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# MORE THAN AN AWE-INSPIRING AIRPORT, A GATEWAY TO THE WORLD.

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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 the rebound in air travel speeds up with a number of travellers gearing up for the year-end holidays and festive season, he shares how the Immigration Department has made preparations at KL International Airport (KLIA) to reduce partly the congestion especially for foreign arrivals with long-term visit permits by extending the use of the automated entrance system (autogate), which had been previously restricted to Malaysians, to them as well.**



**Dato' Iskandar Mizal Mahmood**  
Managing Director  
Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad

**W**e would like to thank the Immigration Department for its initiative to enable arriving long-term visit foreign pass holders to use the autogate facility at KLIA since mid-November, thus speeding up the inspection process normally conducted at the immigration counters. Over 1.8 million foreigners that include expatriates, those working and studying in Malaysia and participants of Malaysia Second Home Programme are expected to benefit from it.

According to OAG's November data, our flagship KLIA is the second fastest growing airport in terms of international seats, adding 159,029 seats after Singapore's Changi Airport with 216,813 seats added. Our national carrier Malaysia Airlines has also done well being the second fastest growing in Southeast Asia in terms of seats added, which amounted to 128,231 seats compared to October.

Of late, the list of airlines resuming their direct services to KLIA has been on the

rise. October 31 saw All Nippon Airways recommencing its thrice weekly Tokyo-Haneda service to Kuala Lumpur (KUL) utilising Boeing 787-8 and KLM Royal Dutch Airlines its four times weekly direct service from Amsterdam to KUL using its two-class Boeing 777-200 aircraft, with its KUL-Jakarta sector also returning.

This was followed by the 288-seater Air Mauritius, arriving at KLIA on November 1 using its Airbus A330-900Neo aircraft. The airline has been our long-standing partner, having first flown into Malaysia since May 1988 and halted in March 2020. We are glad to know that it is reactivating its collaboration with Malaysia Airlines in order to offer more connections in Asia and Australia via KLIA.

The following day (November 2) saw Uzbekistan Airways resuming its Tashkent-KUL route after a two-year hiatus, carrying 188 passengers on its A321Neo aircraft. The carrier has been flying to KLIA since 1992. Also offering a twice weekly service, we hope

to see not only more tourism cooperation between the two countries but also in other areas such as education, medicine and technology.

Meanwhile, Malaysia Airlines' new twice-weekly direct KUL-Yogyakarta took to the skies on November 3 as part of its network expansion within Indonesia while long-haul low-cost carrier AirAsia X resumed its KUL-Jeddah six-weekly flights on November 16 to provide affordable travel to the Middle East for travellers and pilgrims. KLIA serves as a significant umrah hub for those from Indonesia as well with the resumption of this route as Saudi Arabia reopens its travel sectors.

We also welcomed Shanghai-based Spring Airlines' inaugural once weekly Nanning-KUL flight on November 21 to KLIA as China eases its travel restrictions for inbound travellers. We expect the trend of more relaunches of direct flights from KUL to other foreign destinations to continue in December and into early 2023.



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#### Advisor

Dato' Iskandar Mizal Mahmood

#### Managing Editor

Mohamed Sallauddin Hj. Mat Sah

#### Editorial & Concept

Octagon Creative  
melisa.fly@octagon.com.my

#### Advertising & Production

Noor Hafiza Ruslan  
hafiza@malaysiaairports.com.my

Mohd Faizal Md Haris

faizalmd@malaysiaairports.com.my

#### Design & Distribution

Mediate Communications Sdn. Bhd.

#### MALAYSIA AIRPORTS HOLDINGS

BERHAD (487092-W)

Aviation Marketing and Development Division

Level 3, Arrival Hall (Domestic)

Main Terminal Building

KL International Airport

64000 Sepang

Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

Tel : 603-8776 4949

Fax : 603-8776 4040

Email : marketing@malaysiaairports.com.my



## Calls for More Seamless Cross-border Travel, Safety and Sustainability as Air Travel Rebounds

A good thing that emerged from the Covid-19 crisis is the strengthening of resolve among Asia Pacific airlines to redouble their efforts to address regulatory challenges relating to passenger facilitation, safety and sustainability. This is evident from the resolutions passed at the Association of Asia Pacific Airlines' (AAPA) 66th Assembly of Presidents held in Bangkok from November 10 until November 11, 2022.

Where passenger facilitation is concerned, many governments in the region have introduced digital applications (apps) to process contactless pre-travel verification of health status but many of these apps are neither inter-operable with each other nor are they enabled for other purposes such as for immigration clearance or check-in, thus resulting in confusion for travellers.

