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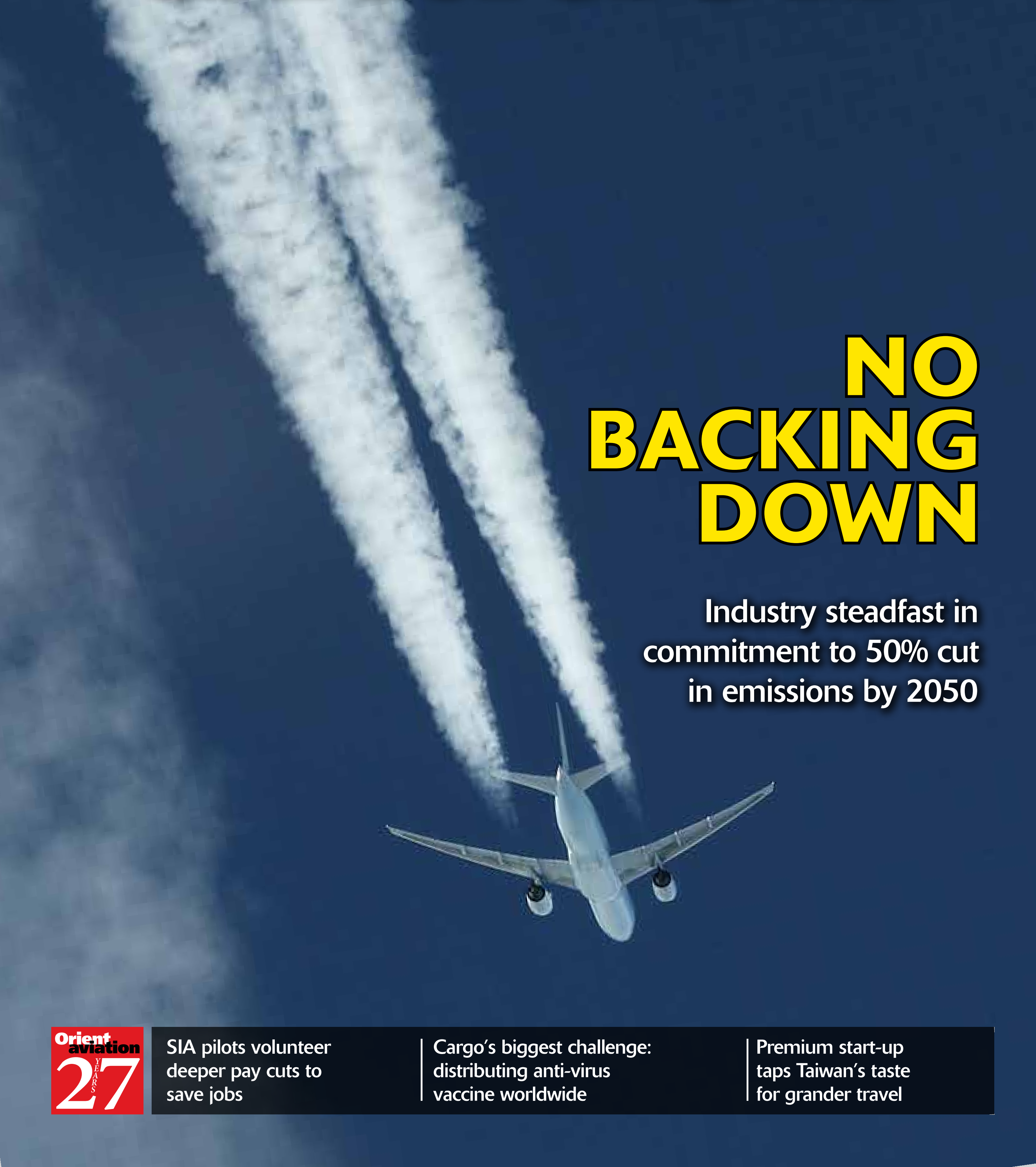

NO BACKING DOWN

Industry steadfast in commitment to 50% cut in emissions by 2050

Orient aviation 27 YEARS

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MAIN STORY

We hear you on emissions, industry says

Aviation's contribution to global warming has long been subject to controversy with airlines a primary target of environmentalists. This situation has persisted despite the fact aviation is the only global industry with ambitious targets for reducing emissions and achieving long-term sustainability.

COVID-19's ruinous financial impact on airline operations, bringing international flying in particular to a virtual standstill, presents a good reason for carriers to put their environmental obligations aside as they struggle to survive. But this has not happened.

The Air Transport Action Group's (ATAG) 2020 Global Sustainable Aviation Forum - Green Recovery, an online conference held at the turn of the month, was proof of aviation's commitment to emissions reductions. The summit brought together leaders from all sectors of aviation. They discussed critical environmental issues related to the sustainability of the industry and its green recovery post the pandemic.

Airlines, aircraft and engine manufacturers, airports and suppliers are recommitting to their sustainability goals despite the immense pressure of surviving the COVID-19 crisis.

Present times may be bad, but as Britain's Prince Charles warned last month, ultimately the climate crisis will "dwarf" the impact of the pandemic. There may be a horrendous number of coronavirus fatalities, frustrating lockdowns and international border closures, but people increasingly are worried about the effects of global warming even in pandemic times.

A Globescan poll recently conducted across 27 countries showed 90% of people regarded climate change as a very serious or somewhat serious problem and that these beliefs had strengthened in the last few years.

There is absolutely no doubt there is an increase in extreme weather events and temperature changes on every continent in the world. This situation alone is sufficient reason for airlines and the industry in general to maintain their focus on working to reduce the impact of emissions from aviation.

Scores of thousands of jobs are disappearing at airlines and across the spectrum of their suppliers, but when the pandemic passes and growth returns to some form of predictability, whether that will be in 2024, as the International Air Transport Association is forecasting, or beyond, the challenge of mitigating climate damage from aviation will not have gone away. In fact, it will have become more important as aviation's target of a 50% reduction in emissions, against 2005 levels, draws ever closer. ■

TOM BALLANTYNE
Associate editor and chief correspondent
Orient Aviation Media Group

Starlux Airlines tapping Taiwan's desire for grand flying

By Tomasz Sniedziewski in Taiwan

When Starlux Airlines, Taiwan's newest carrier, launched flights on January 23 this year and thereby establishing a third force in the skies of Taiwan, its first challenge was battling the hardship of the COVID-19 pandemic and not, as expected, wooing skeptical customers.

Of the three initial Starlux destinations out of Taipei, the carrier had to suspend its service to the Special Administrative Region of Macau less than two weeks after the inaugural cross straits flight. In quick succession, Taipei to Penang, Malaysia and Da Nang were put on indefinite hold in March.

By last month, the carrier's website said routes to Penang and Macau were being operated but Taipei-Cebu was canceled until the end of March 2021.

In the first half of 2020, Starlux lost NT$1.31 billion (US$44.8 million), only NT$1 million or US$35,000 less than China Airlines. To June 30, the full-service carrier had accumulated losses of NT$2.81 billion.

