

AIRLINK

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**A Monthly Publication of
MALAYSIA AIRPORTS © Aviation
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In exploring the various issues and trends shaping the aviation industry in Asia at the recent Centre of Aviation (CAPA) Asia Aviation Summit and Sustainability for Excellence Awards 2023 Malaysia not only took the opportunity to share how it has fared since international borders reopened after the COVID-19 pandemic but also provided updates on its sustainability initiatives.

Transport Minister Loke Siew Fook, in his welcome address, said following the full reopening of international borders, international passenger traffic has grown at an average of 80.9% quarter-on-quarter.

"The approved international Air Traffic Rights also saw a year-on-year increase of 246.1%, underscoring the steady revival of the international market."

Looking at the latest statistics from Malaysia Airports, the airport operator's group's operational performance in terms of air traffic movements in October 2023 showed a promising trajectory for the aviation industry's continued recovery.

As of year-to-date, the group registered 98.9 million total passenger movements, representing 84.7% of pre-pandemic levels in 2019.

The increase in its international passenger movements in October was supported by new services from KL International Airport to Zhangjiajie in China by Batik Air Malaysia; Kertajati, Indonesia by Malaysia Airlines; and Padang, Indonesia by Super Air Jet.

Penang International Airport also welcomed Qatar Airways' daily resumption of its Doha-Phuket-Penang route and Thai Airways' new daily services from Bangkok. These additions are a testament to the resurgence of travel tourism in the region, with Malaysia expecting a full recovery of its passenger traffic by 2024.

Loke stressed, "Our vision for the Malaysia aviation sector is deeply rooted in sustainability." As outlined in the National Transport Policy 2019-2030, the emphasis is on the efficient and sustainable use of resources while minimising environmental pollution.

Supplementing this vision is Malaysia's National Energy Transition Roadmap, released in August, which addressed the need for clarity and guidance in the decarbonisation of the aviation sector. Loke said his ministry is currently developing an aviation decarbonisation roadmap where collaboration with the aviation industry will be crucial.

The minister applauded Malaysia Airports, the host for this CAPA regional summit, for being at the forefront of sustainable practices. Besides achieving the renewal of the Level 3 Airport Carbon Accreditation by Airports Council International (ACI), which Malaysia Airports has participated in since 2016, the airport operator is also into solar power production at multiple airports.

The Group's passenger load factor (PLF) at 88.8% was also the highest half-yearly PLF ever posted with SIA and Scoot recording PLFs of 88% and 91.3% respectively.

Tan Sri Datuk Zainun Ali, Chairman of Malaysia Airports said these initiatives were undertaken to reduce carbon footprint and improve the efficiency of its operations. "Collectively, the total solar energy generated in 2022 reached 19,122 megawatt hours, saving the group almost RM1.5 million in energy costs."

She added, "Despite a substantial increase in business activity across all our airports, we have successfully curtailed the growth in energy usage. Even with increased passenger volume, we have maintained sustainable energy practices, with energy usage only expanding by 20% against passenger growth of 391% over a year."

Malaysia Airport's roadmap to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 is in line with the 12th Malaysia Plan, ACI and the Paris Agreement targets. With the group's journey going beyond passenger volumes and profit margins, she pointed out, "It is about responsible growth, sustainability and leaving a legacy that endures for generations.

Bringing sustainability practices into events, she said, "We have obtained Renewable Energy Certificates to offset all of the energy used throughout of this (CAPA) summit, with energy from Renewable Energy sources.

Additionally, instead of distributing door gifts, Malaysia Airports collaborated with the Hijau Malaysia Foundation to plant 350 red mangrove trees at the Paya Bakau Recreation Park in Sijangkang, Selangor to honour the delegates attending the CAPA event held at Sama-Sama Hotel KLIA. Each delegate also received an e-certificate symbolising their shared commitment to sustainability.

Fruitful Industry Insights

The one-and-a-half day CAPA Asia Aviation Summit held at Sama-Sama Hotel KLIA from November 2 to 3 saw industry leaders from Malaysian carriers providing insights on their latest developments.