AAPA, whose permanent secretariat is headquartered in Kuala Lumpur, urges governments and border control agencies to work together to adopt inter-operable digital apps for air travel in accordance with the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) guidance in order to reduce unnecessary pre-departure congestion, delays and inconvenience to the travelling public.

Recognising that existing e-passport technology can be leveraged for digital travel credentials and pre-verification of traveller identity for seamless immigration clearance, the trade association for scheduled international airlines based in Asia Pacific says this would help alleviate the long queues at the immigration checkpoints and congestion at many airports due to manpower constraints.

It calls on the governments to use existing passenger data exchange systems to provide integrated pre-travel verification responses

to aircraft operators related to immigration, security and public health requirements while fully respecting passenger privacy rights.

Noting the proliferation of onerous regulations imposed on the air transport industry during the pandemic, AAPA says it cannot stress more on the critical importance of governments adopting a more coordinated approach to ensure the speedy recovery of the sector in the coming year.

Its director general Subhas Menon believes the lack of coordination of travel requirements across borders and the burden of restrictive government regulations will hold back Asia's carriers' sustainable recovery and growth as well as their ability to fully contribute to the region's social and economic development.

#### Safety and sustainability concerns

Also of serious concern are the unilateral regulations introduced by national or regional aviation regulators which failed to take into account the international nature of airline operations.

Currently, the United States (US) Federal Aviation Administration requires all commercial aircraft be retrofitted with new or modified radio altimeters by July 2023 to maintain their operations to the US. AAPA says telecommunication companies are powering up their 5G networks to the full capacity authorised by the Federal Communications Commission even as 5G's full effects on aircraft operations are being studied.

It adds that unresolved spectrum issues relating to aeronautical safety services have resulted in flight cancellations, degradations of air traffic management services and interruptions of flight operation.

A comprehensive frequency spectrum strategy in line with ICAO's Standards and Recommended Principles is required to support timely availability and protection of adequate spectrum for civil aviation.

AAPA believes that introducing regulations to meet specific regional or sectoral goals that are counterproductive to aviation safety and recovery is not in keeping with ICAO's "No country left behind" principle. It calls on governments, aviation regulators, safety agencies and other stakeholders to support the ICAO's frequency spectrum strategy besides urging them to consult with aviation safety regulators, experts and airspace users to establish regulatory measures to ensure that incumbent aviation systems and services are free from harmful interference.

On sustainability, AAPA says its member carriers are fully committed to achieving the industry's ambitious target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050 in support of the United Nations' Paris Agreement's goals. It calls on governments to work with relevant stakeholders such as fuel suppliers to accelerate the fuel research, certification and development as well as processing technology and feedstock production.

This also includes the certification of new aircraft and engines to allow the scaling-up of sustainable aviation fuel in sufficient quantities at competitive cost to meet the airline industry's long-term needs. Renewing its call on governments to participate in the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation, AAPA also cautions them to refrain from applying duplicative requirements on international aviation carbon dioxide emissions.

Subhas remarks, "AAPA carriers have shown great resilience in confronting the challenges brought about by the prolonged Covid-19 pandemic whilst maintaining the highest safety standards."

He anticipates the airlines in the region to do well in 2023 based on the forward bookings. So far, despite high oil prices and other headwinds, carriers such as Singapore



Airlines and Qantas Airways have shown strong financial performance.

The SIA Group, for instance, posted record operating profits in the first half and second quarter of the financial year 2022/23 as travel demand surged after Singapore fully reopened to vaccinated travellers in April.

Meanwhile, China, among the last countries in the region to reopen, recently suspended its circuit breaker policy in which international flights into the country could be banned for a certain period if it noticed a spike in the number of positive Covid-19 cases.

China also relaxed some of its rigid protocols for inbound passengers where they are only required to produce a negative polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test within 48 hours prior to their arrival instead of two such tests previously. Instead of having to quarantine for 10 (7+3) days at designated areas, inbound travellers now need to do so only for eight days, where five days are in centralised quarantine locations and three days are home quarantine.

Data reportedly shows searches and bookings surged following the Chinese government's relaxation of its Covid-19 control policy. Among the popular inbound routes into cities

such as Guangzhou are those from Kuala Lumpur, Vietnam and Phnom Penh.

In Hong Kong, its health officials have lately relaxed the arrangements for inbound travellers, allowing them to undergo only two PCR tests effective November 21 after finding that the Omnicron subvariant has a short incubation period and that most of the infected arrivals were detected in the first two tests.