Despite the adverse market conditions, Starlux remains positive about its outlook. In September it announced the leasing of eight A330-900neo, making it the first Taiwanese carrier to fly the type. Deliveries will start from the fourth quarter of next year.

Starlux's order book is now 10 A350-900s, nine A350-1000s and a commitment to three additional A321neos over its previous order of 10 of the type. Following the recent signings, Starlux will have 39 aircraft by 2024.

Starlux said the A350 will join its fleet at the beginning of 2022, which will be slightly later than originally planned, and that the planes will be equipped with first class, a decision going against the trend at many Asia-Pacific carriers. Longer term, it has the U.S. in its sights for its long-haul fleet.

The increase in scale of its operations will put Starlux on par with funds hungry China Airlines and EVA Air. From early 2021, Starlux will continue with building on its current capital of NT$8.36 billion. Its target is NT$30 billion, said airline spokesman, Nieh Kuo-wei, who declined to offer more details about the airline's strategy. The massage of the message is Starlux's funding is solid.

Unlike its rivals in Taiwan, Starlux has not entered the domestic or cargo sectors. It is using the hiatus created by the pandemic to reinforce its brand, which has established very strong recognition in Taiwan.

When the airline decided to participate in pseudo trips abroad – flights to nowhere – one flight sold out in just 30 seconds, according to media reports.

Top of the class positioning convinced Samsung to partner with Starlux in the launch of its latest flagship smart phone in Taiwan.

"Why shouldn't we be able to hold out?" asked Starlux Airlines chairman, Chang Kuo-wei, in a profile in the widely read CommonWealth magazine. The positive buzz around the brand seems to fuel his optimism. ■

AirAsia Group to score big from AirAsia India exit

By Anjuli Bhargava

AirAsia Group co-founder, Tony Fernandes, is jockeying bids between joint venture AirAsia India (AAI) majority partner, the Tata Group, and fund investors as he negotiates the sale of his company's share of the LCC, India's Business Standard has reported.

Malaysia's AirAsia Berhad (AAB) owns 49% of AAI and it has been written the company has been offered US$54 million by a private fund for acquisition of its minority holding. The offer includes the potential suitor's willingness to take on short-term expensive loans from banks and Tata Capital. It is believed the Malaysian LCC group invested $14 million-$15 million to launch the carrier, along with partner, Tata, seven years ago.

At press time, it was reported Tata had first right of refusal to decline to buy the AAB shareholding in the LCC. If it declines, the foreign fund will be the LCC's replacement investor, the Business Standard said.

In 2012-2013, master salesman Tony Fernandes sold a billion dollar dream to Tata Group chairman, Ratan Tata. Setting up a joint venture LCC in India, he told the leader of India's most enduring conglomerate, would bring both of them new riches with its asset light model in such a huge, potentially, airline market.

Tata was sold on the idea. Citing another AirAsia joint success, he painted a picture of instant prosperity when seeking board approval for the deal.

Until the news broke that Fernandes had an offer of $54 million from the offshore fund, he was expected to sell his holding in AAI to Tata, which took management control of the group in November last year.

Tata sources have assessed the current valuation of the 49% Fernandes holds in the LCC at beyond US$50 million.

In India's difficult political and economic environment, Fernandes has attracted some antipathy in regulatory and industry circles because of the management style of the Malaysia headquartered LCC group.

"The blame for the venture going awry lies far more with Fernandes and Co who tried and failed to micro-manage the company from Malaysia," a source told this reporter.

He added Tata was "left holding the can" and was in the unenviable position "of putting an unruly house in order". Whether these are Tata's tactics to lower the final price to be paid for the exit of Fernandes is anybody's guess, but more than one source has told Orient Aviation this marriage is headed for divorce, a situation made clear by the latest offer for AAB's holding in Bangalore-headquartered AAI. ■

Cathay Pacific Group adopts clean sheet strategy for shaping new structure

At press time, with pilot union leaders metaphorically banging on senior management's door demanding a place at the airline group's restructuring table, the lead Hong Kong airline group continued it's softly, softly campaign of managing the public's expectations of inevitable job losses from the Hong Kong icon's root and branch restructuring.

In an early October note to members of the Hong Kong Aircrew Officers Association, chairman Tad Hazelton said Cathay Pacific's director of flight operations had told him there was no firm date for any announcement about the restructuring of the company "as details were continually changing".

"Management still aims to present the future size and shape of the company to the board in the current quarter," Hazelton wrote to HKAOA members in a memo circulated widely at the airline group.

In the meantime, the group's CEO, Augustus Tang, told Hong Kong's South China Morning Post that smaller aircraft could be in play in its future fleet and that a review of the size of its business class offering was part of restructuring discussions.

In August the group reported an interim loss of HK$9.9 billion (US$1.28 billion), the biggest in its history and a result of COVID-19, Cathay Pacific Group chairman, Patrick Healy, said.

The airline group had undertaken an earlier three-year transformation, advised by the McKinsey management consultancy. It reduced the airline's home city headcount by 600 and preceded lay-offs at its outports.

The Cathay group employs more than 20,000 staff worldwide. Passengers of the company's airlines are running at about a 1,000 a day. Earlier this year, the group was a recipient, along with most major companies in Hong Kong, of government backed salary support and a package of loans that it must be repaid in five years. At the time the relief deal was announced, Tang told media the airline group had approached the government for assistance.

The prestigious airline company is not alone among top tier carriers in the region being forced to make redundant thousands of employees due to the capacity rout brought on by the pandemic.

In September Singapore Airlines Group CEO, Goh Choon Phong, announced 4,300 jobs had to go at the flag carrier. He said 1,900 jobs had disappeared through natural attrition, vacant jobs not filled and voluntary retirements. These staff reductions were not enough to avoid the elimination of another 2,400 positions at the group, he said. (***See page 10. SIA pilots offer deeper salary cuts to save cockpit jobs***)■

Every penny counts

Some clever clogs at Qantas did their bit for the environment and the coffers of the group when they came up with the idea of selling off the galley carts of the airline's nostalgia laden 747 fleet. With the news the beloved aircraft of millions of passengers was destined for six feet under in the airline cemeteries of the world or be broken up for parts, 1,000 of the fleet's galley carts were offered for sale online. Fully kitted out with F&B and offering the options of amenity kits, Qantas biz class PJs and a throw produced exclusively for Qantas, half bar carts were advertised at $691 or 169,000 Qantas Points and full size carts were $1045. Overwhelmed by the response, all the carts sold in two hours.

Airlines across the region experiencing similar difficulties in making money as the Australian headquartered airline are proving to be just as innovative when it comes to earning cash. Several airlines are operating "flights to nowhere" to keep some of their pilots busy and to earn money, while an enterprising few are putting some of their on-ground assets to financial use. Thai Airways (THAI) is offering a "THAI Simulator Experience" for customers to "fly" an aircraft in their flight simulators, which includes the experience of piloting an A380, a 777-300ER, B747-400 or B737-400 in the comfort of a simulator suite. Prices start at $381 for two people for a 30-minute session. The Bangkok-based carrier also has opened a restaurant at its headquarters in the city where diners can eat in a space that replicates an airplane cabin.