Among them at the panel discussion on CAPA Think Tank: A Meeting of Minds, Benjamin Ismail, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of AirAsia X shared the airline started from

a very low base last year with three or four aircraft. "Operating now with 16 aircraft, we would probably have 18 or 19 aircraft by March 2024."

Despite the Asia Pacific market's slower start compared to the other regions, the airlines in Malaysia tried to fill in the gaps as much as they could. As for AirAsia X, he said its 82% load factor came close to pre-COVID level while on the yield side, it was 84% higher compared to pre-COVID level.

Moving into the fourth quarter, although straddled by fuel prices and a weak Ringgit against the US dollar, he remarked, "We try to be sustainable. The good side is demand is back," highlighting that the no-frills low-cost carrier's (LCC) business model is purely 95% leisure. For the remaining 5%, it caters to short-haul business destinations such as Bangkok, Hong Kong and Jakarta.

Benjamin said the first market the LCC opened up to was India, whose arrivals have been very big, pointing out that AirAsia Malaysia and AirAsia X fly to a total of eight destinations from Kuala Lumpur to this key market.

For the more mature routes such as Shanghai and Beijing in China, they comprised frequent independent travellers who purchase online. "We have not seen signs of group travel yet from the Chinese tourists," he added.

Following Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's announcement on November 26 to allow citizens from China and India 30-day visa-free entry to Malaysia from December 1 2023, AirAsia Malaysia and its LLC affiliate Air Asia X will not be alone in planning for significant flight increases to both countries early next year.

The government's decision follows China's trial of visa-free travel for up to 15 days from December 2023 through November 30 2024 to citizens from Malaysia, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands.

Both the Airline Leader Interview sessions with Datuk Captain Izham Ismail, Group Managing Director of Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG) and Riad Asmat, AirAsia Berhad CEO proved to be equally interesting.



For MAG, which recently flew in its first Boeing 737-8 MAX, it has set its sights for Malaysia Airlines to be the Most Improved Airline by 2025 and join the Top 10 Best Global Airlines in Skytrax World Airlines Award by 2030.



Xiamen Airlines Strengthens Partnership with Qatar Airways

China's Xiamen Airlines' debut of its twice-weekly non-stop flights to Doha, Qatar on October 31, 2023 has not only bridged the Fujian Province to the Middle East but also to Qatar Airways' other networks in Africa and Europe.

The strategic codeshare partnership between the airlines was further strengthened as Xiamen Airlines launched its Beijing-Doha daily flights earlier on October 20.

The launch of these direct flights using the airline's widebody Boeing-787 Dreamliner variant becomes all the more significant as the two countries celebrate the 35th anniversary of their bilateral diplomatic relations and the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative.

A broader Air Silk Road is expected to be developed, promoting economic and trade cooperation as well as strengthening cultural exchanges between them.

With cooperation in areas of network intermodal transportation, intermodal check-in and direct baggage handling, passengers enjoy the convenience of using one ticket, including one-time security check, passenger check-in and baggage check-in.

For more information, visit www.xiamenair.com



Doha



Singapore Airlines Group Posts Record Half-Year Results

Continued robust air travel demand into the northern summer travel season, led by the rebound in passenger traffic to North Asia with the full reopening of China, Hong Kong, Japan and Taiwan, has resulted in record operating and net profits of \$S\$1,554 million and \$S\$1,441 million for the Singapore Airlines (SIA) Group on higher revenue of \$S\$9,162 million for its half-year ended September 30 2023.

SIA and its low-cost subsidiary Scoot carried 17.4 million passengers for the period under review, up 52.3% year-on-year with the former serving 75 destinations and Scoot 67.

The Group's passenger load factor (PLF) at 88.8% was also the highest half-yearly PLF ever posted with SIA and Scoot recording PLFs of 88% and 91.3% respectively.

In terms of its network expansion for the China market, SIA's reintroduction of its services to Chongqing in November 2023 will be followed by Chengdu in December and Xiamen no later than January 2024.

The airline has started operating to Shenzhen in lieu of Scoot with the reinstatement of its full-service flights. SIA has also increased its frequencies to Guangzhou from daily to double daily since November.

