

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, he is pleased with the newly launched upgraded management platform STARdesk to enhance its passenger experience at KL International Airport (KLIA). Upgrading or expansion at other key airports are also in the works to ensure that they are able to meet the increasing passenger capacity as travel momentum continues to pick up post Covid-19 pandemic. He also brims with pride that a Malaysia Airports talent has won Airports Council International Asia Pacific (ACI APAC) signature Human Resource programme's Young Executive Award 2023 for promulgating innovative ideas and best practices in the region and the Middle East.

Dato' Iskandar Mizal Mahmood
Managing Director
Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad

As part of our continuous efforts to elevate our service standards to help us regain top-tier global rankings for KLIA, we recently introduced the STARdesk system which can quickly validate and address passengers' feedback within 15 minutes after they are submitted to our MYAirports mobile app. The app, which can be downloaded at Google Play Store or Apple App Store, is also useful for our passengers as it features flight schedules, wayfinding as well as food and beverage offerings at our flagship airport.

STARdesk was launched alongside our new EZbagz self-service bag drop facility at KLIA Terminal 1 where we are working for a start with Malaysia Airlines for its domestic flights. We are changing the way we operate with more vigour and carrying various transformation exercises for continuous enhancements to the passenger journey. We aim to sustain this momentum and introduce more innovative initiatives in the coming months.

As for our other airports in Malaysia, we have not overlooked their expansion plans or upgrading exercise either. In the case of Kuching International Airport, RM2.9 million has been allocated for 2023-2025 to upgrade its facilities, baggage handling system and aerobridges.

On the estimated RM1.2 billion expansion of Penang International Airport (PIA), which will cater to 12 million passengers annually upon its completion in four years'

time, construction is expected to begin next year. It will include the building of a new terminal, infrastructure and facilities for passengers.

Meanwhile, the federal government has approved the redevelopment of Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport, popularly referred to as Subang Airport, to be turned into a regional aviation hub with a maximum capacity of eight million annual passengers. All these airport expansion projects are expected to create high value and skilled job opportunities, which will augur well for the aviation sector.

I am also happy to announce that Noor Sabrina, our senior executive of stakeholder relations and regulatory affairs has been declared the winner of this year's Young Executive Award themed 'The Future of Airport Workforce'. She will not only receive US\$1,000 cash and a scholarship for an online self-study on an Airports Operations Diploma programme but will have her research paper featured on ACI website.

As an incentive for nominating her, Malaysia Airports is also offered an additional scholarship to any ACI Global Training Leadership and Management Professional Course which can be taken virtually or classroom style, excluding travel fare. We are thankful for this opportunity to send our young talents to further enhance their skills and develop their career with us.

MORE THAN AN ISLAND, A GATEWAY TO LIVING HERITAGE.

PENANG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, THE GATEWAY TO GETAWAYS

It all begins at Penang International Airport (PEN). Modern street art interweaving with old world architecture. Cuisines both fancy and rustic, found nowhere else. Home to a heritage of 500 years. Plan your route to a UNESCO World Heritage City.



A Monthly Publication Of
MALAYSIA AIRPORTS © Aviation
Marketing and Development
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Air Connectivity Recovery to Boost Socio-Economic Growth

The full-scale of global Covid-19 pandemic has brought about a significant drop in the number of direct routes, flight frequencies and available seat capacity in Asia Pacific between 2019 and now, affecting more so the medium or large airports in the region.

Preliminary findings of a study on Airport Connectivity by Airports Council International Asia Pacific (ACI APAC) cited that these airports, largely more dependent on international traffic, saw a 42% reduction in the connectivity index by August 2022 compared to a 17% drop reported at small airports, which benefited from a more resilient domestic traffic.

Conducted with the assistance of PwC, the study also revealed that airports in the Middle East (ME), especially the large and medium-sized international airports, have recovered much faster with 19% increase in connectivity while the smaller airports witnessed 5% increase.

Understanding the way airports operate and how the current

scenario, characterised by increased airfares, manpower shortage and stiff competition in the aviation sector, the ACI APAC Board, which recently met at its 18th Regional Assembly in Kobe, Japan, called on airport operators to open a new dialogue with their national authorities and industry stakeholders to modernise the aviation sector and its infrastructure.

Considering that the sector generates economic value and supports employment besides boosting trade, tourism, education and foreign investments, it believes that a holistic approach to create the fertile ground for the industry is required. They include boosting connectivity by further liberalising international aviation markets.