Its Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) has been proactive in working with its key Southeast Asian markets in preparation of the reopening of the borders in countries such as Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. HKTB executive director Dane Cheng is expecting to receive 9.6 million inbound travellers in the second half of 2022.

Japan, which recently eased its border controls, also saw a rebound in travel by foreigners on its international routes as attested by ANA, the country's largest and five-star carrier which witnessed growing demand for flight connections between North America and Asia.



# Firefly Launches Penang-Banda Aceh Flight

**F**irefly has launched a new international route connecting Penang International Airport (PEN) to Sultan Iskandar Muda International Airport (BTJ) in Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

The flight FY3510 began operating its new route on Monday as it departed from PEN at 10.50 am local time and arrived at 11.10 am at BTJ, using the Boeing 737-800 aircraft. The airline, which is under Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG), will operate twice weekly services to BTJ from PEN and vice versa, flying on Monday and Friday via FY3510 and FY3511.

The service frequency will gradually increase to four times weekly from December this year, as part of the network expansion strategy across ASEAN.



A welcoming ceremony event was held at BTJ with the presence of MAG’s global head of sales Roslan Ismail, while the Firefly management team were among the passengers who joined the inaugural flight.

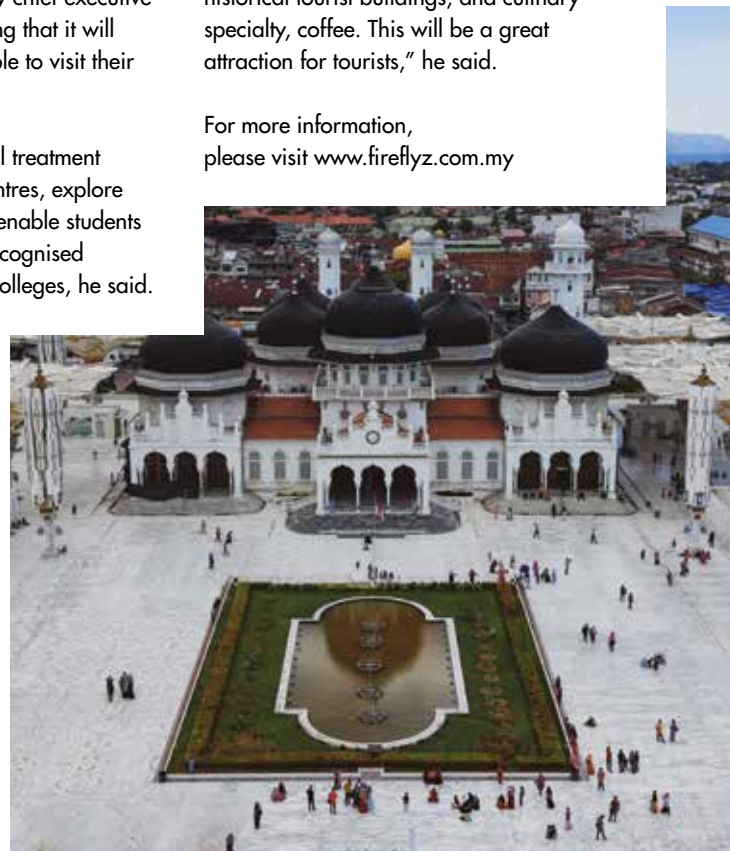
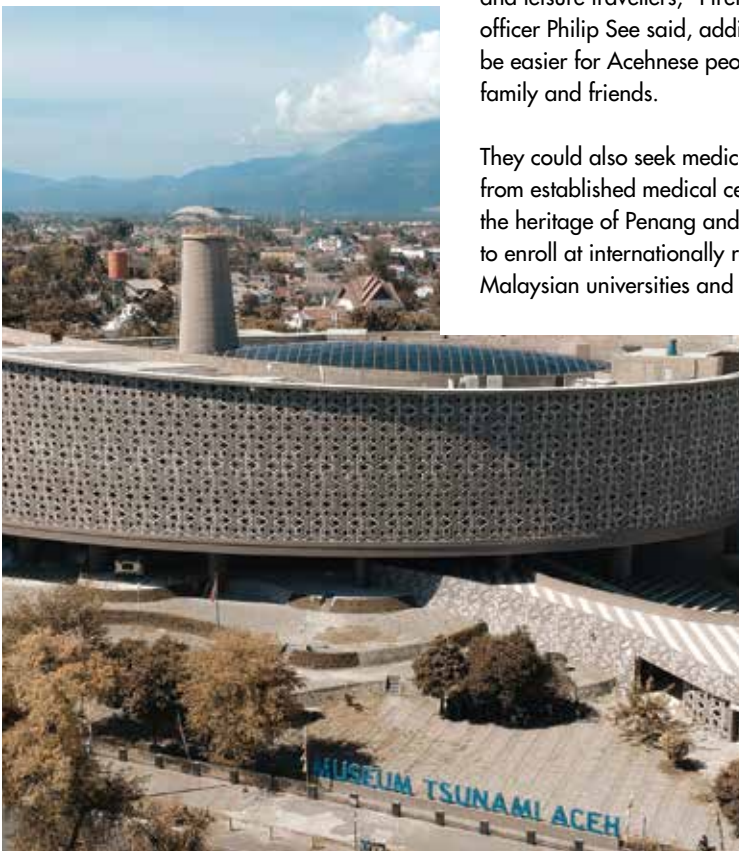
“We expect to see a high influx of medical and leisure travellers,” Firefly chief executive officer Philip See said, adding that it will be easier for Acehnese people to visit their family and friends.