Singapore Airlines also is thinking outside the box. It has launched the Discover Your Singapore Airlines suite of experiences that includes Restaurant A380 @Changi, a dining experience with SIA's award winning service inside an SIA A380. In November, an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of SIA training facilities will be on offer, where children can dress up and role play as cabin attendants. Adults can choose to operate a full flight simulator, sample some of the carrier's premium in-flight wine labels and attend a grooming workshop. ■

Indian aviation falls short in nurturing local leadership talent

Tiny CEO cabal ride merry-go-round at the top of India's airlines.

By Anjuli Bhargava

India's aviation sector has been plagued with an acute management talent shortage from the word go and it is showing no signs improving.

In early 2018, when the founder of LCC IndiGo, Rahul Bhatia, was scouting for a CEO to succeed Aditya Ghosh, then president and CEO of India's largest airline by numbers, he was not exactly overwhelmed with candidates. In India, no matter the airline looked at, the CEO either had been imported - Vistara, AirAsia India, GoAir and Jet Airways being cases in point - or was run directly by their promoters/investors. The obvious example of the latter is SpiceJet.

So convincing a qualified potential CEO to relocate to India's capital city, Delhi, labelled as one of most polluted cities in the world, was not easy. Increasing numbers of expatriates were looking to leave the city, concerned about the impact of air pollution on the health of their children, rather than moving to it.

Therefore, it was not a surprise to IndiGo insiders and the industry in general that Bhatia sought to convince Rono Datta, an Indian by birth, to come on board at the LCC. Datta has had vast management experience at airlines in the U.S. and has a reputation for rescuing carriers from bankruptcy.

Datta's children were grown and India was a known animal to him. He had spent four years at Sahara Airlines, from 2004-2008, before it was sold to Jet Airways. He had the required expertise even if he was seen more as a full service airline man than one with expertise in low-fare carriers. Only a few may know Datta also had been a choice for Bhatia in 2004. When Datta visited India in 2003, founders of three of the country's airlines, Naresh Goyal, Subroto Roy and Rahul Bhatia, approached him to join them. He chose Air Sahara.

In late 2018, when the churn within IndiGo began to take its toll on staff, the airline's then chief commercial officer, Sanjay Kumar, who had more than a decade with the airline, decided to move on. He too had three airlines chasing him. GoAir approached Kumar to join it as did SpiceJet, where he had worked earlier in his career. AirAsia India, a joint venture between Tata Group and the AirAsia Group, was Kumar's choice, no doubt influenced by Tata's controlling interest in the LCC.

He came on board at AirAsia India as chief operating officer in November 2018 at almost the same time the airline named Sunil Bhaskaran as CEO. Kumar, who had better knowledge of the sector than his boss, did not last long for a variety of reasons and returned to IndiGo as chief of strategy and revenue.

Shakti Lumba, now 71, and an industry veteran respected for flight operations and management expertise, had been targeted by AirAsia India in its start-up days in 2013-2014. Lumba even made a trip to Kuala Lumpur, but declined an offer from the Malaysian LCC. More recently, despite being past retirement age, IndiGo has brought him back to head its ATR and UDAN operations, an appointment jeopardised by India's Ministry of Civil Aviation's (MOCA interference. Lumba had a long career at Indian Airlines then set up flight operations for IndiGo and was a member of the LCC's start-up team.

More recently, when Jet Airways pulled downed its shutters in 2019, the airline's CEO, Vinay Dube, was approached by at least two airlines - SpiceJet and GoAir - to run the carriers. Dube, new to India, had built a name for himself in his short stint with Jet. Many of his colleagues acknowledged his thorough understanding of the airline business. However, unable to move cities for personal reasons, Dube chose GoAir over SpiceJet despite the former's not so happy reputation in handling employees. Dube left GoAir in August.

While the above instances highlight the acute shortage of talent the sector faces at top management level, the sector also has suffered and continues to suffer from an acute lack of management talent, or as some industry professionals say a "love and obsession for all things foreign". While technical expertise – pilots, engineers and technicians – is in plentiful supply in India, it is the management cadre where many feel there is a vacuum.

A former aviation secretary has said India could do with "one less airline and one more airline management school" to help the sector develop and prevent the endless cycle of airlines going bankrupt in India. Although people tend to think only of

Kingfisher Airlines and now Jet Airways [as failed], the country's aviation history, he pointed out, is populated with failures almost from the word go.

THE PUBLIC SECTOR LEGACY

One of the reasons the industry has been short of talent is India's aviation sector has been vested entirely in the public sector. Chairman and managing directors (CMD) of Air India and Indian Airlines typically have been government officials and have tenure at best of five years at their appointed airlines.

"Before the person heading the airline could acquire expertise in running it, the incumbent would change," said a former CMD, who grappled with this and attempted to convince the authorities to extend tenures. This, in his view, is one of the reasons for the inconsistent performance of government-owned airlines. Even when talented, not everyone is willing to leave a "safe, public sector, government paid job" with several perks to join private carriers that are perceived as far rockier boats and subject to the whims of their founders.

As late as 1994, the government allowed private airlines to operate as scheduled airlines. In 1993, Damania Airways started operations as an air taxi business. But many of the early players operated as "one man shows" with very little organisational structure. It was only when Jet Airways was set up in the mid-1990s that some talent began to develop in the sector outside of Air India and Indian Airlines.

The three airlines have provided the industry with many of its skilled veterans. But whenever Indian investors have started airlines, they have looked outside the country for talent. More recently, some talented leaders have developed at IndiGo. But it suffers too because most of the newbies use the airline to poach staff for their own teams.

A LOVE OF ALL THINGS FOREIGN

Not everyone agrees local airline talent is in short supply. They argue instead that Indian airline founders have been obsessed by the white man, a legacy of India's colonial past. "The assumption is someone who comes from overseas with some global experience necessarily knows better", said a senior captain with IndiGo, who also has worked for Jet and Sahara. Jet Airways founder, Naresh Goyal, largely left the reins of power in foreign hands, primarily Nikos Kardassis and Wolfgang Prock-Schaeur, who both had long stints as CEOs. Goyal turned to Kardassis in all crises, most recently pulling him in when Tata Group was in discussions to buy Jet, a deal that failed to happen.

No matter the airline in India, its owners and investors have hired foreigners to run them throughout India's aviation history. India's first LCC, Air Deccan, brought in Warwick Brady to run its operations in Bengaluru. Similarly, when Vijay Mallya decided to take the plunge with Kingfisher Airlines, he appointed Alex Wilcox, a low-fare airline expert, to launch the airline. Wilcox left Kingfisher within weeks when he realised Mallya was not interested in setting up a low-fare product. At that stage, Mallya hired Sanjay Agarwal, who had done a stint with US Airways and had been CEO of SpiceJet until the Marans bought the company. Eventually, Mallya was forced to take matters into his own hands. He ran the ship aground himself.

Mumbai-headquartered GoAir has only had expat CEOs – the latest in a long line was Cornelis Vreeswijk. In 2019, after Jet Airways was grounded, Vinay Dube moved to the top job at GoAir, but its owner, Jeh Wadia, has replaced him with Kaushik Khona. The airline is struggling to retain key staff and has had more than 13 human resource directors in as many years.

