

AIRLINK

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Airport MD Speaks

Dato' Iskandar Mizal Mahmood returns to Malaysia Airports after almost 20 years with his wealth of experience gleaned from many multinationals and government-linked companies to elevate and transform Malaysia Airports in the fast-changing aviation landscape with new travel norms and innovative technological advances.

This month as we enter into the second half of 2022, he welcomes the initiatives of various airlines which had recommenced new routes and expanded their international network as air travel picks up momentum. Recently concluded events such as the second Asia Parks Congress (APC) 2022 in Sabah, where Malaysia Airports is one of the partners, and the Gawai Festival, which is celebrated by the Sabahans at end-May followed by their Sarawakian counterparts from June 1-2 have seen increased flight bookings from Peninsular Malaysia to these two East Malaysian states. More local and foreign passengers are also expected to come to the Land of the Hornbills with the 25th edition of the Rainforest World Music Festival (RWMF) and Borneo Jazz Festival (BJF) taking place in June.

Dato' Iskandar Mizal Mahmood
Managing Director
Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad

We are happy to witness the opening up of more international connections with Malaysia Airlines' recent direct flight to Doha, its third Middle East destination after Jeddah and Madinah via its codeshare agreement with Qatar Airways. This will not only boost passenger traffic flow via KL International Airport (KLIA) but will also open up Malaysia globally.

The same is true of Indian low-cost carrier (LCC) Indigo's recommencement of its Chennai-Kuala Lumpur flight and a new service for Tiruchirappalli-Kuala Lumpur route, which will help promote not only tourism but also trade across the regions as air travel demand picks up. We also welcomed Cambodia's LCC, Lanmei Airlines' schedule flight from Phnom Penh to our flagship KLIA, which we are keen to promote as a hub for Southeast Asia.

We are glad to see the return of events such as the RWMF and BJF, which are now made available in physical and hybrid versions. We expect to see more passengers coming not only through the KLIA but also our main gateways in Sarawak and Sabah namely Kuching and Kota Kinabalu. Malaysia Airlines is benefitting from the revival of such music festivals and regional events like APC 2022 as the official carrier. The national carrier has also come up with attractive packages to stimulate travel and support the travel industry's supply chains such as the travel agents, products, local artisans and other business partners.

As an airport operator, we work closely with our stakeholders to build travellers' confidence by maintaining high safety and hygiene standards besides ensuring our passengers' whole journey is a memorable and joyful experience. According to the

Economist Intelligence Unit, in its Asia Travel Ready Index, Malaysia ranks alongside Singapore and Australia as having some of the most favourable conditions for tourism recovery in Asia Pacific.

As part of our country's tourism recovery, we congratulate the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Arts' timely and recent launch of its tourism recovery plan for 2022 and a new song for its Cuti-Cuti Malaysia programme. We look forward to more positive vibes as air travel and the country's travel industry gradually regains itself.

Lastly, I am honoured that the Airports Council International Asia Pacific has appointed me as its regional board director to represent Malaysia for a three-year term starting June. I look forward to advocating policies for the betterment of our stakeholders and the aviation industry in general.



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Asia Pacific Aviation Recovery to be Accelerated Sustainably

To accelerate Asia Pacific's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, the governments concerned have been urged to further ease border measures. A number of them, however, have lifted many of the travel restrictions.

Southeast Asian countries such as Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam have opened their borders for inbound travel while Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand and the Philippines are only partially opened.

According to International Air Transport Association (IATA) Director General Willie Walsh at the recent Changi Aviation Summit in Singapore, "Asia-Pacific is playing catch-up on restarting travel after Covid-19" when there is clear demand for people to travel, judging by the immediate positive reactions received as soon as the travel measures were relaxed.

"So, it is critical that all stakeholders, including governments, are well-prepared for the restart. We cannot delay. Jobs are at stake and people want to travel." Walsh says in his keynote address.

The region's international passenger demand for March reached 17% of pre-Covid levels after hovering at below 10% for most of the last two years.

Blaming the lag in Asia Pacific due to government restrictions, he states that this is far below the global trend where markets such as Europe, North America and Latin America have recovered to 60% of pre-crisis levels.

"The sooner they are lifted, the sooner we will see a recovery in the region's travel and tourism sector, and all the economic benefits they will bring."

As such, Walsh urges Asia-Pacific governments to continue easing measures and bring normalcy to air travel by removing all restrictions for vaccinated travellers and lifting quarantine and Covid-19 testing for unvaccinated travellers where there are high levels of population immunity, a case in most parts of Asia.