Given the ensuing congestion at airports amid the strong growth prospects, ACI APAC also suggested a rethink of the model of optimising the use of existing infrastructure via slots allocation as well as modernised and a more flexible charging system.

It also urged governments to simplify and streamline visa processes for inbound international travellers, where applicable and to incentivise funding and financing of airport infrastructure with a reasonable return on investment.

Compliance with environmental and other sustainability objectives, including reducing carbon dioxide emissions in compliance with the long-term global aspirational goal for international aviation of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 should also be prioritised.

Recognising the importance of fully restoring air connectivity and the essential role airports play in driving socio-economic growth, the trade association representing 622 airports from 47 countries or territories, also made a resolution to promote, restore and develop air connectivity in APAC and the ME besides supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

“

Connectivity is a critical enabler for social and economic wealth. Restoring air connectivity in the APAC and development of more routes in the ME is essential to support the recovery of their economies.

EMMANUEL MENANTEAU

President of Airports Council International
Asia Pacific (ACI APAC)

With APAC resurging after three complex years, ACI APAC Director General Stefano Baronci said, “Modernising the sector means critically assessing what can be done differently and better through a close dialogue between institutional and industry stakeholders.”

Following the model of the first bloc-to-bloc air transport agreement between the European Union (EU) and the ASEAN as well as the recent summit between India and the EU, he called upon the implementation of a more liberalised market, the strengthening of cooperation and harmonisation on safety, security and environmental protection among other things.

“This will require a sense of leadership, significant investment but also building capacity and expertise. At all levels, ACI AP is keen to provide its contribution through this process of transformation.”

Tourism Malaysia's Focus on GCC

Capitalising on the continuing growth of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries outbound sector, Tourism Malaysia spearheaded a tourism sales mission to Bahrain and Kuwait from May 7-9 May after its participation at the Arabian Travel Mart (ATM) from May 1-4 at the Dubai World Trade Centre.

Led by Manoharan Periasamy, its Senior Director of International Promotion Division (Asia/Africa), Tourism Malaysia visited Manama and Kuwait City to promote Malaysia as a top-of-the-mind tourist destination and to strengthen Malaysia's presence in these markets. The Malaysian delegation comprised 16 organisations which represented a good mix of hotels and resorts, travel agents, associations and representatives from state tourism boards.

Meetings were held with key Bahrain and Kuwait tourism industry players, Gulf Air, Kuwait Airways, top travel agents besides a courtesy call to the High Commissioner of Malaysia to Bahrain and Kuwait.

Earlier at the four-day ATM, Tourism Malaysia's efforts to publicise its promotional efforts to the ME was led by Khairul Firdaus Akbar Khan, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia. It was participated by 76 organisations. They included state tourism organisations such as Langkawi Development Authority, Penang Global Tourism, Sabah Tourism Board, Sarawak Tourism Board, Tourism Melaka, Tourism Pahang and Tourism Johor.

ATM 2023 marked the 29th anniversary of Malaysia's participation to market and promote its latest attractions and safe travel destinations for shopping, family fun, eco-adventure, honeymoon, and luxury holidays. During the event, the Malaysian delegation met up with a few Middle Eastern airlines such as Qatar Airways, Emirates, Etihad Airways, Saudia, Air Arabia, Oman Air and Salam Air to discuss future collaborations.

Tourism Malaysia also signed two Memorandums of Collaboration (MOC) with Saudia and Air Arabia on May 2 and 3. The MOCs will benefit the Malaysian economy and strengthen its economic ties with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Malaysia, which has recorded 10.07 million tourist arrivals and RM28.2 billion in tourist receipts in 2022, surpassed its initial target of 9.2 million international tourist arrivals. It received 88,534 tourist arrivals from the ME.

Malaysia aims to welcome 16.1 million international tourist arrivals this year, of which 300,000 tourists are expected to come from West Asia, and to generate RM49.2 billion in tourist receipts.

Wings Air Opens New Pekanbaru-Melaka Route



The first flight of Wings Air into Batu Berendam Airport in Melaka from Sultan Syarik Kassim II Pekanbaru International Airport in the Riau province of Indonesia on May 15 has brought 85% of its passengers who are seeking medical treatment at the state's private hospitals.

Besides Melaka being a popular health tourism destination, especially among tourists from Indonesia, Wings Air Acting Chief Executive Officer Captain Fitzgerald Julian also expects the new route to benefit both Malaysia and Indonesia in terms of business, economy and trade.

Additionally, Riau, located on the island of Sumatra with Pekanbaru as its capital and largest city, share a rich history and cultural relationship with Melaka as both were part of the Melaka Sultanate in the 15th century.

