sector which has been impacted by the raging Covid-19 pandemic?

We are looking at speeding up the full vaccination status for all our tourism industry players besides offering safe and clean accreditation for our tourism products. We also need to provide a level of confidence and comfort to both the travellers coming to Sabah and our local players.

Destination awareness and constant reminders to travellers about Sabah as their choice of holiday destination are

one of our priorities, especially during this period where our travels have been limited. We do so through multiple digital platforms and campaigns working with our global stakeholders and partners in key markets.

What are some challenges faced by STB and how do you hope to resolve them?

One of the main challenges is the moderate vaccination rate in Sabah, which is hindering us from opening the state to visitors and tourists alike. However, we are confident the state government's target of 60% herd immunisation will be achieved by October as Sabah has reached 55% vaccination rate of its targeted adult population in the second week of September. Meanwhile, we have started immunisation for children between 12 and 17 years old.

Our next challenge involves rebuilding visitors' confidence. In this respect, we are looking into providing accreditation for our tourism products and will be working with the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) for safe and clean certification. The readiness of our tourism players may also pose a challenge after the long period of inactivity created by the pandemic. Through the Sabah Tourism Recovery Committee, we have conducted frequent meetings to engage with the stakeholders and tourism players to not only update them but also to gather their feedback and suggestions which will aid in the industry's road to recovery.

The new criteria for the Malaysia My Second Home (MM2H) programme have been reported to be damaging in terms of investment and tourism. Your Borneo sister state has set up its own Sarawak-MM2H requirements. Will Sabah be following in her footsteps?

The Sabah state government is studying the impact of the new changes in the criteria of the MM2H programme announced by the Federal Ministry. Sabah values the programme and we believe its continuity will contribute to the growth of our tourism industry and socio-economic development.

Where were the majority of the MM2H applicants to Sabah from?

According to data from the Immigration for 2009 until 2019, the top five countries for MM2H were from China, South Korea, the UK, Japan and Australia.

STB led eight Sabah tourism industry players to participate in the virtual PATA Travel Mart (PTM) held in September. How successful was this event in promoting the state and locking in forward contract sales?

The objectives of participating in PTM were to reinforce Sabah's presence in Asia Pacific's tourism scene, show that we are optimistic of the future of travel and assure our tourism players and partners we are always ready

for business. We managed to secure 27 scheduled appointments with interested buyers and believe these appointments will eventually translate into prospects when travel restrictions are lifted. The chances of being seen by over 75,000 Chinese and international trade professionals through this event have proven to be a successful strategic branding exercise and product placement feat.

You mentioned trying to establish "isolation travel" in a recent PTM panel discussion during the on-going pandemic. Can you elaborate on this?

Isolation travel is a term akin to travel bubble or sandbox travel. Instead of going to a populated area or popular tourist attraction, isolation travel brings you to a premium tourism destination in Sabah. The main idea is that you will be isolated while travelling. You can be in a premium rainforest surrounded by nothing but nature or being surrounded by only sand and sea.

Imagine spending several nights in a luxury jungle resort in a primary rainforest with a private butler in Danum Valley or on an island holiday with your own private beach. All this is done by observing privacy and strict standard operating procedures right from your arrival to your departure where contact with other people is limited. More details are being fine-tuned to meet the requirements of the current situation in order to make the whole arrangements workable, especially in ensuring a seamless point-to-point journey.

Kota Kinabalu (KK) has been included as part of the Hybrid City Alliance alongside Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Kuching by MyCEB. What will this mean for Sabah and how will it open up the state's business event (BE) opportunities?

Sabah will be able to enjoy the benefits of connecting with global network partners and foster collaboration through knowledge sharing, innovation and tools to produce hybrid and multi-city events. We believe this alliance will increase the meeting, incentive, convention and exhibition (MICE) buyers' confidence in KK's ability to host such events, thus providing a new path for destination management companies and MICE suppliers in Sabah among the BE industry.

STB's successful participation in Jin Air's Flight to Nowhere in promoting Sabah to the passengers onboard is expected to be replicated by other Korean airlines. Has it happened and what is the state promoting to the Koreans?

Following the successful collaboration with Jin Air, we proceeded to work with Jeju Air and Air Busan on similar concepts to continuously refresh and keep Sabah's presence in the market, reminding the Koreans that it is one of their favourite holiday destinations. Such collaborations also encourage the airlines to keep Sabah in their priority list once international borders reopen.

With the reopening soon of more domestic tourist destinations in Malaysia, where do you wish to take your family for a holiday this year-end?

My three children have been home and not attending their boarding schools for almost 20 months due to the lockdown. When travel reopens, I would like to bring them to Sabah's rural areas to see more of our local tourism products.



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