He also calls for lifting the mask mandate for air travel when it is no longer required in other indoor environments and public transport, reminding that accelerating the recovery will require a whole of industry and government approach.

With airlines bringing back the flights, he says airports need to be able to handle the demand while governments need to be able to process security clearances and other documentation for key personnel efficiently." Despite obvious headwinds such as the brutal war in Ukraine, high oil prices and increased inflation, Walsh remains optimistic about the recovery this year and into 2023.

On the two big gaps – China and Japan – in Asia Pacific's recovery, he observes, "So long as the Chinese government continues to maintain their zero-Covid approach, it is hard to see the country's borders reopening. This will hold back the region's full recovery. While Japan has taken steps to allow travel, there is no clear plan for its reopening."

In terms of global aviation recovery, the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) lists Asia Pacific as the weakest performing region due to its slow domestic and stagnant international traffic levels. ICAO projects 2022 passenger totals will be 26% to 31% less than 2019's pre-pandemic levels with seat capacity down 20% to 23%. In an optimistic scenario, it expects passenger traffic to recover to 86% of its 2019 levels by December based on 73% international and 95% domestic traffic recovery.



ICAO's more pessimistic scenarios point to a 75% recovery based on 58% international and 86% domestic recoveries. Its projected continued decline in traffic could translate into estimated losses of US\$186 billion to \$217 billion in gross airline passenger operating revenues in 2022 compared to 2019.

ICAO says its longer-term forecasts indicate that current downturns will also affect traffic patterns over the longer-term, with the 2018-2050 compound annual growth rate of global revenue passenger kilometres, currently projected at 3.6%, down from the 4.2% forecast pre-Covid.

Sustainability and net-zero carbon emissions

With airlines committed to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, it is imperative that the governments also share this vision and agree on a long-term goal at the ICAO Assembly later this year.

Walsh believes, "Among the most important things that governments should do is incentivising the production of sustainable aviation fuels (SAF)." With such projects underway, he expects to see a rapid increase in SAF production over the next few years and contribute to 65% of the mitigation needed to achieve net zero in 2050.

Acknowledging the positive developments in Asia Pacific, he says Japan has committed considerable funds for green aviation initiatives while New Zealand and Singapore have agreed to cooperate on green flights.

"Singapore's cross industry International Advisory Panel on a sustainable aviation air hub is a positive example for others to adopt." Walsh also calls on ASEAN and its partners to do more, particularly looking for opportunities in the region to expand SAF production.

In line with the #FlyNetZero commitments made by the industry last October, IATA senior vice president Sebastian Mikosz reiterates that the focus strongly remains on sustainability and lowering the carbon footprint of the industry.

While infrastructure will play an important role in decarbonising the industry, he says the difficulties of achieving #FlyNetZero cannot be understated but the progress we are seeing across the industry shows that this goal can be achieved. "Progress is key but the road ahead will be long and will need legislative support and incentives for investments to follow."

Manpower shortages have also been identified as another key barrier to the recovery across Southeast Asia, with Malaysia short of an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 tourism workers which the government has given approval to bring in workers from abroad and expect the matter to be resolved in one or two months. In the battle for talent as airlines try to rebuild the industry, Walsh stresses that it is important that we become more attractive, particularly to women as this industry has always been seen as male dominated.

"We need to change that to ensure that we can, not just attract but also to retain the best talent in the industry so that we can build on the progress that we have made and ensure that we have a sustainable financial business and a sustainable environmental business for the future."



Malaysia Airlines Expands International Network

Malaysia Airlines has expanded its international network with a new direct flight to its long-awaited destination, Doha, making it the third destination the airline flies to in the Middle East, after Jeddah and Madinah, effective May 25, 2022.

The new service provide passengers seamless connectivity via Hamad International Airport, enabling optimal connections to the United States, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, through the codeshare partnership with Qatar Airways. Malaysia Airlines and Qatar Airways currently offer 62 codeshare destinations in Malaysia, Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand, the Middle East, Europe, the United States, and Africa.

“

In light of the continued easing of travel restrictions across the globe, Malaysia Airlines' new route to Doha is an excellent opportunity to expand our network and offerings while significantly connecting the ASEAN markets with the Middle East region and beyond. As we strive to become Asia's Leading Travel and Aviation Services Group, this new service marks another milestone in the airline network's expansion plan.

