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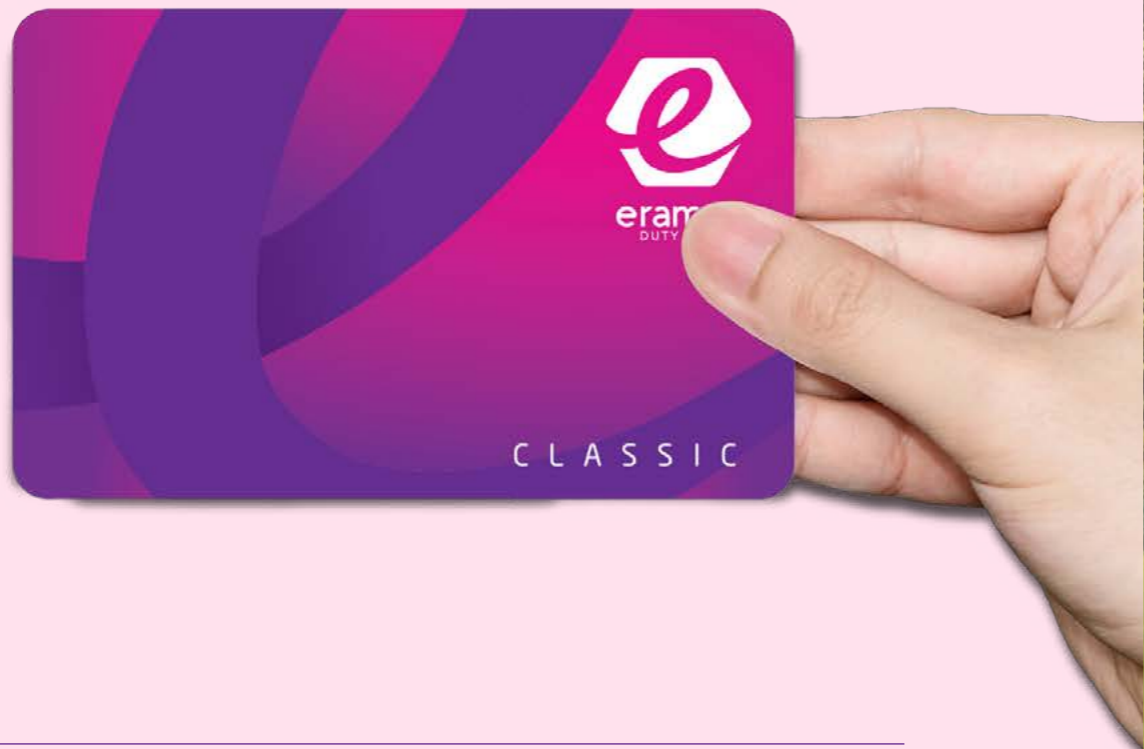


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Strong September International Passenger Growth to Prevail

Latest data for September 2024 released by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) shows an all-time high for September for global passenger's total demand. Measured in revenue passenger kilometres, it rose 7.1% compared to September 2023.

Total capacity, measured in available seat kilometres, was also up 5.8% year-on-year while September 2024 load factor was slightly higher at 83.6%. Both international and domestic demand were also higher for the month

While Willie Walsh, IATA's Director General welcomed this good news not just for passengers but also for the global economy, he reminded that the air travel success story is wrought with challenges.

"We will soon face a capacity crunch in some regions which threatens to curtail these economic and social benefits," Walsh warned.

Despite airlines making significant investments to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050, he said that needs to be accompanied by an equally active political vision, backed-up by actions to ensure we have efficient and sufficient airport and air traffic management capacity to meet the needs of citizens and businesses to travel."

IATA's data also showed all regions posting growth for international passenger markets in September 2024 with Europe having the highest load factor (LF) at 85.9% while Asia and African carriers also improved their LF to 82.6% and 76% respectively.

In Malaysia, its improved international passenger traffic has been largely driven by the introduction of new airlines and routes, visa exemptions for travellers from China and India as well as by the steady rise in global air travel demand.

Passenger Traffic Near Pre-Pandemic Level

The Malaysia Airports Group reported 36.1 million passenger movements for the third quarter of 2024 (3Q24), representing a 10.6% year-on-year increase 97.7% of the pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels for the same period in 2019.