Together with Scoot's flight resumption to Kunming and

Changsha in November, SIA and Scoot serve 23 destinations in China as at September 30 2023 compared to 25 points pre-COVID-19 pandemic.

To cater to the year-end peak holiday period, Scoot will deploy supplementary services to Hong Kong, Melbourne and Sydney from December 2023 to February 2024 while SIA has started operating supplementary services to Adelaide, Brisbane, Christchurch, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney from November 22.

For the northern winter operating season commencing 29 October 2023 to 30 March 2024, SIA has earlier announced that the airline is increasing its frequencies to Hong Kong; Fukuoka, Haneda, Nagoya and Osaka in Japan as well as Bangkok and Phuket in Thailand.

From 31 January 2024, additional frequencies will be mounted to Frankfurt until the end of the season.

With the progressive ramp-up of its services across its network, the SIA Group expects its average capacity to reach around 92% of pre-pandemic levels this month and return to pre-pandemic capacity within its next financial year 2024/2025.

For more information, visit www.singaporeair.com and www.flyscoot.com



Malaysia Airlines Elevates Onboard Dining Experience

Following Malaysia Airlines' commitment to fully restore its inflight service offerings, including beverages, hot and special meals complete with dining ware, the airline has been rolling out enhanced meal offerings and refreshed menus across its various sectors.

Besides improving its meal variety from local Malaysian favourites to destination-specials on its London and Incheon routes, the national carrier is extending from December its menu refresh for its Chef on Call services on selected sectors.

They include introducing its Best of ASEAN dishes, enhancing the vegetarian meals via its collaboration with international vegetarian chain, Annalakshmi, offering Illy premium Italian coffee as an extra option for its Business Class passengers and exclusive Cool Treats ice cream on selected regional and domestic sectors.

The airline's catering transition, effective since September after its contract with supplier, Brahim's Food Services, terminated at end-August, is now handled by its MAG Catering Operations (MCAT).

Complying with safety standards set by the Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia and local health authorities, its MCAT facility manages the assembly of food and beverage items and uplift the meals onboard using its fleet of 24 hi-lifts.

Also critical in upholding the airline's food quality and safety standards are the facility's six freezers, two chillers and two ware wash machines.

Datuk Captain Izham Ismail, Group Managing Director of Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG) said Malaysia Airlines serves an average of 18,000 meals daily for its flights coming out from Kuala Lumpur.

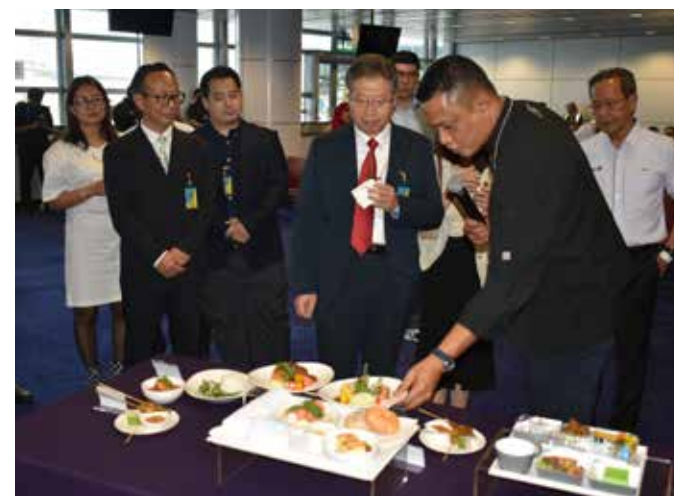
The airline partners with nine third-party suppliers,

namely MAS Awana Sdn Bhd, Sajian Ambang Sdn Bhd, Syed Food Industry Sdn Bhd, QL Kitchen Sdn Bhd, Fantastic Food Factory Sdn Bhd, AlQina Cuisine, Cosmic Culinary Food Solution, Koperasi Petronas and Wanmalinja Food Industries Sdn Bhd.

He added, "MAS Awana is 60% owned by us while Wanmalinja specifically provides satay. Combined with the international stations, the airline handles about 40,000 meals daily.