A member of Indonesia's Lion Group, Wings Air's seven weekly flights, using the ATR 72-600 aircraft with 72 seats, delivers its passengers to Melaka in slightly more than an hour.

Present at the launch of its inaugural flight in Pekanbaru were Mohamad Hendra Irawan, Executive General Manager of Sultan Syarif Kasim II Pekanbaru International Airport and Lieutenant-Colonel Aviation Corps (PNB) Bambang Apriyanto, Head of Operations Department at Roesmin Nurjadin Air Force Base.

Welcoming the low-cost carrier's maiden flight in Melaka, State Tourism, Heritage, Arts and Culture Committee chairman Datuk Abdul Razak Abdul Rahman hopes Wings Air will help Melaka achieve its target of attracting 8.4 million tourist arrivals this year.

The state government, which reportedly has been holding discussion with Malaysia Airports and the Civil Aviation

Authority of Malaysia to attract more airlines to Melaka, said it is drafting strategies and plans regarding the operations and facilities at the Melaka Airport.

According to Melaka State Works, Infrastructure, Public Facilities and Transport Committee chairman Datuk Hameed Mytheen Kunju Basheer, this includes new applications to the federal government for additional allocation to upgrade the airport runway.

For more information, visit www.lionair.co.id



Etihad Airways Expands Interline Pact with Emirates Airline to Boost UAE's Tourism

To woo visitors to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Etihad Airways and Emirates Airline have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the recently concluded Arabian Travel Market 2023, which saw the interline agreement between them being expanded to provide travellers with additional itinerary options this summer.

Viewed as the first of its kind agreement between the two UAE flag carriers, the initial stages of their interline pact will enable them to focus on developing inbound traffic to the UAE from select points in Europe and China.

According to the Emirates Tourism Council, tourism, a key pillar of UAE's economy, is expected to contribute to 5.4% or US\$31.6 billion of its total gross domestic product, supporting almost an estimated one million jobs by 2027.

Via this "open jaw" arrangement, which offers the flexibility of a single ticket and convenient baggage check-in for the full journey, visitors can cover as much ground as possible when exploring Abu Dhabi, Dubai or the other emirates. This "multi-city flights" option also saves them time as they do not need to fly home via their arrival airport.

The MoU's two signatories - Etihad Chief Operating Officer Mohammad Al Bulooki and Emirates Chief Commercial Officer Adnan Kazim - inked the pact in the presence of Emirates President Sir Tim Clark and Etihad Chief Executive Officer Antonio Neves, who viewed it as "a win-win proposition for travellers to the UAE".

This is the second collaboration between the two airlines after their first MoU in 2018, which saw Etihad Aviation Group and Emirates Group Security strengthening their aviation security, including the sharing of information and intelligence in operational areas both within and outside the UAE.

As part of its network expansion, Neves also announced Etihad will be returning to Mykonos in Greece, Malaga in Spain with twice weekly flights each from June 16 and 18 respectively while on July 2, the national carrier will introduce its new direct thrice weekly service to Portugal's capital city of Lisbon from its Abu Dhabi hub.



Lisbon, Portugal

With the addition of these three popular hotspots, Etihad will be offering travellers nearly 160 weekly flights to 21 destinations in Europe this summer, which is 20% more seats available than in 2022.

For more information, visit www.etihad.com



Xiamen Airlines Inaugurates Chongqing-Kuala Lumpur Flight

Xiamen Airlines' recent commencement of its four times weekly flight from Chongqing to Kuala Lumpur (KL) will be instrumental in helping Malaysia achieve its target of five million Chinese tourists this year. Its new non-stop flights will fly on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday.

The airline's maiden flight MF8687 touched down at KL International Airport Terminal 1 on May 15 with 165 passengers and nine crew. They were welcomed with goody bags by the Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture Dato Sri Tiong King Sing, Tourism Malaysia Director General Datuk Dr Ammar Abd Ghapar and its Senior Director of International Promotions of Asia and Africa, Manoharan Periasamay. Also present was China Cultural Centre Director Zhang Jie Xin.

Senior General Manager of Malaysia Airports (Sepang), Mohd Arif Jaafar said Xiamen Airlines, which has been operating flights to KL since 2002, continued to do so during the Covid-19 pandemic and added more flights last year.

The additional four weekly flights from Chongqing now brings it to a total of 25 flights a week. They have not only enhanced KLIA's connectivity network but also fuelled further growth for the national aviation sector. "Malaysia Airports is committed to build a strong and mutually relationship with Xiamen Airlines to support its growth," he added.