"Notably, international passenger numbers have surpassed 3Q19 levels by 7.4% with 18.9 million passengers. In contrast, the domestic sector experienced more modest growth, recording 17.2 million passengers and achieving 88.9% of the levels recorded in 2019."

The Group's network of local airports showed encouraging performance in the 3Q24, with international passenger movements consistently surpassing four million each month.

Apart from new airlines such as 9 Air, Air India, AirAsia Cambodia, Lucky Air and Qingdao Airlines that flew into Malaysia recently, LOT Polish Airlines also brought in charter flights from Warsaw to Langkawi in Kedah.

Operating once a week, these direct charter flights which will continue until March 2025 are expected to attract more European tourists. As of September 2024, Malaysia welcomed 24,362 visitors from Poland, up from 21,472 in 2023 and surpassing the pre-pandemic level of 2019.

There are now 73 airlines operating in the country compared to 69 airlines in 2019.

Malaysia Airports, in collaboration with its partners - Tourism Malaysia, Sabah Tourism and Istanbul's Sabiha Gokcen International Airport - were at the prestigious 29th Routes World held in Bahrain from 6 to 8, October 2024 to attract more airlines and facilitate operations to multiple destinations across Malaysia.

The event offered invaluable opportunities for face-to-face meetings and networking, enabling its delegates to strengthen existing relationships and explore new possibilities.



New Team for Airports Council International's Regional Board

Malaysia Airports managing director, Dato' Mohd Izani Ghani is one of the five newly elected Board directors on Airports Council International's Asia-Pacific & Middle East (ACI APAC & MID) for a three-year term starting on January 1, 2025.



Underscoring Malaysia Airports' position as a leading player in the international aviation community, Dato' Mohd Izani will collaborate with his fellow board members under the newly elected President, SGK Kishore, Executive Director and Chief Innovation Officer of GMR Group.

The President and his five newly appointed Executive Committee members, however, are on a two-year term starting also in 2025.

ACI APAC & MID, representing 132 members operating in 617 airports across 46 countries and territories, plays a key role in promoting airport excellence, safety and sustainability, advocating for industry-wide policies that benefit airports of all sizes.



At its first Airport Excellence (APEX) in Security review conducted in a Southeast Asia country, Malaysia's second busiest airport, Kota Kinabalu International Airport (BKI) successfully completed the assessment, which was held from July 1 to 5, 2024, thanks to the exemplary efforts of the Aviation Security team from the headquarters and dedication of the MASB BKI staff.



Qatar Airways' Vision for 2024-2025 and Beyond

Under the theme, New Era of Dynamic and Sustainable Partnership, the Qatar Airways (QR) Group has outlined its efforts to drive long-term success and excellence as it moves forward with its 2.0 vision for the future.

At its recent 2024 Investors' Meeting in Doha, QR, the World's Best Airline voted by Skytrax in 2024, reaffirmed its commitment to balancing profitability with social and environmental responsibility, operational excellence and people-centric initiatives.

QR Group Chief Executive Officer, Engineer Badr Mohammed Al-Meer said that the airline is embracing the future by investing in digital technologies and innovative solutions to elevate its product offerings, particularly in its first and business class cabins.

This is evident by the unveiling at Farnborough Airshow 2024 of its QSuite Next Gen, touted to be the latest version of the world's best business class.

Set to debut on QR's Boeing B777-9 aircraft by 2026, it will include updated features such as movable monitors with Bluetooth connectivity, companion suits with window views, larger lie-flat and double beds, lockable drawers and touchscreens passenger control unit.

Posting the strongest financial performance in its 27-year history for the 2023-2024 fiscal year with record-breaking net profit of US\$1.7 billion and revenue totalling US\$22.2 billion, QR has one of the youngest fleets in the aviation industry.

The airline has 94 Boeing 777Xs on order, including commercial and cargo aircraft. The new addition will support QR's global operations, connecting passengers seamlessly to over 170 destinations through its award-winning hub, Hamad International Airport, which was voted by Skytrax in 2024 as the World's Best Airport.



QR's strategy centres around four key pillars: advancing technology through fleet modernisation, optimising operations, utilising sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) and lower carbon aviation fuel as well as participating in the carbon offsetting and reduction scheme for international aviation.