"As a global airline, Malaysia Airlines sets high standards for our product offerings and services onboard, being the embassy on wings for the country and the champion for Malaysian Hospitality.

"We will continue to strengthen our core proposition as a premium airline, with a commitment to elevate the onboard dining experience by providing more options, curated offerings and variety for all our guests."



For more information, visit www.malaysiaairlines.com



Batik Air Malaysia Extends Its Global Reach

Aligned with Batik Air Malaysia's commitment to offer diverse and exciting travel experiences to passengers, its latest network expansion on 8 December 2023 will witness the launch of direct twice-weekly flights from Kuala Lumpur (KUL) Tashkent (TAS) in Uzbekistan, the Land of the Great Silk Road.

Using KUL as a hub, travellers from TAS can not only visit Malaysia but also enjoy the connectivity offered by the fast-expanding network of Lion Group within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Indian subcontinent, Australia, New Zealand and Saudi Arabia in which Batik Air Malaysia is a member airline.

Using the modern wide body Airbus A330 aircraft, Batik Air Malaysia will also be launching direct, four-time weekly seasonal flights from KUL to Melbourne (MEL) this December 20 up to February 6 2024 to cater to the rising travel demand to Australia during the coming peak holiday and travel season.

This culturally rich and sports-loving Australian capital city offers abundant entertainment options delectable cuisine, thriving theatre scene besides being as a popular destination for visiting friends and relatives.

Batik Air Malaysia also provides direct flights connecting KUL to Adelaide and Perth (PER). It also serves MEL, Sydney, Brisbane and PER via Denpasar apart from operating from KUL to Auckland, New Zealand via PER.

Additionally, the airline is debuting a new four-times weekly service starting February 9 2024 via Turkiye's Istanbul Sabiha Gokcen International Airport (SAW) to further expand its global presence. Datuk Chandran Rama Muthy, Group Strategy Director of Batik Air Malaysia expects this route to foster stronger bonds between Malaysia and Turkiye, enhancing both cultural and economic ties.

Recently, the airline launched its second route to the Middle East, KUL to Dubai (DXB), which was instrumental in expanding its footprint from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Pacific markets.

"From an abundance of family-friendly entertainment options to immersive cultural experiences in historic neighbourhoods and vibrant souks, DXB offers something for everyone. Plus, the pleasant climate from November to March enhances the overall experience," he added

The airline jointly held a welcome reception with Malaysia Airports and Tourism Malaysia for arriving passengers from DXB on its maiden flight on November 10.



Dato' Dr Ammar Abd Ghapar, Director General of Tourism Malaysia said the new route will increase seating capacity and further boost the growth of traffic flow via KL International Airport (KLIA), thus accelerating Malaysia's tourism recovery.

For more information, visit www.batikair.com.my



Riyadh Air and Saudia's Strategic Tie-Up in Saudi Arabia's Aviation Ecosystem

Saudi Arabia's new world-class Riyadh Air wholly-owned by the Public Investment Fund has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Saudia as part of an expansive agreement that includes a codeshare flight.

The MoU is the first major agreement between the two national flag carriers of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Signifying a major milestone in its country's aviation ecosystem, this strategic collaboration will allow passengers to seamlessly connect between sectors operated by the two airlines and take full advantage of each other's worldwide network through the interline and codeshare agreement.

Members of the respective carrier's loyalty programme will also be able to earn points or credits when travelling on the codeshare services as well as receive elite benefits across both carriers' global networks.

Additionally, the two parties will be working together to implement broader synergies and efficiencies across the value chain in areas such as commercial, digital development, aviation support services and cargo/logistics.

This strategic agreement also aims to optimise routes and resources to ultimately provide passengers with a broader range of destinations and services.

Describing this as 'a historic moment', Captain Ibrahim Koshi of Saudia Chief Executive Officer (CEO) said the

two airlines will be supporting the national aviation strategy and the country's tourism objectives. "Saudia and Riyadh Air will positively disrupt the industry as a whole."