"The inability of the airline's promoters to work consistently with senior professionals has been seen time and again", said a former CEO of the carrier. Most aviation industry personnel who have worked at GoAir have said its owners do not trust their own teams. GoAir is seen as a stop gap arrangement by many aviation personnel, especially those who cannot leave Mumbai due to personal reasons.

But even at airlines like IndiGo, the start-up's CEO was Bruce Ashby, brought in by Rakesh Gangwal. Several senior appointees have been selected by Gangwal, albeit from a distance. Gangwal, who owns approximately 37% of IndiGo but lives in Miami in the U.S., was a former CEO and chairman of US Airways. This arrangement has led to considerable discontent within the airline and among its Indian employees who often feel they have to report to "retired expats way past their shelf lives and who have little understanding of the Indian situation and reality".

Many senior employees have taken exception to the fact that as the airline grew more expats were brought in to supposedly manage affairs but in fact they ended up making a "hash" of things. The subsequent departure of many of the expats confirms their opinions. But even as the industry grapples with its biggest crisis in COVID-19 the lack of talent in aviation in India remains a worry for the industry. It is a "chicken and egg" predicament. Talent at the top is missing because promoters don't want to hand over control to fellow Indians. But unless the Indians find themselves in positions of authority or leadership, they cannot develop. It remains to be seen who will blink first. ■

Rollover of aircraft leases grinding to halt in paralysed market

Global aviation analyst and data provider, IBA, has warned the commercial aircraft leasing market will experience considerable turmoil in 2021 with more than 1,000 aircraft forecast to be returned to lessors. In a recent webinar, IBA said approximately 1,300 aircraft, including 200 wide-bodies, were scheduled pre-pandemic to be returned to their lessors. Most of them expected to then extend their leases. In the era of the coronavirus that outcome is extremely unlikely as increasing numbers of airlines are in negotiations to terminate longer leases earlier rather than lease planes.

"This uncertainty is set to break the model of recent years of seamless redeliveries between lessees. IBA expected a higher level of disputes between airlines and lessors around lease returns and redeliveries," it said.

IBA said the decline in aircraft leasing activity would drive a corresponding fall in engine shop visits. Pre-COVID-19, MRO shop business was forecast to increase from 3,200 in 2019 to 4,500 by 2023, aviation intelligence platform, IBA.iQ said. Now they will reach only 1,000 shop visits this year. It will take until 2026 to achieve previously forecast 2019 levels.

Distributing a COVID-19 vaccine air cargo industry's greatest challenge

Dealing with a pandemic is bad enough. Now airlines have been told in no uncertain terms they will face a huge challenge in distributing the COVID-19 vaccine after it is developed. Associate editor and chief correspondent, Tom Ballantyne, reports.

The International Air Transport Association's global head of cargo, Glyn Hughes, does not mince words when he is describing the importance the airline industry must place on preparing for the distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine to 7.8 billion people worldwide.

Just when that will be remains a matter of conjecture, but if scientists soon produce a coronavirus vaccine, transporting it to where it's needed will be one of the greatest challenges air freight has faced.

The capabilities of the aircraft itself are not the only problem. "The vaccine will have to be stored at correct temperatures as it moves from the production source to the airport and then from the aircraft to distribution centres and onto medical facilities delivering the inoculations," Hughes said.

"We know the procedures well. We need to scale them up to the magnitude that will be required." IATA is working with airlines, airports, global health bodies and pharmaceutical firms to pull together plans for a distribution program, calling it the industry's "largest single transport challenge ever", he said.

There are as many as 250 different vaccine programs under development, said Hughes, citing the World Health Organization. Governments have invested billions of dollars to develop a vaccine at an accelerated pace and eleven possibilities are understood to be in late-stage trials. But while U.S. President Donald Trump has been touting the arrival of a vaccine as early as this month or by November, most experts suggested a more realistic estimate was mid-2021.

IATA has launched ONE Source, an online platform to help the air cargo industry match shipping needs with the infrastructure capabilities of cargo for pharmaceuticals and also certifications of service providers in the value chain.

"This is particularly timely amid the COVID-19 crisis when shippers of medical supplies and pharmaceuticals need accurate information for time-and temperature sensitive shipments," explained the airline body. "ONE Source lists the latest operational information about airlines, airports, cargo handling facilities, freight forwarders, ground handlers, shippers, and trucking companies. All critical information contained on ONE Source has been verified by IATA for accuracy. IATA ONE Source is free for all service providers across the air cargo supply chain," IATA said.

Hughes said air cargo has been essential in the global fight against COVID-19, transporting vital equipment and medicines to those who need them most. "However, with over 3,500 differently sized cargo handling facilities worldwide, until now the industry has lacked visibility about the capacities and services these facilities offer," he said. "The need for greater transparency is even more critical in the current context."

Even with military precision planning, Hughes said flights to Africa, Latin America and parts of Southeast Asia, which lack vaccine production capabilities, will be especially challenging.

Developing markets rely almost wholly on cargo carried in the bellies of passenger planes, many of which remain grounded from the COVID-19 plague. For example, Hughes said, distributing a vaccine in Africa would be "impossible" now, given a lack of capacity combined with the size of the region, its thin surface transport infrastructure and the complexities of border crossings. ■

Singapore Airlines pilots offer deeper salary cuts to save cockpit jobs

Anyone familiar with Singapore Airlines (SIA) group CEO, Goh Choon Phong, knows cutting 4,300 jobs from the group's payroll was the most difficult task of his career. But the catastrophic impact of COVID-19 left him with no choice, reports associate editor and chief correspondent, Tom Ballantyne.

After the latest round of Singapore Airline Group retrenchments were announced in mid-September, the airline group's pilots agreed to take deeper cuts in their salaries so more of their cockpit colleagues could remain employed, Singapore's Straits Times has reported.

In addition to a cut in their Monthly Variable component benefit, re-employed captains and first officers will have their salaries reduced by 60% and 50%, respectively, at SIA and SilkAir. The new pay rates apply from October 1 to March 31 next year. The group employed approximately 2,600 pilots before the pandemic took hold, the newspaper said.

"The company will implement additional pay cuts for all remaining pilots at Singapore Airlines and SilkAir with effect from October 1. As a result, this agreement will help mitigate future job losses for our pilots," an airline group spokesman said.

Unlike many airlines in times of crisis, Singapore Airlines (SIA) tries to avoid mass sackings. So its announcement last month that retrenchments were unavoidable because of COVID-19 made clear the challenges the airline group faced.

In a message sent to more than 17,000 staff in mid-September, CEO Goh Choon Phong painted a grim picture of the group's situation. There had been a "catastrophic" 99.5% decline in passenger carriage in the first quarter of fiscal year 2020-2021, he said, and the group was operating only 8% of its capacity compared with pre-COVID-19 times.

"Relative to most other major airlines in the world, the SIA Group is in an even more vulnerable position," Goh said. "We do not have a domestic market which, as demonstrated in many countries, is the first to recover in air traffic.