The Group achieved several industry firsts in recent years, including being the first airline in the Middle East to join the International Civil Aviation Organisation's Global Coalition for Sustainable Aviation. It also secured an offtake agreement for 25 million gallons of neat SAF.

Part of the Group's ongoing strategic approach is to build deeper, more meaningful relationships with global audiences, solidifying the brand's leadership position in the social media landscape during the financial year 2023-2024.

As a result, QR is now the world's number one airline across social channels with more than 47 million combined followers. It is also the world's number one followed airline on Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube.

For more information, visit qatarairways.com



IndiGo's Latest Partnerships to Enhance Connectivity and Operations Efficiency

India's low-cost carrier, IndiGo (6E), and Malaysia Airlines (MH) have entered into a strategic codeshare partnership to boost connectivity across their key hubs following the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between them in April 2024.

MH's flight code will be added to seven domestic destinations in India, namely Kolkata, Varanasi, Patna, Tiruchirappalli, Goa, Bhubaneswar and Visakhapatnam.

The partnership will complement MH's direct routes to its 10 key hubs in New Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kochi, Ahmedabad, Amritsar, Trivandrum and Kolkata.

Likewise, 6E's flight code will be added to MH's domestic flights from its main hub at KL International Airport Terminal 1 to destinations such as Penang, Langkawi, Johor Bahru, Kota Kinabalu and Kuching.

"This strategic partnership reflects our mutual commitment to boosting tourism growth between our nations, especially with the visa-free entry for tourists between the two countries.

The collaboration allows us to offer MH customers greater access to India's rich cultural and economic landscape while warmly welcoming 6E passengers to experience the unique charm of Malaysian Hospitality.

Our goal is to provide more travel options, enhanced connectivity and a seamless travel experience for our valued customers.

DATUK CAPTAIN IZHAM ISMAIL
Group Managing Director
of Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG)

Meanwhile, to support 6E's growth plans and reinforce its commitment to nurturing the next generation of pilots, the airline partnered with Marigold Aviation for the ninth time in the Cadet Pilot Programme.

Captain Ashim Mittra, Senior Vice President of Flight Operations at 6E said, "India is home to the third largest and fastest-growing aviation market in the world.

"As we continue to scale up our operations and work towards doubling our strength, the need for skilled pilots will be pivotal in achieving this vision."

Covering three key phases, the 21-month training programme charts out a path to become a Junior First Officer at 6E.

To provide aspiring pilots with insights into the programme, 6E and Marigold Aviation will host seminars across key cities in India in November 2024.

The airline also announced the integration of a cutting-edge, artificial intelligence powered risk management platform to further enhance its operational safety and efficiency.

Captain Ashim Mittra remarked, "This new technology empowers us to proactively identify potential risks by providing real-time intelligence, thus allowing us to make well-informed decisions that prioritise the well-being of everyone onboard.

"By integrating this intelligence into our operations, we can adjust flight plans proactively, minimise disruptions for our passengers and ensure the highest level of safety across our expanding network."

For more information, call **+603-2145 8533** or visit www.goIndiGo.in



Elevated Cabin Experience from Cathay Pacific

Cathay Pacific (CX) is raising the bar for customer experience with the unveiling of its new business class, Aria Suite, alongside its new premium economy and refreshed economy onboard its retrofitted Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, which debuted on its Hong Kong-Beijing route on October 18, 2024.

The new cabin experience will be progressively deployed on other regional and long-haul routes. A holistic and immersive experience has been reimagined for Aria Suite passengers focusing on comfort, privacy and a sense of personal space.

“We are excited to introduce new seat products over the next three years, each designed to elevate the inflight experience for our customers.

“These will be followed by a new world-leading first-class experience onboard our 777-9s and a brand-new flat-bed business class product on our Airbus A330s.

LAVINIA LAU

Chief Customer and Commercial Officer of Cathay Pacific (CX) Group

As Hong Kong's flag carrier, CX Group Chief Executive Officer Ronald Lam welcomed the recent announcement of government's plans for the single administration region to further strengthen Hong Kong's international aviation hub status.



This includes capitalising on the commissioning of Three-Runway System and more than doubling the scale of the Airport City.