Tony Douglas, CEO of Riyadh Air said, "The MoU signing of this strategic collaboration shows a solid statement of intent from both airlines," adding that this is the best way to accelerate and manage tourism growth within Saudi Arabia.

At Riyadh Air's debut at the recent Dubai Air Show, the airline unveiled the second of its permanent dualivery designs via a digital launch, showcasing its indigo theme with striking lines inspired by the twisting canopies of traditional tents and elegant curves of Arabic calligraphy.

"We are confident that Riyadh Air will raise the bar in air travel and working in cooperation with Saudia will help us achieve this as we prepare for take-off in 2025."

TONY DOUGLAS
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
of Riyadh Air

For more information, visit www.riyadhair.com

Patrons of Mitsui Outlet Park KLIA Sepang's (MOP KLIA) will be amazed to witness the transformation of Sunshine Square into a mesmerising Santa Wonderland for its grand year-end festivities.

With Mitsui Shopping Park MY App available on Google Play and App Store, shoppers who spend a minimum of RM300 can enjoy a variety of activities in Santa Wonderland such as Make a Wish with Santa, crafting Letters to Loved Ones and capturing cherished memories at Santa photobooth. Those who complete all activities will receive a Christmas goodie box filled with festive treasures.

TJ Cheah, Deputy Managing Director of MFMA Development, a joint venture company between Mitsui Fudosan Co Ltd and Malaysia Airports, said, "This year, shoppers get to play Santa by spreading cheer and granting wishes of children from Rumah Hope. By selecting a wish card from the gazebo, they can make a child's dream come true."

Throughout December weekends, MOP KLIA hosts performances such as Santa Parade, dances by Santa and

SKS Airways is on the lookout for strategic investors for its phase two growth, where it plans to have an additional 20 aircraft on top of its earlier commitment for 10 Embraer E195-E2. These additional aircraft will play a crucial role in its continued growth when Malaysia Airports' Subang Airport Regeneration Plan is completed, it said in a statement.

Operating two 19-seater DHC-6-300 Twin Otter turboprops to Tioman and Redang islands last year out of Subang Airport, the airline said it had experienced low take-up rate during the monsoon season. "This year, we have decided to cancel all flights during the monsoon season for safety and commercial reasons."

On the 10 Embraer jets, SKS Airways said initial payments to secure them have been fully remitted to the lessor, Azorra Aviation Holdings, LLC of the United States with subsequent payments due upon their delivery.

Following the delay delivery of the Embraer due to supply chain constraints from the aircraft manufacturer, which



Santa Wonderland at Mitsui Outlet Park KLIA Sepang

Santarina, an LED dance performance, mascot appearances, musicals and carolling. Shoppers can also participate in workshops on creating festive ornaments and decorations.

A special sale will be held from December 15 to 17 which provides instant cashback rewards to shoppers. MOP KLIA is also providing free parking for two hours for its app users with a minimum RM20 spend and above in a single receipt until March 31, 2024. Redemption can be made at the Information Counter located at Sunshine Square.

Free shuttle bus pick-up to MOP KLIA is available at KL International Airport Terminal 1 at Level 1, Door 2 while at Terminal 2, the pick-up location is at Level 1 of the car park bay at B9 and B10.

For more information, visit www.mitsui-shopping-park.com.my



SKS Airways Seeks Investors for Next Phase of Growth

was conveyed by the lessor in late September 2023, the airline is targeting for the first delivery by the second quarter of 2024 instead of January and coordinating closely with the lessor and the original equipment manufacturers involved such as Embraer, Pratt & Whitney, Viasat and others.

Meanwhile, SKS Airways said its newly renovated hangar at Subang Airport, officiated by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah on November 21 2023, has ample storage space for aircraft spare parts, tools and equipment.

Measuring close to 46,000 sq ft, the new facility also has space for office use. The airline is now helmed by Dato' Rohman Ahmad, its Executive Director and Accountable Manager.

For more information, visit www.sksairways.com



Eraman to Transform Duty Free Offerings at KLIA's Contact Pier Next Year

Malaysia Airports (Niaga) Sdn Bhd, better known by its marketing brand name Eraman, is conducting extensive renovation at the Contact Pier of KL International Airport (KLIA) Terminal 1, which will transform the entire commercial aspect and provide its duty-free offerings with a fresh, modern look.