They could also seek medical treatment from established medical centres, explore the heritage of Penang and enable students to enroll at internationally recognised Malaysian universities and colleges, he said.

Meanwhile, Aceh’s head of tourism and culture, Almunizar Kamal said the route could help drive the growth of tourism from both sides.

“Aceh, which is in northwest Indonesia, is famous for its attractive beach tourism, historical tourist buildings, and culinary specialty, coffee. This will be a great attraction for tourists,” he said.

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



## Air Mauritius Resumes Direct Flight to Kuala Lumpur

Passengers aboard the national airline of Mauritius – Air Mauritius flight were welcomed upon arrival at KL International Airport from Port Louis on November 1, 2022.

They were personally welcomed by YBhg. Tan Sri Dr. Ong Hong Peng, Chairman of Tourism Malaysia and presented a Malaysian cultural performance. Among the passengers from the flight was a delegation of 10 people consisting of top management of leading travel agents from Mauritius. The delegation then continued with familiarisation tours hosted by Tourism Malaysia to various tourist destinations including Kuala Lumpur, Genting Highlands, and Selangor.

Air Mauritius flight completed its resumption of direct flights to Kuala Lumpur since it last served this route in March 2020.

The non-stop flight departs Mauritius every Monday and Thursday at 11.00 pm and arrives in Kuala Lumpur at 10.10 am the following day. The flight is equipped with a seating capacity of 288 seats, with 28 seats in Business Class and 260 seats in Economy, and will operate the route using an Airbus A330-900 Neo aircraft.

Tan Sri Dr. Ong Hong Peng, said, "I am encouraged by the return of this direct route, which demonstrates Air Mauritius' confidence in Malaysia's tourism industry. Connectivity is the heart of tourism, and I am sure the resumption service will help increase tourist arrivals and receipts between our two nations".

“

We are excited to resume our operations in Kuala Lumpur after two years. Air Mauritius has been offering scheduled flights to Kuala Lumpur (KLIA), since May 1988. Mauritius is an upcoming destination for Malaysians while Kuala Lumpur features among the favourite get-away destinations for Mauritians. Air Mauritius is in the process of reactivating its collaboration with Malaysia Airlines and we hope to offer our passengers connections to a number of destinations in Asia and Australia via the important hub of Kuala Lumpur in the near future.

”

**LAURENT RECOURA**  
Chief Commercial Officer of  
Air Mauritius

According to Malaysia Airports Managing Director, Dato' Iskandar Mizal Mahmood, "Air Mauritius is one of our long-standing partner airlines, first flying into Malaysia in May 1988. Kuala Lumpur has remained a favourite destination and also serves as an important transit hub for those continuing their journey into the region. We welcome the resumption of their weekly flights to Kuala Lumpur after a short hiatus due to the pandemic."

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



# SAUDIA Crowned World Class Airline



Saudi Arabian Airlines (SAUDIA) has been named World Class Airline at The APEX Official Airline Ratings awards, the second time in a row for them to be recognised in the award that stands at the pinnacle of all APEX Passenger Choice awards. In addition, SAUDIA was renewed as a ‘Five Star Airline’ by APEX.

Developed in conjunction with Yates and Partners, the new “World Class Airline” award is unique in considering not only an airline’s services and products, but also its health, safety, and sustainability efforts – reflecting the expectations of today’s customers and key focus areas for the airline industry.

“

On behalf of all of us at SAUDIA, we’re proud to be named APEX World Class for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a row. This is an honor that celebrates the amazing work of our worldwide team at SAUDIA in reaching the pinnacle of APEX Passenger Choice awards.