"Given the expectation the road to recovery will be long and fraught with uncertainty it has come to the point where we have had to make the painfully difficult decision of implementing involuntary staff reduction measures."

The airline is eliminating around 4,300 positions across SIA, its subsidiaries SilkAir and Scoot and outports. Some job reduction targets have been met by not filling vacancies, offering a generous Special Early Retirement Scheme (SERS) for ground staff and pilots and a Voluntary Release Scheme (VRS) for cabin crew. But another 2,400 jobs have to go.

In May, the SIA Group reported a net loss of US$155.8 million for the 12 months to March 31, a reversal from a $502 million profit a year earlier. In July, it announced it had lost $538 million in January to March, down from the $149.2 million net profit it reported in the same months a year ago. It was the largest quarterly loss in the history of the company.

SIA has done its best to soften the blow for departing employees. Retrenched staff will continue to receive their salaries until December 15 and will retain their medical coverage and other benefits until the same date.

Each affected employee will be paid in lieu of the notice period in their employment contract, which can be up to three months of salary. Those who have been in service for two years or more will receive one month of pay for every year of service, capped at 25 months.

Sadly, in an industry that not long ago was fretting about potential cockpit crew shortages, a new generation of pilots will have their careers put on hold. SIA has had let go about half of its 400 cadet pilots and cabin crew trainees. A spokesman said those who remain will be supported through their training programmes, but the airline could not keep them after that due to the "current surplus in staff numbers". SIA will be open to hiring them should there be demand for cabin crew or junior pilots when air travel returns to pre-Covid levels, the airline said.

For Goh, all of this has been an emotional experience. "For our impacted colleagues, please know this is not a reflection of your individual strengths and capabilities. It is the result of an unprecedented travel paralysis brought about by a global pandemic. Please also be assured we will conduct the process in a fair and respectful manner and do our best to ensure you receive all necessary support during this very trying time," he told employees in his message

Nobody could have predicted the devastating impact of COVID-19, he said. "Eight months on, the number of carriers that have collapsed continues to rise. It is not clear who will ultimately survive this crisis. From airlines and airports to aircraft manufacturers and suppliers, everyone has taken sweeping steps to cut costs – including drastic measures to reduce staff numbers - and prepare for an uncertain future," he said.

"The future remains extremely challenging. The pandemic is not under control, with some countries experiencing second and third waves. We do not have a vaccine and tight border restrictions remain in place as governments try to limit imported cases. Global economic growth remains anaemic, with little impetus for the return of international leisure and business travel." ■

Southeast Asia's emerging powerhouses

China and India have long been touted as the growth engines of Asian aviation but two other nations promise to be future powerhouses of the airline industry. After the pandemic, Vietnam will almost certainly be one of the region's winner.

By associate editor and chief correspondent, Tom Ballantyne

It is no accident Vietnam's airline sector is leading the way in recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. The country's government acted swiftly when the outbreak began and despite a recent increase in cases the situation appears to be under control.

The result? A study released last month by Oxford Economics forecasts Vietnam is expected to be the only Southeast Asian economy to report expansion this year, with its GDP to rise by 2.3%.

The Global Economic Outlook report said recovery prospects look brightest for Vietnam, which had contained the COVID-19 outbreak very effectively until recently. Vietnam's performance stands in stark contrast to the rest of Southeast Asia, where growth is predicted to contract by 4.2% in 2020.

Vietnam's domestic flight network had returned to 2019 levels in recent months until another wave of the virus, in July and August, saw services fall by around 30%. Nevertheless, General Director of Vietnam Airlines, Duong Tri Thanh, has said domestic flights in the last five months of the year would be around 70% of last year, much higher numbers than most other countries in the region.

What the figures indicate, according to analysts, is when restrictions on international travel ease, the Vietnamese aviation sector will be well positioned to attract growing numbers of tourists and foreign investment.

The Vietnamese government's approach to the COVID-19 crisis has been steady and measured. For example, Hanoi froze approval of entrant airlines until 2022. Transport Minister, Nguyen Van The, said supporting existing operators must take top priority. There are five commercial airlines operating within Vietnam, but two players dominate the market. Flag carrier, Vietnam Airlines (VNA), and low-cost carrier, VietJet Air, command a combined 75% market share. Pacific Airways (formerly Jetstar Pacific), a wholly-owned VNA subsidiary after Qantas Airways recently offloaded its 30% holding, has another 10%. Newcomer Bamboo Airlines is the fourth major airline in the county and VASCO, another VNA subsidiary, plays a minor role.

Vietnam's Hanoi-Ho Chi Minh City is the world's fourth busiest domestic pair in seats offered and the most lucrative in-country route in Southeast Asia. Vietnamese air travel has grown nearly 20% annually for the past five years. In response, the Transport Ministry plans to spend $15.4 billion to develop 23 airports by 2030.

There are high barriers to entry into the Vietnam air passenger market for foreign aviation companies; specifically a cap of 34% ownership of a domestic airline. Southeast Asia's largest budget carrier, the AirAsia Group, has made four unsuccessful attempts to add the nation to its network. Vietnam remains the only country in the region that does not have foreign-owned budget airlines operating in its home market.

Last month, Vietnam Airlines and Vietjet resumed international flying post the pandemic hiatus with flights from South Korea. Vietjet, which is marketing itself as a new age carrier, sweetened its September 30 re-launch of Seoul-Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) and Seoul-Hanoi-HCMC from October 7 with a new deluxe ticket class and upgraded benefits for members of its Skyboss frequent flyer brand. Members will be offered business class style services, including priority check-in and boarding, luggage packages and seat selection.

Vietnam Airlines beat VietJet in re-opening the Seoul-Vietnam route by a few days, but the vibrant LCC, along with young full service Bamboo Airways, is testing the mettle of the flag carrier both domestically and regionally.

While there remains a great deal of uncertainty about the impact of the pandemic on Asia-Pacific airlines, it is assumed that recovery will come at some stage. And if past performance is anything to go by, Vietnam will resume its spectacular growth in the aviation sector.

The International Air Transport Association's (IATA) statistics show Vietnam is one of five global markets with the largest increases in passengers after China, U.S., India and Indonesia. Its annual growth rate from 2011 to 2015 was 32.65%. The total Vietnam aviation industry, including international traffic, increased by 2.6 times in scale, from 23.7 million passengers in 2011 to 61.2 million in 2017.

By 2030, the Boston Consulting Group forecasts 16% of Vietnamese will be affluent compared with 5% in 2018, another factor offering the promise of more major growth in the country.

Like Vietnam, Indonesia has seen impressive growth in its aviation sector since the airline industry was deregulated in 2000. Airline passengers have increased from nine million in 1990 to around 90 million in 2016 and the country's airline fleets have soared more than ten-fold, from 102 aeroplanes in 1990 to 1,030 in 2017. Airline expansion has been underpinned by the country's economic growth, the emergence of LCCs and the expansion of the country's middle class.