To be executed in multiple phases, the renovation is expected to be completed by the fourth quarter of 2024. Besides enhancing Eraman's brand image as a leading player in the duty-free industry, it is aligned with Malaysia Airports Group's Commercial Reset strategy to elevate the commercial profile of its international airports by creating a sense of place and introducing a refreshing mix of new tenants.

"Eraman has turned the corner since last year", Mohamed Rastam Shahrom, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer of Malaysia Airports said at the grand launch of two flagship Duty Free Emporiums of its wholly-owned subsidiary sited at the Satellite Building of KLIA Terminal 1 on November 22 2023.

Eraman plays a crucial role in Malaysia Airports' non-aeronautical segment, contributing RM262.4 million to the group's total revenue of RM3.127 billion for the financial year ended December 31, 2022.

The premier airport duty-free and travel retail operator has over 40 retail as well as food and beverage outlets at the group's International airports in Kuala Lumpur, Kuching, Kota Kinabalu, Penang and Langkawi.

Malaysia Airports (Niaga) General Manager, Md Fadzwin Abdul Rahim said, "Eraman consistently enhances our airports' and country's image by fostering joyful connections," reiterating that the reopening of its two Duty Free Emporiums earlier this year reflected Eraman's commitment to strive for excellence and innovation, which is vital for the group's sustainability.

"Offering 1,074 sq m of retail space, they represent a significant step forward in creating next-generation shopping experiences in the global duty-free and travel retail market.

"Elevating the shopping experience, we have incorporated innovative interactive screens throughout the Emporiums, providing information about our products and exclusive promotions."

Additionally, Eraman is the first travel retail operator to introduce self-checkout counters in KLIA. Customers can also scan to play an Augmented Reality game at its Emporium for an interactive shopping experience and stand a chance to win a mystery gift.

At its Food Garden on level two of KLIA's Main Terminal Building, customers can take part in the Eat and Win Contest, which runs until April 30, 2024. The contest is part of Eraman's 30th anniversary celebration and offers fantastic prizes, with the Ducati Superbike as the grand prize.

For more information, visit www.eramanmalaysia.com.my



Captivating Qatar Airways Garden at EXPO 2023 Pavilion

Qatar Airways Garden, reflecting the grandeur of Versailles Gardens with a contemporary Qatari touch is a botanical wonderland at Expo 2023 Doha, where it is the official airline and strategic partner.

Its design at the six-month long expo, concluding at the end of March 2024, captures the iconic landmarks across the continents that the airline connects to. Besides emphasising Qatar's pivotal role as a global hub, the garden also embodies the spirit of diversity, sustainability and cultural celebration.

A giant yellow teddy bear, an iconic reference to the award-winning Lamp Bear at Hamad International Airport (HIA), greets visitors at the pavilion's focal point. Another notable highlight is its augmented QVerse platform, which seamlessly integrates digital innovation into the botanical experience.

Launched in April 2022, QVerse provides an immersive digital exploration of Qatar Airways' luxurious interiors. Guided by the airline's MetaHuman cabin crew member, Sama, which means sky in Arabic, visitors can virtually embark on a journey through its first-class check-in counters, premium lounges as well as business and economy class cabins.

A standout feature of the garden is its stunning overhead maze, delighting visitors with unique artistic and experiential moments. Ensuring a holistic experience, Qatar Airways has also introduced an enriched inflight experience where they can expect curated beverages and an exclusive à la carte menu from Evergreen Organics, which spotlights Qatari farm-sourced ingredients.

Additionally, a dedicated expo-themed channel

offering over 30 gardening-related shows can be viewed here.

At the recent Dubai Airshow, the Gulfstream G650ER from its Qatar Executive fleet together with its long-range Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner and Airbus A350-1000 aircraft for a reimagined passenger experience were on display.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, Engr Badr Mohammed Al-Meer said, "With 15 Gulfstream G650ER in its fleet, Qatar Executive has become the world's largest owner and single commercial operator of the aircraft type."

