

PRESS RELEASE

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December 2020 / Traffic / Preliminary

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International Air Travel Decimated in 2020

Air Cargo a Silver Lining and could play Vital Role in Recovery

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia – Preliminary traffic results for the full calendar year 2020 released today by the Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA) underscored the collapse of international airline operations in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 69 million passengers carried by Asia Pacific airlines in the year 2020 represented only 18% of volumes recorded in 2019, an extent of decline in 12 months not seen in the region's history of commercial aviation. Offered seat capacity was similarly just 26% of the levels recorded in 2019, while the international passenger load factor averaged a lowly 61%.

Asia Pacific airlines account for over a third of global air cargo traffic with strong networks and logistics expertise built up over the years. During the global pandemic, the region's carriers have played a vital role in transporting medical supplies including vaccines, personal protective equipment and other essential goods, even though capacity was severely restricted as a result of the wide scale grounding of passenger aircraft. As global economic activity rebounded in the latter half of the year, the increase in export orders grew with the rising demand for the speedy delivery of merchandise by air.

In December 2020, air cargo demand improved further in freight tonne kilometres (FTK), recording a single digit year on-year decline of 6.4%. For the calendar year, international air cargo demand fell by 15.5%, whilst offered freight capacity plunged by 24.4%. The average international freight load factor rose significantly, by 7 percentage points to 66.4% in 2020, with cargo yields offering a welcome boost to operating revenue, although airlines continued to face an existential crisis with commercial passenger operations remaining at a standstill.

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Commenting on the results, AAPA Director General Mr. Subhas Menon, said, “The dismal numbers underline the severity of the impact of the pandemic on the airline industry. The discovery of several effective vaccines towards the end of 2020 provided hope that recovery was on the horizon as large scale vaccinations of their people, will give governments the confidence to allow travellers from abroad without restrictions”.

Mr. Menon added, “It will take time for the roll-out of vaccinations across the world, as well as for the pandemic to recede globally. Looking ahead, many industry challenges remain, as restrictions on cross border travel will continue to affect air travel demand in 2021. We encourage governments to step up coordination efforts on cross border risk mitigation measures and health protocols. The implementation of harmonised protocols, incorporating the ICAO CART Take-Off Guidance, is imperative for the safe resumption of travel. Asia Pacific aviation is ready and willing to play its part in the successful restart and recovery in the region.”

TRAFFIC UPDATE – PRELIMINARY
International Scheduled Services of Asia Pacific Airlines

International	Dec-20	Dec-19	% Change	Jan-Dec 2020	Jan-Dec 2019	% Change
Passengers (Thousand)	1,550	33,802	- 95.4%	69,483	383,542	- 81.9%
RPK (Million)	5,794	124,211	- 95.3%	271,488	1,402,185	- 80.6%
ASK (Million)	19,811	151,341	- 86.9%	447,053	1,732,169	- 74.2%
Passenger Load Factor	29.2%	82.1%	- 52.9 pp	60.7%	80.9%	- 20.2 pp
FTK (Million)	5,813	6,208	- 6.4%	60,210	71,223	- 15.5%
FATK (Million)	8,085	10,391	- 22.2%	90,638	119,868	- 24.4%
Freight Load Factor	71.9%	59.7%	+ 12.2 pp	66.4%	59.4%	+ 7.0 pp

Effective January 2020, the dataset comprises aggregated traffic data from the following 40 Asia Pacific based carriers: 3K, 5J, 6E, 7C, 9C, 9W, AI, AK, BI, BR, CA, CI, CK, CX, CZ, D7, GA, HO, HU, IX, JL, JQ, KA, KC, KE, KZ, MH, MU, NH, NZ, OZ, PG, PR, QF, SG, SQ, TG, TR, VA and VN.

Previous year data adjusted for comparison purposes

- RPK = revenue passenger kilometres
- ASK = available seat kilometres
- FTK = freight tonne kilometres
- FATK = available freight tonne kilometres

All figures, including estimates for missing data, are provisional

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Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA)

The AAPA is the trade association for scheduled international airlines based in the Asia-Pacific region. The AAPA permanent secretariat is headquartered in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia with international representation in Brussels and Washington, D.C. Collectively, the region's airlines carry 1,623 million passengers and 23 million tonnes of cargo, representing over one-third of global passenger and air cargo traffic, and thus play a leading role in the ongoing development of global aviation.

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