The service will further boost the growth of traffic flow via KL International Airport, opening up Malaysia more broadly to travellers from other international destinations. As a leisure and tourism player, we aim to play a significant role in bringing in international travellers to continue driving Malaysia's tourism recovery via this new route. We invite business travellers and holidaymakers to enjoy a warm and genuine service which reflects Malaysian culture and traditions underpinned by its inimitable Malaysian Hospitality the moment their journey begins with us.

”

CAPTAIN IZHAM ISMAIL
Group Chief Executive Officer
of Malaysia Airlines



The national airline will operate a direct daily flight between KL International Airport (KUL) and Hamad International Airport, Doha (DOH) via MH160 departing KUL- DOH at 9:20pm and MH161 departing DOH-KUL at 01:30am. The daily service will be operated with A330-300 aircraft, equipped with 290 seats, comprising 27 seats in Business Class, 16 Economy with extra legroom and 247 seats in Economy Class.

For more information, please visit www.malaysiaairlines.com



Tourism Malaysia Signs MOC with Emirates

Tourism Malaysia has signed a Memorandum of Collaboration (MOC) with Emirates on May 10, 2022.

Working as strategic partners to boost the tourism recovery, Tourism Malaysia will work together with Emirates, one of the world's leading airlines, to increase air connectivity through a number of flights and flight capacity to Malaysia, from major destinations beyond Dubai and across the globe.

“ This collaboration will give a further boost to the tourism industry and strengthen economic ties between Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates. We hope Emirates will continue to work together with Tourism Malaysia to promote Malaysia as a unique travel destination focusing solely on Malaysia by highlighting different cities such as Kota Kinabalu and Penang. This collaboration also aims to attract potential tourists from other markets such as Europe, America, and Africa via Emirates' network and services. ”

NANCY SHUKRI
Minister of Tourism,
Arts and Culture Malaysia

The collaboration will explore mutually beneficial initiatives that will drive inbound tourism to Malaysia, and also offers Emirates more opportunities to serve the market. More joint activities are mapped out to drive the tourism recovery through familiarisation trips, workshops, seminars, digital campaigns, in-flight marketing campaigns, and other marketing programmes.

Following the reopening of Malaysia's international borders on April 1, 2022, through this collaboration, Emirates is expected to expand its wings to other cities in Malaysia as well as promote some of the country's latest attractions and destinations for shopping, family fun, eco-adventure, honeymoon, and luxury holidays.



IndiGo Connects Malaysia to Chennai and Tiruchirappalli



In line with its vision to strengthen international connectivity, IndiGo has commenced two new daily direct flights between India and Malaysia, effective May 15, 2022. With these new routes, IndiGo connects Malaysia with UAE, Kuwait, Sri Lanka and 11 Indian cities including Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Bhubaneshwar, Baroda, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Kochi, Vizag, Trivandrum and Kolkata.

“ We are pleased to announce daily direct flights, connecting Kuala Lumpur to Chennai and Trichy. Following the easing of restrictions, we are witnessing a huge demand for international travel. With these new connections, IndiGo will connect Malaysia to multiple Indian and international destinations.

The enhanced connectivity will boost trade, tourism and mobility between the two nations. As India's leading airline, IndiGo remains committed to enhancing international connectivity and offering new destinations to its customers, as international holidays make their way back this summer!

SANJAY KUMAR

Chief Strategy and Revenue Officer of IndiGo



The resumption of these flights will bolster India's international connectivity and aid in the acceleration of economic and tourist activities that had been impacted by the pandemic.

IndiGo is amongst the fastest growing low-cost carriers in the world. The airline has a simple philosophy: offer fares that are affordable, flights that are on time, offering a courteous, hygienic, and hassle-free travel experience. With its fleet of 275+ aircraft, the airline is operating over 1,500 daily flights and connecting 73 domestic destinations and 24 international destinations.

For more information, please call 603 – 2711 6489 or email your queries to IndiGo.Kul@aviareps.com

Malindo Air Rebrands Itself to Batik Air

Malindo Air, a Malaysian-based regional airline, announced on April 27, 2022, that it is now officially rebranded as Batik Air.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia (CAAM) has granted a new Air Operators Certificate (AOC) to Malindo Airways Sdn Bhd to do business as Batik Air with effect from April 28, 2022.