For its first-half financial performance for 2023/2024, the group posted a strong net profit of US\$ 1.026 billion and revenue totalling US\$ 11.019 billion. With the majority of the airline's Airbus A350 fleet now back in service, it has recorded an 18% increase available seat kilometres compared to the same period last year.

Qatar Airways' total passenger count for the first six months ended September 2023 rose 22.5% to 19.078 million. A key component of the airline's success can be attributed to its innovative partnerships with oneworld and other global strategic alliances in Australasia, Europe and China.

Fleet expansion and loyalty programmes are also pivotal to its growth with the group having ordered around 150 aircraft to meet rising passenger and freighter traffic. Additionally, operational efficiencies, innovation programmes and staff development are other contributing factors to its strong results.

For more information, visit www.qatarairways.com

UPCLOSE WITH TS SHAMSUL KAMAR ABU SAMAH

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of National Aerospace Industry Corporation Malaysia



What is the difference between NAICO Malaysia and NAICO as both share the same acronym?

While NAICO Malaysia remains an agency of the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry (MITI) dedicated to bolster the local aerospace ecosystem, we are keen to further expand and propel it to the next level of excellence and gain more global prominence.

Endorsed by the Cabinet on October 18 2022, NAICO Malaysia has made its home at the MATRADE Tower after starting operations on April 1, 2023. We have maintained the acronym as it is an established name that has earned worldwide recognition from Japan, France, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US).

Has NAICO Malaysia's responsibilities been enlarged as a result?

As a coordinating office previously, NAICO operates based on specific scope that limits our engagements with external parties which include establishing of any memorandum of understandings (MoUs). Under NAICO Malaysia, to date we have signed more than 10 MoUs with various organisations, including learning institutions to advance the industry.

Among them are the MoUs signed at Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (LIMA) 2023 with Technological Association Malaysia and Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia to develop aerospace professionals as well as technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

At the 6th edition of the Malaysia Aerospace Summit 2023 (MyAero'23) themed 'Bridging Digital Frontiers for Sustainable Skies' organised by us from November 15-16, we also had MoU exchanges with Aerospace Malaysia Innovation Centre, Terengganu Incorporated Sdn Bhd, The Institution of Engineers Malaysia, NanoMalaysia Berhad, MIT Academy Sdn Bhd and MiraKama Sdn Bhd, whom we are in talks in regards of strategic cooperation for specific areas such as research and technology (R&T), competency and industry development. The aim is to spur the growth of Malaysia's aerospace industry and to be able to compete with other countries, particularly in Southeast Asia.

In addition, we are focusing on aerospace clusters development in an effort to prepare Malaysia as the preferred hub for aerospace business. To achieve this ambition, we sealed MoUs with Invest Selangor Berhad and NS Corporation (M) Sdn Bhd on aerospace development initiative in Selangor and Negeri Sembilan respectively.

What are some highlights of NAICO Malaysia's activities this year?

NAICO Malaysia organised with Boeing an aerospace

From Head of National Aerospace Industry Coordinating Office (NAICO) to his current position as NAICO Malaysia CEO in a matter of seven years after his appointment in April 2023, Shamsul Kamar has been pivotal in driving growth within the aerospace industry via collaborations and knowledge-sharing with both the government and industry players.

The recently announced New Industrial Master Plan 2030 (NIMP 2030), complementing the Malaysian Aerospace Industry Blueprint 2030, is set to transform Malaysia into a global hub for aerospace manufacturing and services.

The 49-year-old professional technologist and founding member of NAICO Malaysia now helms a much bigger team compared to four staff before. Considering himself a second-generation leader in his field of expertise, he is committed to grooming the next generation of young talents beyond being just technocrats and engineering aerospace professionals.

He would also like to see them equipped with the competencies such as dealing with international business matters and become a technologist like himself.

supply chain forum on October 10. This is the first time Boeing, a global aerospace original equipment manufacturer (OEM) carried out such a programme in Malaysia. Prior to this event, we lead a few aerospace players for an international mission to Japan in collaboration with Japan's Ministry of Economics, Trade and Industry as it is also in conjunction with Aeromart Nagoya.