SAUDIA’s commitment to our guests is at the heart of everything we do, and APEX five-star airline rating is a testament to our efforts. SAUDIA is grateful to APEX for recognising the lengths we have gone to keep our guests safe and well.

”

**CAPT. IBRAHIM KOSHY**  
Chief Executive Officer of SAUDIA

Dr. Joe Leader, Chief Executive Officer of APEX said: “With independently verified passengers serving as the final judges, SAUDIA has set the highest echelon bar of airline experience by winning the APEX Official Airline Ratings™ World Class and Global Five Star rating.”

“World Class is the new North Star for aviation. It embodies everything that is important to airline customers today. It is a more comprehensive recognition of superior service, depth of guest experience, keeping guests safe, and sustainability achievement.”  
Dr. Joe Leader stated.

The APEX Official Airline Ratings is the first rating program in the world to score airlines entirely based on certified passenger feedback. As part of this program, airlines are segregated into four categories; Global Airlines; Major Airlines; Regional Airlines, and Low-Cost Carriers. In partnership with Triplt® from Concur®, the world’s highest-rated travel-organising app, the industry-first award category is based on neutral, third-party passenger feedback. More than one million flights across nearly 600 airlines worldwide have been rated by passengers and independently certified by a professional external auditing company.

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

## AirAsia Recommences Kuala Lumpur – Kaohsiung Route

**A**irAsia celebrated its post-pandemic inaugural flight to Kaohsiung from Kuala Lumpur on November 12, 2022 after two long years of no air connectivity between the cities. Flight AK170 took off at 5:25PM local time, and arrived at 9:55PM local time in Kaohsiung.

A grand send-off event was held at klia2 for the guests onboard the flight who received goodie bags filled with various AirAsia merchandise items and an iPass each worth NTD50. Guests were also treated to a special performance by AirAsia's talented cabin crew.

“

This inaugural flight from Kuala Lumpur to Kaohsiung is a long-awaited occasion for us. Our Kaohsiung and Taipei routes were amongst our most popular and frequented by many since we commenced operations in the region in 2005. It was a difficult decision to halt our flights for over two years during the pandemic but it's incredibly heartening to see our first flight take off with so many excited guests onboard, ready to explore the wonders of the city.

Now that travel restrictions have eased worldwide, we look forward to connecting more travellers to Kaohsiung and soon to Taipei when the flights resume in December 2022! Recently, we celebrated having flown 700 million guests in our 21 years of flying and in conjunction with that, we're treating our loyal guests to a number of amazing promos with some unbeatable deals to these cities.

”

**RIAD ASMAT**

Chief Executive Officer of  
AirAsia Malaysia



attraction – free internet access is available throughout the cities with thousands of WiFi access points placed at various locations.

Kaohsiung, famed for its picturesque harbour and sprawling landscape, is one of AirAsia's most popular destinations in the North Asia region. Travellers to both destinations are spoiled for choice when it comes to tourism attractions. Furthermore, both Kaohsiung and Taipei are often a preferred choice for travellers who are looking for affordable Muslim-friendly food options. These two bustling cities are also home to a unique

As of October 13, 2022, travel restrictions have been eased for the majority of international visitors to Kaohsiung and Taipei. Malaysians (as well as citizens from selected countries) can visit these cities without any visa, vaccinations, Covid-19 tests, or quarantine requirements.

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

# Malaysia Airlines Launches Flight to Yogyakarta

Malaysia Airlines has launched its new twice-weekly direct flights between Kuala Lumpur (KUL) and Yogyakarta (YIA) with the inaugural flight taking to the skies on November 2, 2022. The new service marks another milestone in the airline’s network expansion strategy, bringing the airline’s existing network within Indonesia to six (6) cities including Jakarta, Denpasar, Surabaya, Medan, and Pekanbaru.

The airline will operate twice weekly service on Wednesday and Sunday, departing KUL via MH857 at 5:40pm and return from YIA to KUL via MH856 at 8:30pm. The flights will be operated by the B737-800 aircraft, equipped with 160 seats, comprising 16 seats in Business Class and 144 seats in Economy Class.

“ We are delighted to expand our connectivity to one of Malaysia Airlines’ key destinations, Indonesia, to cater to the needs of business and leisure travellers, as well as to pursue our aspirations of strengthening the region’s share of umrah and hajj pilgrimage. This new direct flight from Kuala Lumpur to Yogyakarta complements our current services to and from Indonesia, providing passengers with additional choice, smoother connection, and the airline’s premium products and offerings, anchored by the signature Malaysian Hospitality experience.