But unlike Vietnam, Indonesia has not managed the pandemic outbreak competently. As a result, its growth has stalled, especially as it already has growing pains ranging from lack of safety overnight and airline mismanagement that has led to airline losses. It does not, however, detract from the potential for growth post-pandemic.

Indonesia's unique geography, with most of its major cities separated by mountain ranges and seas means transportation by land or sea can take days and this gives the aviation sector a competitive edge. While there are more than 60 scheduled and unscheduled airlines operating in Indonesia the market is dominated by flag carrier, Garuda Indonesia, its domestic subsidiary Citilink and Indonesia's largest airline, budget Lion Air. Other operators include Batik Air, a Lion subsidiary, Malindo Air and Thai Lion Air. Before the crisis domestic traffic was reporting double-digit growth for five years.

All in all, post the COVID-19 recovery there is little reason to doubt the miserable hiatus in air passenger services is merely a pause in both Vietnam and Indonesia before they resume their rapid trajectories. ■

Vietnam early responder to re-opening international flights

Vietnam Airlines flew Seoul Incheon to Hanoi's Noi Bai International airport with an A350-900 on September 25 after a six-month hiatus in operating international flights. Passengers were tested for the COVID-19 virus after they disembarked from the journey.

It was the first international commercial flight to Vietnam since the outbreak of the corona virus early this year.

Deputy director of the country's Civil Aviation Administration of Vietnam, Vo Huy Cuong, said: "this is not only the first international flight to Vietnam after COVID-19, but also a 'trial flight' to evaluate our operational capability to welcome international visitors by way of our local industry.

"This flight denotes a substantial recovery for Vietnamese aviation that realises the government's dual goal of fighting the pandemic and promoting economic development, embracing the "new normal" with more development opportunities."

Bamboo Airways accepts first two Embraer E195 jets

Vietnam's first full-service private carrier, Bamboo Airways, is to operate its newly arrived E195 jets from Hanoi to tourist hot spot, the southern island of Con Dao, 1,400 kilometres (760 nautical miles) from the nation's capital, Hanoi. The jet service to the island will provide a staging point for visitors to a 16 island archipelago off the southern coast of Vietnam.

Bamboo Airways, which is targeting the middle to high end leisure market, initially will service Con Dao with two flights a day from Hanoi and once daily from Vinh and Hai Phong. It will be equipped with a business class in its 118 seat configuration.

Bamboo Airways executive vice chairman, Dang Tat Thang, said the Embraer E195's short runway performance made it ideal for flights to Con Dao, which falls short in runway maintenance and aircraft fuel supply.

The Hanoi-headquartered company, owned by travel to property and mining conglomerate, FLC Group, began flying in January 2019 with the aim of achieving five star status for the carrier as it built its network in Vietnam and internationally. Pre-COVID-19, it was operating 51 domestic and regional routes and had transported five million passengers since its launch. ■

NO BACKING OFF LOWER EMISSIONS TARGETS PROMISES INDUSTRY

Global aviation remains on track with its commitment to achieving a 50% reduction in emissions by 2050 from 2005 levels, reports associate editor and chief correspondent, Tom Ballantyne.

With aviation losses mounting by billions of dollars a month from the coronavirus pandemic, the industry could be forgiven for losing sight of ambitious environmental targets. Mid-pandemic, survival is the name of the game as airlines slash capacity and store thousands of jets in airline parking lots; a situation that probably delights an extremist wing of the climate movement that has long targeted airlines as major global polluters.

Despite the enormity of the crisis the airline industry is experiencing, it has recommitted to its ambitious emissions reduction targets. "The bottom line is it's still critically important for the industry to continue to push for sustainability and meet the 2050 targets set in stone in 2016," said former CNN journalist and Head of Communications Environment at the International Air Transport Association (IATA), Andrew Stevens.

"There is no doubt this is going to be more difficult given the financial situation of the airlines, but we have not seen clear evidence airlines are pulling back on their commitments. For example, I have not seen anything that suggested, at this stage at least, that airlines will not honour their commitments to the uptake of sustainable aviation fuel."

It is a view shared across the industry. Last month the oneworld alliance, which represents 13 major airline groups, including leading Asia-Pacific carriers Cathay Pacific Group, Japan Airlines and the Qantas Group, re-confirmed its commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2050. It is the first global airline alliance to unite behind a common target to achieve carbon neutrality.

Also in September, manufacturer Airbus announced developments in its hydrogen powered jet. Rival Boeing is continuing its research and the design of the B787 ecoDemonstrator in joint partnership with Etihad Airways.

Engine manufacturers, whose development work is critical to achieving ultimate sustainability, are pursuing emissions mitigation programs. "The pandemic has actually brought the aviation industry forward by focusing attention on sustainability and how we need to advance technologies that help the aviation industry drive down CO_2 emissions,"

Pratt & Whitney senior vice president, engineering, Geoff Hunt, told Orient Aviation last month.

As a result of the pandemic, the engine manufacturer has reduced its workforce, cut capital expenditure and prioritized investments, but Hunt said one program Pratt & Whitney has kept front and centre is the Geared Turbofan™ engine (GTF™). "We believe the geared turbofan architecture we pioneered has room to develop and deliver improvements in fuel efficiency and lower emissions, particularly NOx," he said.

Rolls-Royce has announced the completion of tests on ground-breaking technology that will power the world's fastest all-electric plane. "Rolls-Royce's announcement follows the unveiling of Airbus's three zero-emission commercial aircraft models. It is another indication aerospace companies are increasingly attempting to align their businesses to a future market emphasising climate consciousness, GlobalData Aerospace and Defense Associate Analyst, Harry Boneham, said.

Results of a poll conducted by Globescan, released in September, identified growing numbers of people are "very concerned" about climate change, despite the pandemic and the subsequent economic impact of the virus. Across the 27 countries surveyed, around 90% of respondents viewed climate change as a very serious or somewhat serious problem. That finding has strengthened in recent years. In the UK, long time climate change advocate, the Prince of Wales, has warned the climate crisis will "dwarf" the impact of the pandemic.

At the turn of the month, China joined the front line of the anti-emissions flight with President Xi Jinping's commitment for his nation to reach carbon neutrality by 2060.

For more than a decade, aviation, with IATA as its lead spokesperson, has been at the forefront of seeking the science to address the global challenge of climate change and establish ambitious targets to mitigate CO_2 emissions from air transport. The targets remain to achieve an average improvement in fuel efficiency of 1.5% per year from 2009 to 2020, a cap on net aviation CO_2 emissions from 2020 (carbon neutral growth) and a 50% reduction in net aviation CO_2 emissions by 2050 relative to 2005 levels.

In March, Montreal-headquartered International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) agreed the types of carbon offset units eligible for compliance with the world's first global sector climate mechanism, the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA).

MORE THAN 80 COUNTRIES HAVE COMMITTED TO THE INDUSTRY'S CARBON OFFSETTING SCHEME

At press time, 82 countries had agreed to participate in the first and voluntary phase of CORSIA. It is estimated about 80% of the growth in international aviation's CO_2 will be covered by the scheme from the end of this year.