We had technical visits to a few Japan companies and universities with the possibility for further potential collaborations. With aerospace being one of the key sectors identified in the NIMP 2030, we are looking at bringing in more high-value and technology investment into Malaysia.

Tell us more about the Malaysia Aerospace Centre of Excellence (MyAERO Centre) launched during LIMA 2023 to drive the development of a sustainable aerospace ecosystem in the country.

Its three focus areas are supply chain, competency development as well as R & T. Besides engineering and design, other labs that MyAERO Centre will look into are robotics and automation, digital technology and advanced manufacturing. We can also provide industry facilitation to investors and consultancy services to local players who wish to expand their aerospace business. In tandem with the development of new technology, including new processes, part of it involves talent development as well besides bringing in maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) to support the aircraft industry, where we are looking at more than 4,000 new aircraft in the next 15 years not only for Malaysia but also for the region.

We are currently supplying not only specialised parts but also initiating specialised engineering activities. Providing continuous supply is key besides investing in industry-led programmes. That is where MyAERO Centre plays a key role.

The recent MyAERO'23 saw us promoting local digital providers and their homegrown processes. I do not want to see in our industry disruptions in operations and supplies. If we have a hybrid solution, we can continue to operate with minimum presence in our work. That is why we promote robotics.

How big is your new team? Is it sufficient to meet NAICO Malaysia's present needs?

My current team comprises 12 members, of which five are engineers, including myself apart from three international business experts. The team is female dominated as we have only five male staff. We are looking at a maximum of 17 staff with vacancies to be met by the first quarter of 2024.

We plan is to bring in more interns and to further expand our manpower, experts from the industry and academia, especially technical training organisations, can be seconded to NAICO Malaysia as part of our project team. It will be a win-win for all parties and we could start with those that we have signed MoUs with.

We have one division looking into industry development activities, including business development for the long-term sustainability of the aerospace industry while another explores strategic plans and possible growth. Working hand-in-hand, both divisions focus on the technical aspects and commercial value of the projects.

Considering yourself as the second generation in the aerospace community who is actively involved in developing the third generation, what do you hope to achieve and impart to them?

At NAICO Malaysia, we aim to position Malaysia to be the top talent supplier in Southeast Asia, producing technical expertise combined with abilities to do trade facilitation and more. With our human capital marketable worldwide, they can work throughout Europe, Japan, the UK and the US.

TVET is a key support element in our industry, accounting for 75% while engineering makes up the rest. We supply not only specialised parts but also organise specialised engineering activities for the industry. In fact, NAICO Malaysia has been endorsed by the Department of Skills Development under the Ministry of Human Resources as the Industry Lead Body for aerospace industry to conduct activities relevant to TVET. The Malaysia Board of Technologists acknowledged us as Technical Expert Panel for aerospace and aviation technology and we aspire to promote Continuous Professional Development within the industry.

I even challenged my team to be recognised as professional technologists and business management experts. I also believe in instilling trust and professionalism in the young ones as these qualities are key to their success.

You intend to bring the aerospace industry to the next level. What would that entail?

We are trying to move to the next level in terms of technological advancements with plans to establish an engineering and design centre by the second quarter of 2024 and be able to use our first lab to promote homegrown products such as drones.

We would like to encourage the digital adaptation of advanced and green technology besides the use of satellites. We also hope to localise as much as we can the production of parts and components for the global OEMs. Additionally, the challenge for us is to keep up the momentum with our competitors such as Singapore and the UK by having highly qualified manpower.

You mentioned recently that the aerospace industry is on track to achieve RM18 billion in revenue for 2023. However, you are cautiously optimistic about 2024 outlook for the industry. Would you care to explain why?

Given the potential of new contracts worth RM 5.7 billion secured by the local supply chain, we expect this year to return to pre-pandemic levels. However, with this highly regulative and fast-moving industry anticipated to move in a different phase altogether and bearing in mind the safe delivery, the costs can be very critical.



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