Lam said, “The further expansion of the integrated airport ecosystem will create even more tourism and retail opportunities for Hong Kong, and reinforce its status as a world-leading international aviation hub.”

CX also supported the government's proactive initiatives to leverage Hong Kong's air connectivity with mainland China and enhance cooperation with the civil aviation authorities of Belt and Road countries, he quipped.

Additionally, by fostering closer ties and developing visitor sources from the Middle East and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations for more tourism and business opportunities, Lam is optimistic that such initiatives will take Hong Kong's aviation hub to new heights.

For more information, visit www.cathaypacific.com



More Vietjet Flight Options for Year-End Festive Season

Vietjet (VJ) will be launching on November 28, 2024 a new service connecting Hanoi (HAN) and Kuala Lumpur

(KUL) with a frequency of seven return flights per week using the Airbus A320 aircraft.

HAN is VJ's second Vietnamese destination from KUL after Ho Chi Minh City (SGN). Malaysia is among Vietnam's top six international visitor sources for the first nine months of 2024.

Vietnam received 12.7 million international tourists between January and September this year, surpassing its 2023 figures of about 12.6 million.

Its capital city, meanwhile, welcomed 4.45 million foreign tourists from January to September 2024, up 40.8% year-on-year and almost reaching its five million target of international tourists for this year

VJ will be inaugurating another new route between SGN and Tainan, Taiwan on December 12, 2024, with three return flights weekly.

To meet the growing demands of tourists during the year-end festive season, the low-cost carrier increased the flight frequency on some international routes from October 27, 2024. They include flights from HAN to Nagoya (NKM), Japan, HAN to Siem Reap (SAI), Cambodia and SGN to Vientiane (VTE), Laos to seven return flights a week.

VJ also increased its HAN to Busan (PUS), South Korea route to 14 return flights weekly and SGN to Bali (DPS), Indonesia route to 49 flights per week.

For more information, visit www.vietjetair.com



More Domestic Network Expansion for Batik Air Malaysia

Batik Air Malaysia (OD) is offering travellers more direct access to East Malaysia with three new connections from Kuala Lumpur (KUL) to Bintulu (BTU) and Miri (MYI) in Sarawak and Sandakan (SDK) in Sabah using its Boeing 737 aircraft.

The commencement date for the 10 times weekly KUL to BTU route is on November 1, 2024 followed by KUL to SDK on December 1, 2024 and the KUL-MYI on January 14, 2025. Both the KUL to MYI and SDK routes will run 14 times weekly.

OD's expansion highlights its commitment to not only enhance travel options across East Malaysia but also support Southeast Asia's thriving tourism industry and growing economic opportunities.

Providing an alternative to its thrice a day flights for the (KUL)-Kota Bharu (KBR) sector, the hybrid airline, which recently started operations at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang, Selangor, launched its inaugural daily flight from

KBR to Subang (SZB) on October 21, 2024, thus further expanding domestic travel options for travellers.

Departing from KBR, the send-off ceremony was graced by Datuk Kamarudin Md Nor, Chairman of Kelantan State Tourism Culture, Arts and Heritage Committee; Kamarul Bahri Mohamad, Manager of the Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia and Suhaimi Mohd Sani, Airport Manager of Sultan Ismail Petra Kota Bharu Airport.

Arriving at SZB, the passengers onboard were welcomed by OD representatives and Tourism Selangor Chief Executive Officer, Azrul Shah Mohamad, with goodie bags containing brochures of Splendid Selangor's best 100 tourism products.



This new route caters to the growing demand for convenient air travel for both leisure and business travellers between the northeastern part of Peninsular Malaysia and the Klang Valley. Both OD's SZB and KUL flights to KBR deploy the B737.

For more information, visit www.batikair.com



Vietnam Airlines Gears for European Expansion and Enhanced Cooperation with Garuda Indonesia

As part of Vietnam Airlines' (VN) international expansion to Europe and beyond, it mounted from Hanoi (HAN) and Ho Chi Minh City (SGN) to Munich (MUC) in October 5 and 7, 2024 respectively, becoming the first Vietnamese airline to operate such direct services to Bavaria's capital.

Using its modern widebody aircraft, VN operates the HAN and MUC sector twice weekly while its once weekly SGN to MUC service will have additional frequencies in December 2024.