Datuk Dr Ammar viewed Xiamen Airlines' Chongqing-KL inaugural flight as "timely" to welcome more arrivals from China as Tourism Malaysia had fruitful discussions with the Civil Aviation Administration of China and various airlines to get more flights to Malaysia during its recent roadshow to China, which included Xiamen.

"We aspire to have more direct flights to China as we have

the capacity for 175 weekly flights from China to Malaysia," he added. Describing Chongqing as a dynamic and charming mountainous city sited southwest of China, which is famous for its foggy weather in spring and winter, Xiamen Airlines KL office general manager Gao Ya Shuang said its nickname is wu du or fog city.

Besides the KL-Chongqing sector, the airline also operates daily KL-Fuzhou and twice daily KL-Xiamen flights.

For more information, visit www.xiamenair.com



Sustainability at the Forefront of Air France-KLM Group's DNA

KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, which is part of the Air France-KLM Group, is focusing on a sustainable future having been a pioneer and forerunner in sustainable aviation. "Sustainability has been in our DNA," said Roland Coppens, Air France-KLM Vice President and General Manager of Southeast Asia and Oceania.

The Dutch airline's pioneering efforts in sustainable aviation date as far back as November 2009 with its first biofuel powered demonstration flight.

At the recent celebration of the airline's 65 years' presence in Malaysia, Coppens told his corporate guests and media, "We want to be at the forefront of a more responsible European aviation. We cannot do this alone; we need to do it together with our customers and colleagues to create a sustainable future."

He said Air France-KLM is committed to blend 10% sustainable aviation fuel by 2030, which is more than the European Union's (EU) target, adding that it has been ranked top among the airlines in the Dow Jones Sustainability World Index for many years. Its sustainability commitment to reduce carbon emission will be achieved via fleet modernisation, inflight operations and sustainable catering.

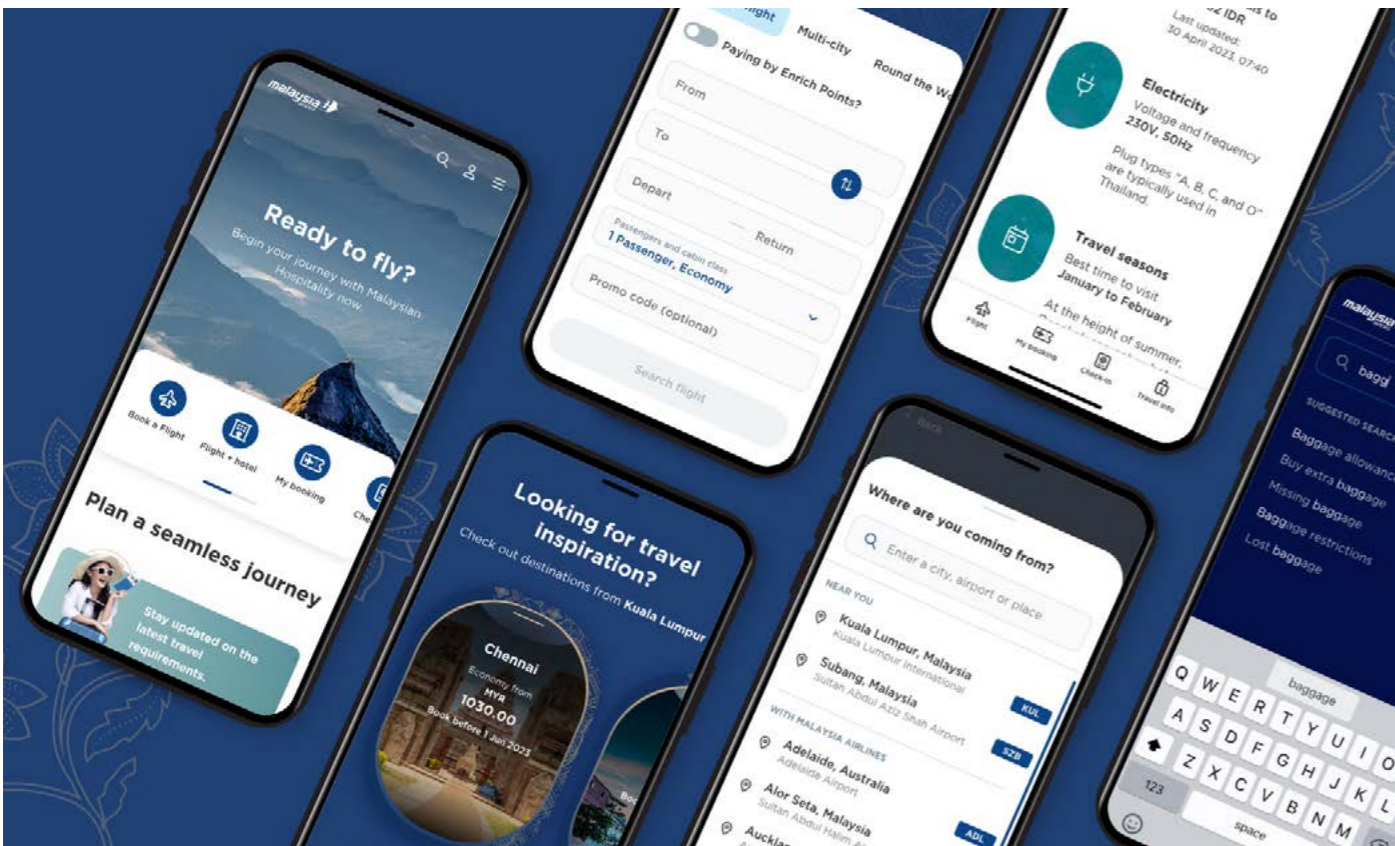
Commenting on the strong bilateral relationship between Malaysia and the Netherlands at KLM's 65th anniversary celebration, His Excellency Jacques Werner, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Malaysia, said the two countries marked 65 years of diplomatic relations last year. The Netherlands is Malaysia's top five foreign investors while Malaysia is the second largest trading partner in the EU.