These developments were debated at the Air Transport Action Group's (ATAG) 2020 Global Sustainable Aviation Forum - Green Recovery, a virtual, on-line event at the turn of the month that brought together representatives from all sectors of the industry to discuss aviation sustainability beyond COVID-19.

ICAO council president, Salvatore Sciacchitano, told the ATAG virtual summit "health and safety, and the fundamental economic viability of operators must be assured".

"But we also must recognise the opportunity this crisis provides to build back commercial aviation greener," he said.

ATAG executive director, Michael Gill, said "2020 was supposed to be, alongside 2019, the baseline for the CORSIA programme".

"An average of the two years was agreed to smooth any potential downturn in traffic in either year, but a situation as grave as the one we face was never contemplated. It is much too early to determine the impact of COVID-19 will have on the CORSIA baseline. We will continue to monitor how the situation evolves over time. However, any modelling done today will be out of date in a week," he said.

"It is very clear 2020 is a completely abnormal situation. In the meantime, we have an industry to rebuild and a world to reconnect."

While there is a major reduction in aviation's contribution to global emissions this year given the number of aircraft on the ground, at some stage growth will resume. IATA's Stevens said: "For the return to normal growth we are forecasting 2024, but the numbers just get worse and worse.

"We have not updated that, but we will have a new financial forecast for the industry around the AGM in November. I can't imagine they are going to be any better. They could be worse.

"Given this has gone on a lot longer than anyone thought, returning to normal may be pushed further and further out. There is a school of thought the trajectory of growth in the airline industry post COVID-19 will not return [to past performance]. We will go back to growth rates but we won't be at the same level of air traffic in numbers by 2050 that we expected before the crisis."

The pandemic has removed large numbers of bigger, less fuel-efficient aircraft from airline fleets. "I guess you can say it's a bit of a double-edged sword," said Stevens. Airlines are taking the big ones out of service but the other side of the coin is fleet renewal will be more of a challenge, that is getting more efficient planes to replace the older planes, he said.

"I can't see fleet renewal will continue at the pace it was originally planned, at least not in the immediate few years. Yes, the environmentalists will be pretty happy when they look up at the sky now, but the bottom line is the world still needs air travel and connectivity. The COVID crisis will reveal what it means to the global economy when you do not have air travel, when you do not have planes in the sky," he said.

ONEWORLD ALLIANCE COMMITS TO NET ZERO EMISSIONS BY 2050

Oneworld's environmental goals underscore its carriers' sustainability focus. The alliance's chairman and Qantas Group CEO, Alan Joyce, said the commitment of oneworld members to reach net zero emissions by 2050, from 2005 levels, "underlines the importance we, as an alliance, place on becoming a more sustainable industry. Despite the challenges we are all facing from the COVID-19 pandemic, we have not lost sight of the responsibility we have to reduce emissions in the long term. Today's announcement reflects the strength of that commitment."

Japan Airlines (JAL) president, Yuji Akasaka, said his airline fully recognises the industry will play a vital role in promoting a sustainable future and proudly supports the alliance in achieving net zero carbon emissions by the year 2050. "In recent years, the JAL Group has invested in the development of sustainable aviation fuel to contribute to building a firm supply chain for the airline industry," he said.

Malaysia Airlines Berhad CEO, Captain Izham Ismail said: "Congratulations to the oneworld alliance, Malaysia Airlines is proud to be in support of this amazing initiative together with our fellow member airlines towards driving the long-term sustainability of the aviation industry. We seek to play a greater part in building a legacy for future generations and are enhancing our own airline's contribution to global sustainability efforts."

Interestingly, the oneworld targets are well ahead of IATA's goals. Several member airlines are actively prioritising a range of environmental sustainability initiatives. IAG (the parent of member carriers British Airways and Iberia) was the first airline group worldwide to commit to net zero carbon emissions by 2050. JAL and Qantas also have targeted net zero carbon emissions by 2050, while Finnair is aiming even higher, with the goal of carbon neutrality by 2045.

"They've decided they are going to go carbon neutral, zero emissions by 2050 that is more aggressive than IATA, which is fantastic," Stevens said. "And to say this in the middle of the COVID crisis underlines a commitment and focus to doing this. 2050 is still a long way out but to have that reinforcement at this time is very gratifying."

In some quarters, however, there remain questions about the ability of aviation to reach the 2050 targets. In a July report, senior associate, transportation and infrastructure research at Sustainalytics, Helene Gaudin, said airlines are in dire need of cash to recover yet the industry is expected to adapt and prepare itself for the more critical crisis of climate change.

"Despite the slowdown of air travel, long-term prospects for mitigating the carbon footprint of the industry are not clear. Carbon commitments supported by comprehensive programs are in place. Nonetheless, our research suggests existing measures may not be sufficient to curve down emissions and mitigate climate change," she said.

The financial struggle of the industry and the required state support for it is a rare opportunity for governments to invest in cleaner solutions and dictate environmental conditions such as taxing fossil fuels and requiring the use of greener energy sources. It would undoubtedly be fiercely contested by airlines, already suffering under heavy tax burdens, she forecast.

IATA is fighting proposed environmental taxes in France, which it calculated would fail to decarbonize the aviation sector but would eliminate 150,000 French aviation jobs. The Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat (CCC) - a citizens' body created under President Macron – is proposing measures to curb aviation emissions, including an eco-tax on tickets issued in France, to raise $4.9 billion annually. France already collects some of the highest aviation taxes in Europe. IATA director general and CEO, Alexander de Juniac, warned such unilateral

national taxes could jeopardize CORSIA, which is calculated to mitigate a billion tonnes of carbon emissions.

Gaudin cited former EU (European Union) climate chief, Miguel Arias Cañete, who has predicted the end of the pandemic not only would return airline carbon emissions to their pre-COVID-19 levels but could exceed these levels if nothing was done. "The historical fall of fossil fuel prices also may impede the necessary actions to clean up the aviation industry and encourage a return to a 'business as usual' model that is undeniably damaging our planet," Gaudin said.

AIRCRAFT RECYCLING COMPANIES FACING "A TSUNAMI OF DEMAND" FROM COST-CUTTING CARRIERS

Sustainability is not only about emissions. The pandemic is putting pressure on other sectors of the industry. In the field of aircraft recycling, planes dismantled for parts or scrap could double to 1,000 annually to 2023, up from roughly 400 to 500 planes a year since 2016, reported data consultancy Cirium. The fate of the world's pool of grounded planes is being closely watched by the market for Used Serviceable Material, with one report from consultants Oliver Wyman forecasting "a tsunami of demand" for such parts as airlines cut costs.

The pandemic, which is expected to result in a 55% drop in 2020 passenger numbers, has prompted early retirements of older planes. While companies that park, dismantle and buy and sell used aircraft parts see opportunity in parked planes, a sudden increase in the supply of used parts risks depressing prices in the estimated $3 billion a year industry, despite demand from airlines seeking to lower maintenance costs.

Ultimately, Pratt & Whitney's Hunt said there is no "silver bullet" to solving the climate impact of commercial aviation. "It will take a basket of solutions, including sustainable aviation fuels from green, non-food stock sources, electric and electric-hybrid and alternative fuel from renewable and green sources," he said.