Currently, Vietnam's flag carrier is the only airline operating non-stop services from HAN and SGN to Paris, Frankfurt and London.

Meanwhile, VN recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Garuda Indonesia (GA) to expand their strategic partnership, which will further reinforce the positions of these two national airlines in the global aviation market.

Both airlines plan to increase their cooperation through joint marketing campaigns, expand their codeshare agreements and joint-ventures besides exploring services such as aircraft leasing, ground services, technical maintenance and cargo operations.

Focusing on enhancing the passenger and airfreight transportation capabilities, the MoU also aimed to foster sustainable development in the aviation industry between Vietnam and Indonesia.

Irfan Setiাপutra, President and Chief Executive Officer of GA said, "This strategic partnership marks an important milestone in our ongoing commitment to strengthening regional connectivity and enhancing travel experiences for our passengers across Southeast Asia.

"By leveraging our combined networks, this partnership will allow passengers more seamless access to key destinations across Indonesia, Vietnam, and beyond, fostering greater tourism, trade, and cultural exchange."

Additionally, both airlines share a common vision to provide world-class service, greater convenience and expanded travel options for their customers.

Vietnam's flag carrier also recently signed a partnership agreement with United Nations (UN) Women to promote gender equality and women's empowerment within the company, community and society at large.



Both parties plan to spearhead several transformative initiatives from 2024 to 2026. They include organising joint workshops and conferences to share best practices among companies that have signed the Women's Empowerment Principles in Vietnam.

Dang Ngoc Hoa, Chairman of the Board of Directors of VN said, "Partnering with UN Women and joining HeForShe solidarity movement not only reflects our tremendous commitment to social responsibility but also workplace equity. We believe that gender equality benefits not only women but also enhances overall productivity and service quality at VN.

Launched by the UN Women in 2014, the HeForShe movement calls for all to stand in solidarity with women to create a bold, visible and united force for gender equality.

For more information, call **+603-2031 1666** or visit **www.vietnamairlines.com**



Catch All Nippon Airways' Contest to Promote Saga

Japan's largest airline, All Nippon Airways (ANA) has partnered with Viu, a pan-regional over-the-top video streaming service in the latter's drama, From Saga with Love Season 2, produced by Red Communications Sdn Bhd.

The storyline follows from season one as its stellar cast of popular Malaysian actors such as Siti Khadijah Halim, Sophia Albarakbah, Ikmal Amry, Fimie Don and Hun Haqem continue their adventures in Saga city in Kyushu, Japan's third largest island.

Fans can catch two new episodes of season two of this drama every Thursday on Viu.

In its commitment to collaborate with key partners in Malaysia to promote Japan's hidden gems such as Saga with its unique cultural heritage, Minoru Kusakabe, General Manager of ANA Kuala Lumpur said, "This partnership aligns with our mission to inspire travellers to explore beyond Japan's famous cities of Tokyo and Osaka."

To celebrate this partnership where ANA is the official airline, it has a Win a Trip to Saga - Stream, Answer & Win contest running until November 30, 2024. Contest participants will receive an ANA promotional code unlocking special fares on flights from KUL to Japan.



They will also get a 14-day Viu Premium access code when they login to anaflyjapan-campaign.com.

The three prizes for the contest include round-trip economy class tickets for two persons from Kuala Lumpur (KUL) to Saga (HSG) via Tokyo Haneda (HND) or Tokyo Narita (NRT) as well as accommodation with breakfast and airport transfer using private taxi sponsored by UbinGo Vacations Sdn Bhd.

The number of foreign visitors to Japan has been growing rapidly this year. In response to the steady recovery in travel demand, ANA resumed its NRT to Perth (PER) route on October 14, 2024 with thrice weekly flights while its NRT to Hong Kong (HKG) service was increased to four times a week on October 27, 2024.

The airline earlier announced it will be operating three round trips weekly from HND to Milan from December 3, 2024.

According to the Japan National Tourism Organization's latest statistics, Japan welcomed some 26.88 million foreign visitors in the first nine months of 2024, up 54.7% year-on-year (yoy), surpassing its 25.07 million total for the whole of 2023.