Werner also took the opportunity to congratulate the airline for supplying the much needed personal protection equipment to European hospitals, proving to be a lifeline during the Covid-19 pandemic, where many passengers from Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand were routed back to the Netherlands through Kuala Lumpur by the airline.

His Excellency Axel Cruau, the Ambassador of France to Malaysia, was also present at KLM's 65th anniversary celebration in Malaysia, where Estee Ng, Air France-KLM Country Manager for Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand took her guests on a video presentation on KLM, tracing its history from its early beginnings until the present day.

For more information, visit www.klm.com



Customer Experience at the Heart of Malaysia Airlines' Revamped Website

Having kickstarted the relaunch of its website in Malaysia on April 17, Malaysia Airlines will be progressively rolling out the improved overall user experience to 17 countries. Supporting 11 languages, the new website is powered by the Adobe Experience Cloud, which has been the staple marketing technology platform for the national carrier over the past decade.

It is collaborating with GrowthOps Asia, a marketing transformation solutions provider, to improve the customers' digital journey from the booking of their tickets to the online check-in on the day of their flight. Other improvements include personalised content with the most relevant topics and destinations based on the user's past activities such as completed bookings, destination search history and other website activities.

With its enhanced search functionality and user-friendly navigation interface, the responsive and fast loading website is optimised to be launched on any device. Embedded with Adobe Analytics capabilities, it will not only enable Malaysia Airlines' marketing team to review their customer experience data for better browsing experience but also track their marketing campaign's effectiveness.

Inspired by the concept, Windows of Hospitality, the revamped website also embeds inspirational images of

destinations combined with iconic Malaysian batik in the designs, thus reflecting the promise of experiencing Malaysian hospitality through travel.

“We are delighted that this critical piece of our digital transformation journey is now live for our customers to enjoy. One that is focused solely on improving the customer experience for travellers who are looking to explore the region and the world with our signature Malaysian Hospitality.”

CLARENCE LEE

Group Chief Digital and Technology Officer
Malaysia Aviation Group

Tng Boon Keong, Regional Head of Consulting of GrowthOps Asia remarked, “A traveller's journey begins the moment they start searching for a destination. Thus, we wanted to provide users of the website with a delightful, smooth and seamless experience in arranging one of the most integral aspects of a trip—their flights.”

For more information, visit www.malaysiaairlines.com



Emirates SkyCargo Doubling Its Capacity in the Next Decade

Emirates SkyCargo has added two Boeing 747-400Fs secured on long-term wet-lease to complement its existing fleet of 11 Boeing 777 freighters. They are being deployed to Chicago three times weekly and to Hong Kong nine times weekly.

With the medium to long-term projections for global air cargo showing an upward trajectory of between 3% and 5%, its Divisional Senior Vice President Nabil Sultan said given Dubai's strategy to double its foreign trade where multi-modal logistics will play a big role and the economic activities happening in markets around the Gulf, West Asia and Africa, the opportunities for Emirates SkyCargo are aplenty.