The rebranding exercise is in line with the Lion Group's goal to establish a common identity for the full-service airlines within the group. With this approval in place, Batik Air now will be able to conduct improved business for seamless transfers, leveraging KLIA as a transit hub for the Lion Group of Airlines.



“

With the rebranding exercise and the reopening of the borders taking place in the region, we are very excited for the opportunities presented to us for the potential growth of our airline and with the new brand, we will be able to offer fresh and new services.

”

CAPT. MUSHAFIZ BIN MUSTAFA BAKRI

Chief Executive Officer

The exercise will be conducted in phases and Batik Air will communicate to its passengers and partners progressively during the rollout.

With the reopening of borders and the gradual improvement in the demand for travel, Batik Air will be adding a number of B737 aircraft to its existing fleet to offer services to the markets operated prior to the outbreak of the pandemic.

Condor's A330-200s Take Off on Long-Haul Routes

Condor announced the start of long-haul A330-200 flights with aircraft registration D-AIYC departing Frankfurt Airport for North America on May 16, 2022. The carrier will operate three A330-200s over the next two years on long-haul flights to Seattle, Toronto and Punta Cana, before replacing them with new Airbus A330neos. The three A330-200s will also be deployed to Palma de Mallorca.

While Condor's new A330neos will be configured in three classes, the current A330s are configured with 22 full lie-flat Business Class and 240 Economy Class seats. Each seat has a monitor, USB

port and power socket, and inflight entertainment will be available from June 2022. In the meantime, guests can stream free of charge on the Condor FlyStream WLAN inflight entertainment program with their own personal mobile devices.

During summer 2021, Condor announced an order for 16 long-haul A330-900neos, with the first expected to be delivered in October 2022, followed by the successive replacement of their existing long-haul Boeing 767 fleet through mid-2024. Condor will be the German Launch customer for the A330-900neo, which offers state-of-the-art technology, maximum efficiency and the highest level of guest comfort.

For more information, please visit www.condor.com



Etihad Airways Unveils New Sustainability-Driven Economy Experience



Etihad Airways, the national airline of the UAE, has unveiled its new Economy class soft furnishings and tableware which will be launched on board in the fourth quarter of the year. The new products have been designed with sustainability and improved guest experience as primary objectives. The announcement was made on the opening day of the Arabian Travel Market, a trade event for the travel and tourism industry in Dubai.

The Economy class experience will be upgraded with new soft furnishings for all guests in Economy, including a 35% larger pillow with a 200 thread-count cotton cover made locally in the UAE. This is complemented by a soft blanket made from recycled plastic for additional comfort on all flights.

Etihad's new dining experience features reusable tableware made from recycled high-quality plastic and eliminates the use of single-use plastic. The tray, serving plates and their lids are part of a closed loop recycling system. At the end of their lifecycle, they are collected, washed, ground and reused to make new replacement products.

Etihad is also introducing quality stainless-steel cutlery into the Economy cabin which upgrades the experience and also reduces single-use plastic.

In 2019, Etihad committed to remove 80% of single-use plastic from its operation by the end of 2022 and the introduction of this new inflight equipment ensures the airline meets this sustainability goal. Where possible, the airline is also moving towards locally produced items which will further improve the overall environmental impact of the operation.

“

Etihad is trailblazing when it comes to sustainability in aviation. Following extensive research and development through our eco-flights over the past few years, we're proud to reveal the first in a series of enhancements to our inflight experience. Our commitment to sustainability doesn't come at a compromise to the quality and thoughtfulness behind Etihad's guest experience, and these innovative new products will further improve our offering. We look forward to rolling out this new experience across the fleet towards the latter part of the year.

”

TERRY DALY

*Executive Director Guest Experience,
Brand and Marketing
of Etihad Airways*

For more information, please visit
www.etihad.com

Star Alliance Celebrates 25th Anniversary

Star Alliance and its 26-member carriers celebrated the 25th anniversary of the world's first and leading global airline alliance on May 14, 2022. This bold vision was established in 1997 based on a customer value proposition of global reach, worldwide recognition, and seamless service. It continues today by leveraging technology to foster a harmonious experience for customers.

"We reflect on the successes of Star Alliance in uniting the leading global airlines, with an eye firmly focused on a future where the customer continues to be at the heart of our work and our global network," said Jeffrey Goh, Chief Executive Officer of Star Alliance.