In September alone, the estimated number of visitors rose 31.5% yoy to a record 2.87 million, which was also 26.4% higher than September 2019.

The number of Japanese outbound tourists in September was 1.2 million, up by 20.7% from a year ago but still down 30.8% from September 2019.

For more information, call **+603-2032 1331** or visit **www.ana.co.jp/group/en/my**



AirAsia, First Airline in Malaysia to Use Combo Units to Cut Carbon Emission

As part of Air Asia Malaysia's (AK) decarbonisation initiatives, the airline has introduced a cutting-edge ground support technology to cut carbon emissions at its main hub at the KL International Airport (KLIA) Terminal 2.

It is using Smart Airport Systems' (SAS) advanced Combo Units which offers the dual-functionality of a ground power unit (GPU) and an air conditioning unit (ACU) that can provide for the electrical and air-cooling needs of an aircraft while it is stationary on ground before a flight and during transit.

Without adequate ground power and a performing ACU, an aircraft relies on the use of its auxiliary power unit (APU) to perform the same functions but this is costly and carbon-inefficient because APUs are powered by aviation turbine fuel.

With the Combo Units, AK expects to significantly reduce its APU costs and associated carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions by 90% at optimal usage, thus lowering the airline's Scope 1 emissions from ground operations.

According to Malaysia Airports' Annual Report 2023, aircraft emissions contributed 53% of total CO2 emissions at airports. Of this, 23% is attributed to APU usage. Other major contributors to total ground emissions are airport buildings and airport travel.

Deploying its first four Combo units in October 2024, AK expects to introduce additional units at KLIA Terminal 2 and its other major domestic hubs by the end of 2025. Upon their full implementation, the Combo units are expected to reduce AK's ground-based CO2 emissions by 20,000 tonnes a year.

Kesavan Sivanandam, Chief Airport and Customer Experience Officer of AirAsia Aviation Group said, "These energy-efficient Combo units unlock a major opportunity for airlines like ours to decarbonise because we operate in countries with high humidity.

"Previously, we had been unable to make the switch because conventional GPUs lack cabin cooling functions which are necessary for the comfort of our guests."

He said the adoption of SAS' Combo Units technology underscores AK's commitment to sustainability and represents the adoption of a measure identified in the Transport Ministry's Malaysia Aviation Decarbonisation Blueprint (MADB) published in September 2024.

MADB's Airport Measures section calls for all airlines operating at airports in Malaysia to be provided with facilities and options to use GPUs and Pre-Conditioned Air units during transit and when performing aircraft servicing activities.

Commending AirAsia for being the first airline in Malaysia to adopt the Combo units, Transport Minister Anthony Loke Siew Fook said, "This is among the in-sector solutions airlines can undertake to reduce carbon emissions and enhance efficiency at our airports as highlighted in the MDAB.

"I hope to see all airlines and ground handling operators adopt this technological innovation as a new benchmark to strengthen Malaysia's position as a regional leader in sustainable aviation."

For more information, visit www.capitala.com



Scot's Flights to Melaka Important to the State's International Tourism

The five-time weekly flights from Scoot (TR) from Singapore (SIN) to Melaka (MKZ) play a strategic role, especially in expanding access to the historic state as an international tourist destination.

TR, which flew into MKZ on its 50-minute maiden flight on October 23, 2024, carried 112 passengers using the Embraer E190-E2 aircraft.

Among those present to witness the inaugural flight were the Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Dato Sri Tiong King Sing, Melaka State Government Secretary, Dato' Azhar Arshad and Scoot Chief Commercial Officer Calvin Chan.

In anticipation of stronger travel demand for the northern winter season, TR, Singapore Airlines' low-cost carrier recently announced some network adjustments for Australia, Japan South Korea and the Southeast Asian region.

They include increased flight frequencies from 10 to 11 times weekly from SIN to Chiang Mai (CNX), Thailand and five to six times weekly from SIN to Hanoi (HAN), Vietnam from November 10 to 24, 2024.

From December 2024, TR will increase its Australian flights from SIN from 13 to 14 times a week to Perth (PER) and 12 to 13 times weekly to Melbourne (MEL).

The SIN to MEL flights will subsequently be raised to twice daily from January 21, 2025.