Reflecting its strong confidence in the global cargo market, Emirates cargo division is expecting 15 more freighters to join the fleet from its announced orders and freighter conversion programme.

Nabil quipped, “The two new B747-Fs which we have leased will give us immediate capacity while we wait for the delivery of five new B777Fs in 2024 and 2025 and 10 B777-300ERs to roll out of our conversion programme over the next five years.”

By then, he said Emirates SkyCargo will

have its MRO set-up to quickly and efficiently scale-up its freighter conversion programme. It will also be boosting its belly-hold capacity from new passenger aircraft deliveries, starting with Airbus A350s in the late summer of 2024 and followed by B777-Xs the next year.

Over the next decade, Emirates SkyCargo expects to double its existing capacity and add over 20 new destinations to its freighter network besides offering more flexibility and services with a fleet mix of over 300 wide-body aircraft.

Via its two state-of-the-art cargo terminals in Dubai, it transports cargo

to 150 destinations across six continents, offering transit times of three hours air-to-air.

The terminals have a total cargo capacity of around one million tonnes per year, with the ability to raise it to 1.3 million tonnes.

Emirates SkyCargo, which recently launched its brand-new creative advertising campaign, is investing to develop new products and to speed up its digitisation and technology innovation.

For more information, visit www.skycargo.com



Ethiopian Airlines Receives 20th A350-900 Powered by SAF

The recent delivery of the 20th Airbus A350-900 aircraft to Ethiopian Airlines represents another historical first for Africa's largest carrier as its first flight uses the 30% blend Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), thus demonstrating its commitment to realise a sustainable air transport industry.

Besides contributing to the net zero carbon emissions target by 2050 set by the International Air Transport Association, Air Transport Action Group and International Civil Aviation

Organisation, it also helps the airline to reduce its carbon footprint.

The aircraft also carried 10 tonnes of humanitarian shipment into Ethiopia on its April 28 flight as part of the airline's corporate social responsibility. Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mesfin Tasew quipped, “The A350-900 has proven to be instrumental in its fleet strategy, offering unrivalled operational flexibility and efficiency and best in class passenger comfort.”

With the new delivery, Ethiopian Airlines now operates 144 modern and environmentally friendly aircraft to more than 150 domestic and international passenger and cargo destinations across five continents.

They include Boeing 737s, 777s, 787s and Bombardier Dash 8-400 double cabin.

For more information, call 03-2148 9500 or visit www.ethiopianairlines.com



Uniquely Different Branding for Plaza Premium Group's Two New Airport Lounges

Plaza Premium Group's (PPG) two airport lounge brands - Plaza Premium First and Plaza Premium Lounge - housed under one roof at its new site at the Contact Pier of KL International Airport Terminal 1, have attracted a good mix of 60% business travellers and 40% leisure travellers or guests.

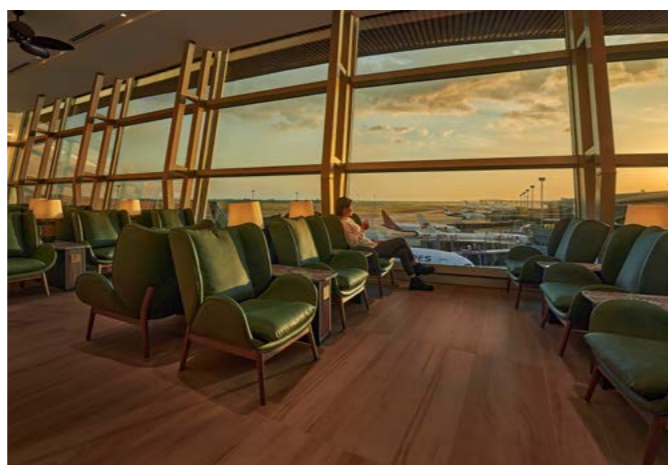
The guests are mainly admitted via airline invitations to Plaza Premium First while those gaining entry to Plaza Premium Lounge are from corporate or financial institution entitlements, PPG Area General Manager for Malaysia and Indonesia, Calvin Loh told Airlink.

"Plaza Premium First is accessible to passengers of specific airlines, those with elite status, premium cabin passengers or those willing to pay for access while Plaza Premium Lounge, available to a broader audience, can be accessed via various means, including through airline alliances, bank credit cards or by paying an admission fee."

Given PPG's 25 years' presence previously at the satellite building of KLIA, Loh said, "We have been working extra miles and using all communication channels to inform our guests about the relocation and will continue to do so until we reach full capacity."