"I am very excited for the innovations led by Star Alliance and our member carriers as we aim to be the most digitally advanced airline alliance offering seamless travel experiences with a unique loyalty proposition. This year, we look forward to further developments in seamless connectivity — such as new digital and mobile innovations — and exciting industry-first offers that loyal customers of our member carriers will welcome," Goh added.

In conjunction with the anniversary milestone, Star Alliance and its member carriers will release exciting campaigns and customer innovations under the new brand tagline "Together. Better. Connected." The new brand tagline captures the intent of fostering better human connections through the Star Alliance global network coupled with digital seamless connectivity.

“

We have defined the way the Earth connects for years and now; more than ever, is the time to enable technology to provide seamless journeys and delight the loyal customers of our member carriers. I am happy that “Together. Better. Connected.” — our new tagline — reflects that earnestly and is also future-facing. It will motivate us to do better.

”

JEFFREY GOH*Chief Executive Officer of Star Alliance*

For more information, please visit www.staralliance.com



Qatar Airways and Virgin Australia Unveil New Strategic Partnership

Qatar Airways, the 'World's Best Airline' at the 2021 Skytrax industry awards, and Australia's most loved carrier, Virgin Australia on May 10, 2022 unveiled a new strategic partnership that will significantly expand both airlines' networks, lounges and loyalty programmes.

Commencing middle of this year, the partnership will give travellers greater access, unparalleled customer experience and unique benefits when travelling between Australia and Qatar Airways' global network, with convenient transit options across Qatar Airways' Australian gateways and key Virgin Australia hubs.

Qatar Airways currently operates daily flights into Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, and Perth as well as three weekly flights into Adelaide continuing into Auckland, New Zealand. Thanks to the new codeshare agreement, Qatar Airways' passengers will be able to travel seamlessly to 35 destinations on Virgin Australia's extensive domestic network, including key popular Australian tourist destinations such as Cairns, Gold Coast, Alice Springs and Broome, on a single booking.

Qatar Airways' passengers will also have access to Virgin Australia's recently relaunched short-haul international markets, including Fiji and Queenstown, New Zealand. Similarly, Virgin Australia customers and members of the airline's award-winning Velocity Frequent Flyer loyalty program, will be able to directly access Qatar Airways' route network of over 140 worldwide destinations, including the Middle East, Europe and Africa, via the airline's hub and Skytrax-rated 'World's Best Airport', Hamad International Airport in Doha.

Group Chief Executive Officer of Qatar Airways, Akbar Al Baker said: "We have a strong, long-standing relationship with Australia and this agreement with Virgin Australia comes at a time when it is needed the most. This partnership will give Australian passengers access to the world that they have so acutely missed these past two years, to be able to reconnect with family and friends, and keep the wheels of trade moving. We hope many of them will stopover in Doha to enjoy the wonderful tourism industry that Qatar has to offer. For those travelling farther afield, they will benefit from the award-winning facilities of our hub, Hamad International Airport, enabling their onward journey. It also opens up the beautiful, cosmopolitan nation of Australia to our passengers flying in on Qatar Airways flights, after such a long, difficult time."

Virgin Australia Group Chief Executive Officer Jayne Hrdlicka said: "We are incredibly focused on creating great travel experiences and our new partnership with Qatar Airways will significantly expand Virgin Australia's footprint into the Middle East, Europe and Africa, offering hundreds more ways our guests can seamlessly see the world. Virgin Australia and Qatar Airways are both known for their award-winning service and joining forces means that together we are able to provide an incredible experience when travelling between Australia, the Middle East, Europe, Africa and beyond. Qatar Airways has been a very important partner to Australia during the pandemic, maintaining vital connectivity to the world in difficult circumstances. We are proud to have Qatar Airways join the Virgin Australia family and we look forward to welcoming their guests onboard Virgin Australia services later this year."



SAUDIA Launch Brand New In-Flight Entertainment System

SAUDIA has officially revealed its brand-new in-flight entertainment system Beyond at Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2022 in Dubai.

The new IFE system will further transform SAUDIA's onboard experience with over 5000 hours of HD content, including, but not limited to, Western and Eastern films and tv shows, as well as a library of E-books, weather reports, shopping, meal ordering, flight information and agenda timeline.

In addition to entertainment, Beyond offers a range of other practical features, such as the ability to check the status of the flight while en route; a real-time view of the sky during take-off and landing from cameras. Guests onboard can also enjoy shopping and browsing the latest products from the comfort of their seat.