The move would encourage economic growth, increasing business and trade between the two nations; while also positioning the airline on a solid footing to achieve more than 82% of pre-pandemic capacity. Our operations into Indonesia have been positive, with current capacity at 70% of pre-pandemic levels. With more countries opening their borders, now is an excellent time to welcome international visitors, and we are confident that our expansion into new markets will be well received.

”  
**CAPTAIN IZHAM ISMAIL**  
*Group Chief Executive Officer of  
 Malaysia Aviation Group*

Malaysia Airlines is committed to facilitating safe and seamless travels for passengers #FlyConfidently and experiencing a smooth journey underpinned by inimitable Malaysian Hospitality. Malaysia Airlines received a 7-star rating for its extensive Covid-19’s health and safety measures from AirlineRatings and is a Travel Safe Alliance Malaysia (TSAM) member.

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



## Airbus Assembles First A321 in China

**A**irbus has announced the commissioning of the first A321 aircraft to be assembled at its Final Assembly Line Asia (FAL Tianjin) in Tianjin, China. The breakthrough expands and deepens the collaboration with China's aviation industry, and demonstrates Airbus' commitment to enhancing its long-term strategic partnership with China.

The FAL in Tianjin officially started the adaptation work to become A321 capable in August 2022. It is the first major upgrade of the assembly line since operations commenced in 2008. FAL Tianjin's first A321 aircraft is scheduled for delivery in early 2023.

"Since we announced our plans to expand the capability of FAL Tianjin to A321 production last November, I am proud that the Airbus Tianjin team has successfully completed the relevant adaptation work on schedule by working closely with European experts and our suppliers to overcome the impact of Covid-19", said George Xu, Airbus Executive Vice President, and Airbus China CEO. "The commissioning of the first A321 aircraft underlines Airbus' commitment to China, marking a new milestone in the industrial cooperation with our Chinese partners."

Airbus has four A320 Family assembly facilities around the world: Toulouse, France; Hamburg, Germany; Tianjin, China; and Mobile, United States. By the end of 2022, all commercial aircraft assembly sites will be A321-capable, as part of the industrial strategy to de-risk the ramp-up and to meet the rising share of A321 production.

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



## Hong Kong Airlines Resumes Services to Okinawa and Sapporo

**H**ong Kong Airlines celebrated the resumption of its service to Okinawa on November 2, following a long wait of two years. Known as the "Hawaii of Japan", Okinawa is the airline's third destination in Japan that it has resumed this year following the relaxation of travel restrictions.

Meanwhile, the airline is also delighted to announce its service resumption to Sapporo on November 4. Flight frequency to both Okinawa and Sapporo are expected to be upgraded from three-times weekly to daily services from December.

Hong Kong Airlines also launched a co-branded mask product in partnership with biotech company RAZE. In celebration of the flight resumption, the airline distributed a gift set to each passenger flying on the first flight to Okinawa, which highlighted its commitment to delivering customers the best and safest travel experience possible. The special RAZE Sanitising Travel Kit featured a collection of distinctively designed RAZE x Hong Kong Airlines 3-Ply Antibacterial Masks (4 pieces), along with sanitising spray with a refill set and sanitising wipes.



To mark this special occasion, the Okinawa Convention & Visitors Bureau hosted a ceremony at the Naha Airport to welcome the passengers.

Louis Li, Vice President at Hong Kong Airlines said, "We are excited to resume direct flights to both Okinawa and Sapporo, adding these charming ports to our recovering network and offering our customers more travel options. With the anticipated increasing travel demands, we are looking to add more flights to both cities as well as other destinations we fly to."

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

# Garuda Indonesia Signs MOU with Emirates



**G**aruda Indonesia and Emirates signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on November 8, 2022 to establish a codeshare partnership between both airlines.

The new partnership allows customers of the flag carrier of Indonesia and the world’s largest international airline, based in Dubai to enjoy seamless connectivity on new routes across the Americas, Middle East, Africa, and Europe. In addition to expanding the breadth of each airline’s networks, with travel made possible on a single ticket, Garuda Indonesia and Emirates will also explore opportunities to cooperate on their respective frequent flyer programmes, to enable customers of both airlines to earn and redeem loyalty points for reward tickets, upgrades and other exclusive benefits.

“ We are delighted to announce our partnership with Emirates that gives their inbound passengers seamless access to top travel destinations in Indonesia connected by Garuda’s domestic network. Outbound Garuda passengers will also benefit from this partnership as it gives them access to a wider range of destinations served by Emirates.