While the two brands share some similarities, there are key differences between them, notwithstanding their many unique selling points. Concept wise, Plaza Premium First, positioned as an exclusive and luxurious airport lounge, offers enhanced services and amenities for its discerning travellers with its more sophisticated and elegant design plus separate zones for dining, relaxation, work and privacy.

Loh said Plaza Premium First's elevated experience ranged from fine dining options, tailor-made a la carte menus, premium alcoholic beverages, spa and wellness facilities, shower suites to personalised assistance. Its guests not only get a welcome drink alongside the full airport runway view at the dining or



private seating area but can also make reservation at the counter for complimentary 15 minutes head and shoulder massage treatment.

Meanwhile, Plaza Premium Lounge, catering to a wider range of travellers, provides amenities that include self-service food and beverage stations, complimentary Wi-Fi access, various seating options, designated quiet areas and three private rooms.

With sizes ranging from 37 to 53 sq m for event bookings, each room can hold 25 to 40 persons depending on the seating arrangement. Apart from being a media room for events, these private rooms also serve as dedicated meeting rooms for corporates as well as a holding room for VIPs from the local authorities, airlines and various organisations.

Overall, the two lounges' interior design focuses on a sense of place, showcasing culturally rich local elements. "Partnering with The Art People Gallery, we create an art and lounge concept, taking our guests on a journey through the exhibits and paintings that pay tribute to the Malaysian spirit," Loh quipped.

For more information, call 03-8876 0988 or visit plazapremiumlounge.com



Jetstar Asia Resumes Singapore-Haikou Route

Following Singapore-based Jetstar Asia's recent resumption of its four return services a week after a three-year hiatus due to the Covid-19 pandemic to Haikou, the popular port city and capital of China's Hainan Island, the low-cost carrier (LCC) is expected to carry up to 70,000 travellers each year between the two cities using the Airbus A320 aircraft.

Before the pandemic, the airline operated more than 80 weekly services to six destinations in Greater China, namely Haikou, Shantou, Sanya, Xuzhou, Guiyang and Taipei.

Its Chief Executive Officer Barathan Pasupathi viewed Jetstar Asia's return of its Singapore-Haikou service on April 29 as a significant milestone as the airline cashed in China's Golden Week Labour Day long weekend.

"Haikou was the first Chinese city Jetstar Asia flew to in 2009 and today, Hainan Island is one of the few Chinese destinations where most visitors can stay for up to 30 days without a visa. We are seeing strong demand for this service and our timing could not be better with the Chinese authorities lifting PCR testing, making it easier for travellers to visit this incredible city, which is great news for our customers as well as tourism stakeholders and hospitality businesses," he added.

Xie Jinhua, General Manager of Hainan Dahua Tourism Service Company, which is the airline's travel partner in China, said: "Jetstar Asia is known for its competitive fares, record for safety and reliability,"

pointing out that travellers from Hainan are also interested to visit Southeast Asia (SEA) as their holiday destination.

It has been wonderful to hear so many heartfelt stories from the Hainanese-dialect community in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia about their desire to be reunited with their families and friends. For our customers from China, they will not only enjoy direct flights to Singapore, the Garden City but also seamless connectivity to our expanding network of incredible Southeast Asian countries.

XU HAIBING
Regional General Manager of
Jetstar Asia

They include Bali (Denpasar), Bangkok, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Phnom Penh and Surabaya.

Jetstar Asia currently operates more than 200 weekly return flights to 11 key destinations in Asia Pacific. It is part of the Jetstar Group, which is listed in Airline Ratings' 2022 World's Top 10 LCC earning recognition for its flight safety records and services.

For more information, visit www.jetstar.com

UPCLOSE WITH DATUK BERNARD FRANCIS

Aviation Group Chief Executive Officer of PT TransNusa Aviation Mandiri



Aviation industry veteran Datuk Bernard Francis, who hails from Sitiawan, Perak has been with Indonesia's TransNusa as its Aviation Group Chief Executive Officer since October 2019. He turns 54 this year and brings with him nearly 23 years of experience having worked with various airlines of different countries, including Philippines.

His previous responsibilities covering sales and distribution, marketing, revenue management, communications and events, branding, route development, network planning and ancillary revenue have certainly stood him in good stead.

Tell us how it has been like working in a foreign country and now helming one of Indonesia's airlines?

Actually, my first experience working overseas was in Indonesia about two decades ago. If I were to describe my working experiences abroad in one word, it would have to be "enriching". It has been an exciting journey for me working in different environments, cultures and having to abide by the rules and regulations of these different countries.