“ We’ve never stopped improving our product. The new IFE will further transform SAUDIA's onboard experience. The success of SAUDIA's IFE investments and strategy is demonstrated by the loyalty and positive feedback from our guests across all cabin classes. ”

ESSAM AKHONBAY
Vice President,
Marketing & Product Management
of SAUDIA

SAUDIA guests can look forward to experiencing the new IFE System Beyond which will be implemented gradually on-board all SAUDIA fleets by the end of this year.

For more information, please visit www.saudia.com

Delta Increases Frequency for Los Angeles-Sydney Route

Delta Air Lines will increase the frequency of its nonstop service between Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) and Sydney International Airport (SYD) beginning December 16, 2022.

Delta will operate 10 flights per week on its flagship Airbus 350-900 aircraft, featuring Delta One suites, Delta Premium Select, Delta Comfort+ and Main Cabin services. Due to Delta's expansive network from Los Angeles, customers can connect to nearly 50 cities in the U.S. and Latin America.

During the Summer season, Delta will operate daily flights between Los Angeles and Sydney with two outbound flights on Wed, Fri and Sun, while there will be two inbound flights Tues, Fri and Sun.

Delta, LAX's largest global and leading carrier, has long been committed to modernising and upgrading the airport experience for customers at its West Coast hub. On April 20, Delta welcomed customers to the new centralised check-in lobby and expanded the security checkpoint and baggage claim area for the first time,



creating a more efficient and seamless experience from the moment they arrive.

For more information, please visit www.delta.com



Aviation Interview with Farouk Nurish

President of KL Tourism Association (KLTA)



Besides his current position, Farouk Nurish is a group executive director of the PETRA Group, a diversified, international conglomerate headquartered in Kuala Lumpur (KL). An entrepreneur since 1995, he founded and helmed the KL-based marketing communications firm Ablemen Communications Sdn Bhd, strategising and running integrated marketing communications campaigns for local and international brands, including to promote KL and Malaysia as tourist destinations. He also actively speaks at seminars and conferences on topics of branding and marketing. Over the years, he has ventured into other industries, including healthcare, sports entertainment, defence as well as information, communications and technology.

Your term as KLTA president will be ending in 2022. Are you running for a second-term?

My team and I were elected to office at end-December 2020 after a delay of six months due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, thus reducing our term to 18 months instead of the usual 24 months as per KLTA's constitution. Most of which were spent in and out of lockdowns and at a time when travel restrictions were very much in place. At KLTA's upcoming annual general meeting, which will be held sometime in the later part of June or early July, I will probably run for another term in order to make some meaningful contributions while in office.

As the oldest tourism industry organisation, how many members does KLTA have now given that the pandemic has severely impacted many industries.

Before the pandemic, we had around 120 organisations from various tourism-related industries as members. That number has dwindled to just under 30 members now. Its constitution requires that members be in good standing for their membership to not be automatically terminated. Many of them found it hard to commit to their membership fees, albeit not a very large amount. This clearly illustrates the challenges most are facing at the moment.

Please share the plans KLTA has drawn up to ensure the growth and survival of its membership post-pandemic.

For the time being, our focus is not so much on membership growth per se. The industry is bleeding. While international travel is now opening, a full recovery will not happen overnight. Many of our members have simply ceased to exist due to the pandemic. Having no business nor income for the past two years has taken its toll on the industry players. To increase our membership, we will need to focus on recovery efforts in the industry as a whole.

As KLTA becomes more active in implementing key strategies for industry recovery and starts showing some results for those efforts, I believe our membership will become more attractive. The initiatives we are currently planning are member-centric. Joining our association, the members will be able to reap greater benefits directly.

One of our major initiatives is the launch of the Visit KL Digital platform which will provide for our members a digital presence and opportunity to reach both domestic and international tourists with their offerings. We will then run an extensive advertising and promotion campaign to drive traffic to the website. We will also be partnering with a local online travel agent to provide a last mile online booking facility for vendors who may not already have such a facility in place. I encourage all tourism product and service providers in KL to join this initiative so that we can have a wider offering on this platform.

Does Malaysia have what it takes to recapture a sizable portion of the international tourist market now that our borders have reopened, and the travel restrictions eased? If not, what do you propose?

While the pandemic has bruised our industry in many ways, this is a global problem. Many of the challenges we face are not exclusive to us. The region is affected in the same manner. What is key though is how we, as an industry, react towards this global catastrophe and what we do to pave the way out of this situation.