"In addition, three more weekly flights will be mounted to Seoul Incheon (ICN) via Taipei (TPE) will be added, making it a daily service.

Similarly, services to Tokyo Narita (NRT) via TPE will also increase from 12 to 14 times daily," TR added.

For more information, visit www.flyscoot.com



Melaka State Tourism, Heritage, Arts and Culture Committee chairman Datuk Abdul Razak Abdul Rahman said they are significant in supporting Melaka's international tourism agenda as the state prepares for World Tourism Day 2025 and the World Tourism Conference 2025 which will be held here.

Upclose with Phang Sau Lian

President of the Malaysia Shopping Malls Association (PPKM)



Share with us more about PPKM's shopping tourism focus?

We are working closely with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) on the coming Malaysia Year-End Sales and preparations for Visit Malaysia Year 2026 (VMY26). We hope to collaborate with MOTAC to promote experiential shopping tourism and position Malaysia's shopping malls at the forefront of global tourism attractions as we work towards VMY26.

Being a multiracial country rich in colourful cultures, festive tourism will be our unique selling proposition to drive visitors and shoppers. Our diverse festive cultures from Chinese New Year, to Hari Raya, Deepavali and Christmas bring added layers of richness to the mall experience.

Our malls spend considerable budgets and efforts during these festive seasons, where malls are transformed into immersive environments, adorned with elaborate decorations and cultural activities for unique shopping experiences. These elements not only attract local footfall but also offer tourists an authentic glimpse into Malaysia's multicultural heritage, enhancing their overall visit experience and leaving lasting impressions.

What do your continuous learning initiatives look at?

Our focus is to improve and innovate the learning content in order to elevate the quality of the industry's professionals and practitioners. This includes close networking with the Council of Asian Shopping Centers' (CASC) council committee, where PPKM is a founding member, for regional sharing and learning as well as encouraging regional conferences and visits by participating members.

How do you view the recent Budget 2025 announcement, themed Revitalising the economy, generating change, prospering the Rakyat?

The decision to raise the minimum wages has dual implications. While it does increase business costs, it is expected to boost overall spending power. By increasing disposable income, particularly for lower-income consumers, we anticipate a positive impact on retail spending. This, in turn, supports our members, as increased retail activities contribute to the malls' footfall and tenants' sales.

Additionally, the petrol subsidy rationalisation on the T15 high-income group which is not impacting the majority 85% of the population, is another key move. By maintaining this subsidy, the government helps mitigate living expenses, thus allowing households to allocate more of their income towards discretionary spending, including retail purchases. In the coming months, more clarity should emerge in the classification of the T15, which should ease the prevailing concerns that could momentarily dampen consumer sentiments. Overall, these measures in Budget 2025 reflect a balanced

From Phang Sau Lian's first experience with shopping malls development almost 30 years ago, this 57-year-old small town lady, who hails from Sungai Siput Utara in Perak, has made great strides to helm PPKM as the President for the 2024-26 term and the second woman to do so in the association's 40 years of history.

Having assumed your newly elected position, what are your immediate plans to further elevate PPKM?

Under our new strategic directions, we will focus on digital transformation, shopping tourism, enhancing industry networking and continuous learning initiatives. Working with retailers, consultants, suppliers, contractors and other professionals related to the shopping mall industry, we intend to create a good platform for learning and sharing, exploration of solutions to mitigate the industry's challenges and looking into work system enhancement.

PPKM will embrace digital innovation to improve efficiency and communication among our members. We are in the midst of developing our own mobile app integration into our working system which will allow easy registration for members to participate in our future programmes.

This upcoming super app is designed to streamline the administration and enhance the engagement with our members. By automating and digitising administrative tasks, the app will improve work efficiency, allowing us to manage memberships, update records and process requests more swiftly. It also serves as a powerful communication tool, offering members timely updates on industry news, PPKM events and newsletter, thereby fostering a closer connection with them.

We also plan to improve the payment gateway and data archive system. The super app will feature a secure data archive, providing easy access to valuable resources, past event materials and research that members can obtain as reference anytime. With the integration of a payment gateway, transactions such as membership renewals and event registrations will be seamless and secure, adding convenience for our members.

approach to stimulating consumer demand while supporting the well-being of the majority of Malaysians. PPKM is optimistic about the positive outcomes these policies could yield for our industry and the broader economy.