"Engine makers have been focused on reducing climate impact and increasing fuel efficiency for decades. In this regard, it took 20 years and a $10 billion investment for Pratt & Whitney to create the Geared Turbofan™ engine – the first new architecture engine of the modern era, and we intend to keep innovating solutions for the good of the planet."

With aviation focusing intently on environmental goals, it is ironic the industry continues to be a target for climate action protagonists. The sensitivity of the emissions issue and the criticism of airline actions, despite their sustainability goals, won't go away. One example, even in times of crisis, is the numerous "flights to nowhere".

They take off on a sightseeing route and return to the same departure airport. They are being offered by airlines to raise cash and to operate some aircraft in desperate times. In the Asia-Pacific, they are being flown by All Nippon Airways, Japan Airlines, Taiwan's China Airlines and EVA Air and Qantas - among others. Environmental campaigners are describing these limited flights as "gimmicks" and "simply emissions for the sake of it". ■

Airbus reveals zero emission concept aircraft

Last month Airbus unveiled three concepts for zero emissions aircraft that could enter service in 15 years.

All code-named ZEROe, they are a 120-200 passenger turbofan airplane with a range of 2,000 plus nautical miles, a turboprop model for 100 passengers powered by a turboprop engine instead of a turbofan engine and a blended wing body design for 200 passengers.

In the blended wing body design, the wings merge with the main body of the aircraft. It will have a range similar to the turbofan and an exceptionally wide fuselage, Airbus said.

All three concept aircraft rely on hydrogen as the primary power source.

Airbus CEO, Guillaume Faury, said at the unveiling of the prototypes last month he strongly believed the use of hydrogen – both in synthetic fuels and as a primary power source for commercial aircraft – has the potential to significantly reduce aviation's climate impact".

TECHNOLOGY

Travelport appoints new chief marketing officer

Equipped with two decades of senior management marketing experience, multi-lingual **Jennifer Cato** has been chosen as **Travelport's** chief marketing officer and a member of the company's Senior Leadership Team. Based in New York, Cato's responsibilities are to market Travelport's travel and payment solutions to offline and online travel buyers worldwide. ■

CABIN INTERIORS

STELIA unveils OPERA business class seat

STELIA aerospace, a global manufacturer of pilot and premium passenger cabin aircraft seating, has launched OPERA, a business class seat specifically designed for single aisle airliners.

Its features include:

- *Widest full-flat bed for single aisle business class cabins*
- *20 inch IFE monitors*
- *Improved privacy with a door fully integrated into the unit's design*
- *Closed amenity and laptop/device stowage*
- *Large meal table stowed under cocktail table*
- *Adjustable arm rests*

STELIA Aerospace vice president cabin interiors, Thiery Kanengieser, said with OPERA, airlines operating single aisle aircraft on intercontinental routes can offer passengers the comfort they have on wide-bodies. "Combining design and efficiency, this new seat is a major step forward for our industry," he said.

STELIA also is a global leader in aero structures, designing and manufacturing the front fuselage sections of the Airbus family of aircraft, the Toulouse-headquartered OEM's fuselage sections and specific sub-assemblies, ATR's fully equipped wings and fully equipped wings for other commercial aircraft types produced by Embraer and Boeing. ■

MRO AND COMPONENTS

China's AMECO invests in facilities to service the Pratt & Whitney GTF engine

Beijing MRO, **AMECO**, is joining the **Pratt & Whitney global EngineWise** service network as a GTF maintenance provider after the joint venture company committed to investing in the necessary technology to service the engine type. The engine manufacturer said last month it plans to have 10 active GTF MRO engine centres in operation by year-end.

AMECO Business of Beijing chairman, Ni Jiliang, said the MRO has had a long-term and stable relationship with Pratt & Whitney and that the U.S. engine maker's GTF engine was perfectly in line with AMECO's corporate strategy.

Since a restructuring of the MRO in 2015, Air China Ltd has held 75% of the company and Lufthansa 25%. It will be the fourth facility in Asia supporting the GTF alongside Eagle Services Asia in Singapore and IHI and MHIAEL in Japan.

Pratt & Whitney vice president commercial aftermarket, David Emmering, said AMECO will be the first GTF MRO network shop in China. Eleven Mainland airlines fly 140 A320neo powered by GTF engines. ■

India's Air Works named Marketing Campaign of 2020 at MRO Asia-Pacific

India's Air Works managing director and CEO, Anand Bhaskar, said being the winner of MRO Asia-Pacific's award for Marketing Campaign of 2020 was the first such recognition for any MRO in India.

"With supportive taxation policies, the Indian MRO sector is poised for faster growth in coming years and the Asia-Pacific will play a critical role in making the country an industry hub," he said from the MRO's headquarters in Gurugram (Gurgaon) in outer Delhi.

"Bagging the Marketing Campaign of the Year reflects the consistent delivery capabilities of Air Works' service quality over seven decades," he said.

"It also acts as a beacon of success in times to come for the entire Indian MRO ecosystem, in sync with the [India] government's ambition."

Air Works began a strategic transformation in 2018 built around an expanded social media presence that aims to strengthen the 70-year-old company's relationships with customers, partners and employees.

Air Works associate vice president brand and communications, Gaurav Sahni, said: "As Indian MROs increasingly upscale and synchronise with the global aviation ecosystem, marketing and communication will play an even greater role in promoting the visibility and capabilities of the sector."

Air Works is India's largest line maintenance provider to global airlines, is certified to maintain more than 50 aircraft types and operates 27 centres across India staffed with 1,300 employees. It also offers commercial aircraft asset management and aircraft finishing services to the global market. This year marks the 50th anniversary of its maintenance of rotary wing machines, the MRO said. ■

Orient aviation

ORIENT AVIATION AND E-ORIENT AVIATION

NOVEMBER 2020

CHINA'S domestic airline industry carried 10% more passengers in the first week of October compared with a year ago. Factors contributing to the 15 million trips and the airlines' COVID-19 recovery trajectory are demand for local travel as international borders remain closed, lucrative travel packages and heavily discounted fares.

IN OUR NOVEMBER ISSUE: Orient Aviation will focus on the next stage of the Mainland industry's recovery – international travel – a sector still shrouded in uncertainty not just for China but for all of the long-haul dependent carriers of the Asia-Pacific.

DECEMBER-JANUARY 2020

THE YEAR NO ONE WILL FORGET

IN THE FINAL EDITIONS OF 2020, Orient Aviation and e-Orient Aviation will report the industry's forecast for 2021 against a backdrop of the most devastating 12 months in the history of Asia-Pacific aviation. Predictions for a full recovery for the region's airlines, based on pre-COVID-19 levels, vary from late 2021 to 2024. Uncertainty is the only certainty about the future health of the industry, our editorial team will report.

THE 2020 YEAR IN REVIEW: Also in December-January, we will take readers down aviation's memory lane, recalling the landmark events and appointments in Asia-Pacific aviation in 2020 - a year that has transformed the structures, ambitions and expansion strategies of the region's airlines.

Orient aviation 27 YEARS

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