This partnership is timely as countries are expected to start to reopen their borders for international flights and ease their travel restrictions. It will also help open up many opportunities for Indonesia’s trade and tourism activities.

**IRFAN SETIAPUTRA**  
President & Chief Executive Officer of Garuda Indonesia

“ We are pleased to forge a codeshare partnership with Garuda Indonesia to provide our customers with access to additional destinations in Indonesia and which also allows them to enjoy seamless and convenient connectivity to eight domestic destinations to and from Dubai and to our global network through Jakarta, and three destinations through Denpasar.

Indonesia is an important market for Emirates and our partnership with Garuda Indonesia is testament to Emirates’ commitment to continuously strengthen our network and complement our offering. Through the expanded, combined network of both airlines, we are able to offer our customers a more seamless experience through check-in, bag check and boarding on every leg of their journey, all with a single ticket. We look forward to working with Garuda Indonesia and nurturing the relationship to bring more valuable benefits to our customers and their travel experience.

**ADNAN KAZIM**  
Chief Commercial Officer of Emirates

Under the codeshare agreement, Emirates customers will be able to connect to and from Denpasar (DPS), Surabaya (SUB), Makassar (UPG), Balikpapan (BPN), Manado (MDC), Medan (MES), Padang (PDG) and Solo (SOC) airports on flights operated by Garuda Indonesia from Jakarta (CGK), to Dubai and beyond with a single ticket. Additionally, routes directly connecting Denpasar (DPS) with Surabaya (SUB) and Makassar (UPG), will be available for passengers’ convenience.

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

## Air Astana Restarts Almaty to Bangkok Service

**A**ir Astana has resumed its services between Almaty and Bangkok from October 30, 2022, utilising the Airbus A321LR. The airline operated five frequencies a week until November 29, after which the frequency has been increased to a daily service. Departure from Almaty is at 01:10 with arrival in Bangkok at 08:55 local time. Return flight from Bangkok is at 10:05 with arrival in Almaty at 16:35 local time.



Air Astana initially launched flights from Almaty to Bangkok in 2003 but had to suspend services due to the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. During that 17-year period, almost 900,000 passengers travelled on the route. In November 2021, Air Astana launched a new service from Almaty to Phuket, the island popular with tourists off southern Thailand, with three

frequencies a week. More than 37,000 passengers have travelled on the route over the past year, with an average load of 74%.

“We are delighted to resume services to Bangkok, which has traditionally proven to be one of the most popular destinations for travellers from Kazakhstan,” said Adel Dauletbek, Vice President of Sales and

Marketing, Air Astana. “With the Thai authorities lifting all Covid-19 related restrictions on foreign visitors, we look forward to a rapid resurgence of passengers travelling to Bangkok for business and vacation.”

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

## SriLankan Airlines Scoops Best Aviation Sustainability Program Award

**S**riLankan Airlines won the prestigious Best Aviation Sustainability Program Award, beating 118 other submissions at the recently concluded Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum (SMBR) Global Aviation Awards for its groundbreaking signature upcycle project, ‘Mathaka.’ Project Mathaka was SriLankan Airlines’ answer to minimising its contribution to landfill waste and ecological footprint by repurposing the airline’s scrap material into a variety of lifestyle products.

SriLankan partnered with House of Lonali, a Sri Lankan organisation that designs and manufactures upcycled lifestyle products, to develop an exclusive range of products under the ‘Mathaka’ brand including travel bags; wallets; books; key tags; and jewellery.

The project allows the airline to take its planet-friendly corporate philosophy a step further by transforming waste into new products, thereby reducing landfill waste and environmental pollution. Moreover, effective waste

management from upcycling offers a practical solution in this age of economic scarcity and shortage of raw materials by extending the use of waste materials in a sustainable manner.

The SMRB Global Aviation Awards were given out at the 41st General Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) in Montreal, Canada. Established in 2016, the SMRB Global Aviation Awards aims to recognise the contributions of business organisations and individuals to the success of the global aviation industry. The evaluation process and winner selection are guided by an international team of strategic partners.

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





# Aviation Interview with Rayner Teo Kheng Hock

Chief Executive Officer of MYAirline

After having been in the airline industry for 34 years, Klang-born Rayner Teo has not only realised the goal to give birth to a new airline but will soon be launching some domestic routes and gradually expanding its route network. Elated with MYAirline recently receiving the air service license (ASL) from the Malaysian Aviation Commission to operate MYAirline effective from November 15, the family man of three children is responsible with the MYFamily team on the new start-up airline and its future expansion.