Shopping mall management has evolved dramatically over the years. What are the key strategies that will help malls rise above their competitors in the fast-changing retail environment?

Staying competitive today requires a strategic blend of innovation, experience, and adaptability. Key strategies that help malls rise above include focusing on immersive customer experiences, which transform malls into lifestyle destinations offering more than just retail. Integrating digital technology is essential, engaging loyalty programmes and seamless online-to-offline (O2O) interactions. ESG practices also play a crucial role as sustainability and community engagement are increasingly important to shoppers. Hence, curating a unique mix of retail, dining and entertainment options always refresh the mix according to trends. Also, the catchment needs will enhance the malls' competitive edge to stay ahead in the market.

Over the last 24 years, how many participants have benefitted from PPKM Certification Courses on shopping mall management and how often do you hold them.

We offered these courses twice a year since they started in 2002. The modules cover the basic three pillars of shopping mall management, that is, Marketing and Leasing; Administration as well as Operations and Maintenance. To date, we have trained more than 4,800 personnel from malls and relevant industries.

Study trips abroad are also organised for your members twice a year. What are some of the latest retail concepts trending that have yet to reach our shores?

Asian malls have shown remarkable adaptability and resilience, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the advancement of technology and convenience in crossing countries, many retail concepts are now shared across Asian countries, creating a level of similarity in mall experiences. However, there are still unique, cutting-edge trends emerging that have not fully reached our shores such as pioneering hyper-personalised services through artificial intelligence-driven technology, where data is used to tailor the shopping journey at a highly individual level.

How do you plan to grow PPKM's membership hovering at 518 when Malaysia is home to 737 malls and retail centres?

Our membership is voluntary for malls, with the total numbers made up of corporate members besides individuals and affiliates. To increase our membership, we will continue promoting our offers from advocacy on key industry issues to industry insights, training, and networking opportunities. We remain as a unifying body that supports mall operators and retail centres of all sizes and will improve our digital presence to engage prospective members more effectively.

Of the 737 malls and retail centres, about 65% are malls as defined by us as "a cluster of shops served by common thoroughfare containing retail or wholesale shops, services, restaurants, entertainment outlets etcetera where people can congregate"

What are some of the endearing milestones achieved at PPKM recent 40th anniversary celebration?

Celebrating with more than 1,200 guests is a significant milestone. Over the years, we have built a platform that advocates for the industry's needs, promoted Malaysia as a shopping destination and fostered strong membership connections through malls. Another milestone is our focus on elevating our members' commitment to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards within the shopping mall industry. Aligned with our dedication to sustainable practices, we have introduced a series of talks and seminars focused on ESG, offering our members invaluable insights into sustainable business strategies, ethical governance, and impactful community engagement.

We recently created an Award for Top Sustainability Practices for members who have shown exemplary efforts in adopting such responsible practices. Together with our annual Best Experiential Marketing Award, we received 78 submissions this year, the highest participation rate from our mall members since 2016.

As a key component of the retail sector, malls are economic drivers in growing Malaysia's gross domestic product. How are you looking at enlarging the pie for your members?

We are focusing on expanding beyond the domestic market to attract a larger share of tourists' spending. While the local population remains a core base, Malaysia's relatively small population size means we must enhance our appeal to international visitors. By working closely with MOTAC, airlines and travel agencies, we aim to position Malaysia as a premier shopping destination in the region. Shopping is a very significant component of tourist expenditure. In 2023, shopping activities constituted 33.9% of the total tourists' expenditure, contributing RM24.1 billion of the total RM71.31 billion tourist receipts. With this year's target for international tourist arrivals at 27.3 mil and tourists' expenditure of RM102.7 billion, this will be 44% higher than last year tourists' expenditure.

This is the second time in PPKM's history that the association is helmed by a woman President. What are your thoughts on this?

I am truly honoured and having served on the committee since 2010, I have had the privilege of working alongside a team of industry experts who bring invaluable knowledge and dedication to advancing our association's mission. I am committed to doing my very best to lead us forward. Together, we will continue fostering collaboration, innovation and success for our members, thus ensuring that PPKM remains a driving force in Malaysia's mall industry.



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