These priceless experiences have given me a more in-depth understanding of the aviation industry and how specific short- and long-term variables in each country impact the industry.

How have your previous job experiences of working in both premier airlines and low-cost carriers (LCCs) shaped you to manage your current responsibilities?

My past experiences have made me the person I am today where I have learnt to reinvent myself. The continuous agility to reinvent is the key to succeed in this industry. Certain industry practices and regulations cannot be changed but if you strive to re-invent oneself then you will find a winning strategy to succeed.

When was TransNusa officially relaunched from a regional carrier to a LCC?

TransNusa relaunched its operations as a LCC in 2022 after ceasing operations in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Since then, we have developed and relaunched old routes as well as introduced new routes. We have also ventured outside of Indonesia to launch our first international flight on April 14 to Kuala Lumpur.

What strategies have you mapped out for TransNusa?

Owing to the pandemic, our passengers' needs have changed. They want more comfort and require more attention for their hassle-free and no-delay flight journey. Our overall strategy is to give them what they want. Hence, the launch of our premium services for international flights, which sit in the space between full-fledged and LCC products.

As such, we are offering among other things free baggage of between 15kg and 30kg, excluding hand-carry of up to 7kg, that is similar to a full-fledged airline. We aim to provide our passengers with high levels of comfort and peace of mind both on and off the flights so that they can enjoy the smoothest and most efficient journey possible.

Since the launch of TransNusa's first international Jakarta-KL service, how is it performing and what segment does it serve?

On average, TransNusa has captured a 75% load factor for this sector. Based on our data, we currently serve the leisure market

How are your plans to have a direct flight from Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport to Jakarta by the end of the year working out

For the time being, Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport is not open for international flights but as soon as the opportunity presents itself, we will

definitely be exploring it as this is a prospect we are looking forward to.

You mentioned about TransNusa launching flights to Johor Bahru and other international destinations later this year. What is its timeline?

Since our announcement in April, other airlines have increased the number of flights from Johor, which resulted in overcapacity. As such, we will probably reconsider and move the flight plan from Johor Bahru to Jakarta to a later stage. As for our new international routes, we will kickstart with destinations in China towards the third quarter.

The competition among LCCs is heating up post-pandemic. TransNusa is not only the first LCC offering premium services. How does it distinguish itself from its competitors?

In Indonesia, TransNusa is an LCC but in the international market, we are a premium service airline offering products and services that are comparable to that of a full-fledged airline.

For instance, our legroom is similar to a full-fledged airline. Transnusa passengers are thus able to enjoy 30 to 31 inches of space as we have configured our fleet of Airbus A320s with a 168 to 174 seat configuration. We offer unlimited flight changes and are one of the few airlines in the world to offer refunds.

In Indonesia, how many domestic destinations does TransNusa fly to?

Since its relaunch, TransNusa has started flights to Denpasar Bali, Manado, Jakarta and Yogyakarta. Currently, TransNusa flies from Jakarta to Bali 10 times daily and three times a day from Jakarta to Yogyakarta.

What is its fleet size?

TransNusa will have six aircraft in its fleet by June. We plan to add another two more aircraft to our fleet by the

end of 2023. As we increase our domestic and international routes, we will further expand our fleet.

What is TransNusa's staff strength? With manpower shortage affecting the aviation industry, where do you source for your staff and what are the qualities you look for?

We currently have 250 employees, who keep our airline running. They are the backbone of our company. As a result of the pandemic, many aviation industry professionals have been unemployed worldwide.

As such, we have had the opportunity to employ the best local talents. Focused on absorbing outstanding Indonesian professionals, we look for those with innovative thinking and are not afraid to challenge the norm.

TransNusa is the first foreign operator of the COMAC ARJ21. Where do you plan to use this aircraft and how do you deal with the stigma that aircraft made in China are not up to par?

Data is imperative in eliminating stigmas. Currently, there are more than 100 COMAC ARJ21s operating in China, which have carried more than five million passengers.

The Civil Aviation Administration China has taken many precautions to ensure the safety mechanisms and features of this aircraft are of high standards that they rival that of Western aircraft manufacturers.

Furthermore, feedback on the COMAC ARJ21 performance in April has been positive and passengers are enjoying the experience onboard. This is good news for COMAC, which is well on its way to remove the negative stigma on Chinese airline manufacturers.

What are your hobbies?

I love sports and recently ran the Singapore Sundown Half Marathon. Last October, I participated in the Jakarta Marathon. I also enjoy reading and listening to music in my free time.



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