Does Malaysia have what it takes? Absolutely! What we need to do is put our hearts and minds to it. We mean every stakeholder, including both the industry players and the government. With a level playing field, the competition is going to get intense as the neighbouring destinations start campaigning for their share of the foreign tourist market.

Malaysia needs to be aggressive again in attracting tourist numbers. We must showcase what we have to offer and ensure that we position ourselves as the preferred destination for the right reasons. Industry players need to think out of the box in creating new and exciting tourism experiences that will help differentiate KL's uniqueness as a destination.

As we continue to build trust and confidence among travellers, be it domestic, regional or international, what more can we do to convince them to come to our country?

We need to engage with them besides convincing them that KL and Malaysia hold for them experiences they have been looking for. Whether it is sightseeing, outdoor adventures in nature or retail therapy, we have what they are looking for and more. This must be communicated effectively.

Our engagement with tourists and potential ones must also be strategic to be effective. We need to speak to them in the language that excites them. I do not mean literally but in a tone and manner that resonate with how they think and their world view. We must be able to talk to today's generation of travellers whether they are frequent independent travellers or business event delegates.

We need to reach out to them on the correct platforms that they are comfortable with and make that impression in their environment while ensuring the right message is imparted. Additionally, we absolutely must have multiple offerings. When it comes to tourism there simply cannot be a one size fits all approach.

In today's highly personalised world, we must be able to provide bespoke experiences. Our tourism players must be able to anticipate the needs of the modern tourists and always strive to offer more. To do this, we require a clear understanding of

the new norms and what it means to travel in the post-Covid world. There must be a real appreciation of the trends and habits of today's travellers.

In the reset for KL, what should be done to ensure that it is a top-of-mind destination?

The silver lining that has come with the pandemic is the opportunity to re-invent ourselves. It is the ideal opportunity for KL to look at what it stands for in the larger picture of global tourism. The city needs to define itself in the context of being an international destination. We cannot simply look at matching what the competition is offering. We need to be unique. We cannot do what we were doing five years ago and expect to get the same results today. The world has changed in so many ways.

Amid the challenging economic environment, surge in oil prices and increasing inflation, what sort of aid do you expect from the government to help prop up the tourism sector?

Propping up the tourism industry would be a stop-gap measure. The easiest way to ensure the industry's survival is to not allow the key players to go out of business by offering them moratoriums and financial assistance either through grants and/or soft loans. This is just "first aid". Once the wounds have stopped bleeding, the government needs to work with the industry players to start the healing process that would eventually lead to growth.

There are so many more aspects to running a tourism business than mere cashflow. Human resource is an example. Without sufficient manpower, many of our tourism service providers simply cannot operate. It is encouraging to know that the honorable Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture recognised this and is working to remedy the situation with the other relevant ministries.

How do you view our current limited air connectivity and seat capacity as our tourism industry starts to gain traction?

It has been said before that connectivity is key to Malaysia's tourism recovery. However, I feel it is a chicken and egg situation. We will not have enough passengers to warrant more flights if we do not create

an interest to want to visit KL or Malaysia. We cannot build a vibrant tourism industry with unique offerings if there is no critical mass of arrivals to substantiate such industry development. There must be simultaneous development on all fronts for there to be real growth. An aggressive campaign that attracts tourists and visitors will lead to more demand and bookings, which will warrant an increase in flights.

What do you see as major travel trends that will shape our tourism and or/aviation industry?

Sustainable tourism and eco-friendly travel. One of the things that the pandemic seemed to accelerate is the awareness of environmental issues. Images of wildlife such as otters, birds and dolphins returning to the rivers in cities around the world have made it clear that our environment is indeed savable with the minimal efforts by just staying at home for a few months.

The clearing of smog and haze in many urban areas too has not only shown us the possibilities but also given us hope. This has resonated with many, especially the younger generation. Travellers today and more so of tomorrow will be looking for environmentally conscientious offerings when it comes to travel.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind during your term as president?

As this is a very crucial time for the tourism sector of KL, I hope the long-term initiatives launched during my term will continue to contribute towards the growth and development of the industry and subsequently the association. I would rather be known for the impact my service as president has had on the industry than just being a Covid-time president.

Work apart, what are your hobbies?

I am passionate about our oceans and am an avid scuba diver. The pandemic, however, has kept me too long on dry land. In the last eight months, I have been travelling frequently to the United Kingdom and India for business. What I would really like to do is a trip to Raja Ampat for the beautiful marine life and seascapes.



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