**Please share how your previous job experiences have equipped you to helm your present position?**

Prior to my current role, I was based in Bangkok with the opportunity to work with Thai VietJet Air as part of the value chain of Thailand and Vietnam’s travel industry. My position as a Commercial Advisor there was mainly due to my experience with AirAsia and AirAsia X. My portfolio included building the tourism industry through my position as Group Head of Sales and Distribution.

My 15-year tenure with the brand has equipped me to run MYAirline. Looking back, since I paved my career in 1988, it has been a humbling journey of gaining well-rounded experiences with full-service carriers, an airline system company, the International Air Transport Association, and stints with low-cost carriers (LCC).

**How did you come up with the overall concept, business plan, and strategy for this new airline with a local entrepreneur?**

In my friendship with a prominent businessman of over 10 years, we have this tradition of wishing each other during festive seasons. The idea came about in October 2020 during the lockdown and looking at the economic disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the objective was to restart the economy while giving a light of hope to our local aviation community.

We wanted to provide job opportunities for those impacted by the pandemic and spur the local economy by providing new business opportunities in the aviation business segment. The overall concept, business plan and strategy were based on what we felt would work with our relevant experience. We went on to build a team of highly skilled talents and decided to work on an LCC model that offers affordable airfares.

**When do you hope to commence your flight operations with the three jets MYAirline has leased and what are the new routes?**

We are now open for sale as we enter the final month of 2022 when the school holidays are starting. We look forward to the long-awaited launch of our inaugural flights to Kuching, Kota Kinabalu, Langkawi, Kota Bharu, and Penang in December.

All of us at MYAirline are thrilled to have come this far as a Malaysian carrier that we have built from scratch. We target to increase the capacity by the end-2023 to international destinations. So, be ready to book your holidays and fly with us!

**How do you view the competition in the LCC market, especially with MYAirline's entry?**

We were confident to enter the market during the pandemic after doing our market research thoroughly when we started out in 2020. We are even more optimistic now following Maybank Investment Bank Bhd's recent analysis that further supports our forecast in travel demand. Healthy competition is good overall.

**What are MYAirline's unique selling points?**

The airline's focus will be on continuously improving our customer experiences in both physical and soft touch basis besides providing affordable airfares.

**Please elaborate on how you hope to turn MYAirline into an "innovative, customer-focused and people-centric airline".**

We innovate through our eco-friendly initiatives and digitisation. We are the world's first airline to be fitted with light, innovative and eco-friendly seats. These ergonomically designed seats save around 800 kg of weight, which translates to 155 tonnes of fuel save per plane each year, and they are made in Italy.

From day one, our manual has been prepared digitally whereby we operate our aircraft using digital manuals on iPad. Our human resource recruitment is processed digitally and we administer financial processes on secured cloud storage. My colleagues in MYFamily are our most important asset. In MYAirline, we have created an aviation ecosystem whereby we hire talents who have been furloughed or retrenched due to the pandemic. I am proud of this as we have grown together for the past years.

**Amid high jet fuel prices, a strong US dollar, surging inflation, how does MYAirline aim to provide a "fair" price to consumers?**

MYAirline was born during the pandemic and we have negotiated hard to acquire aircraft with low leasing rates. As a new start-up, we keep our cost structure strong so we can offer affordable fares to our passengers without compromising on service quality.

**Given that this is a capital-intensive business, how do you hope to raise more money to run your operations and future expansion?**

We are reaping the benefits of getting good airplanes at lower leasing rates. We also have been able to sign up the experienced staff who had left other carriers. For our headquarter in Subang, we were able to lock in a competitive long-term rental rate. We also plan to avoid acquiring white elephants, that is buying something that ends up not being used.

**How do you view the prospects ahead in 2023 as air travel recovery speeds up?**

We are positive that the travel market will bounce back in 2023 and are looking forward to providing viable options with better services for our passengers. As 'revenge travel' is still rising, we believe the locals will continue to discover the beauty in our own backyard. The number of inbound tourists has been on the increase and will continue to rise in 2023.

**How big is your current staff force at MYAirline?**

To date, our staff force, or as we call it MYFamily is over 400 strong. We expect to increase it to 500 by the end of December.

**What is your wish list for MYAirline?**

They include making MYAirline not only a successful LCC in Malaysia but also globally known; having Malaysians view us as their first choice of LCC and expanding our network to key regional routes by the fifth year of operation. We plan to grow to 50 aircraft within the next five years.

**Have you been able to fit your hobbies into your hectic career?**

While prioritising work which includes travelling for business, there have been opportunities to also learn and explore items of interest related to my hobbies; which include football and Formula One races.



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