

UMRAH FLIGHTS

Amal eyes Indonesian and Thai pilgrims

SEPANG: Malaysia Airlines Bhd has officially launched Amal, a service dedicated to haj and umrah pilgrimages that is set to pave the way for the airline's turnaround.

Malaysia Aviation Group chief executive officer (CEO) Captain Izham Ismail said Amal could be a significant revenue contributor to the group.

"We see a big potential for the haj and umrah market and we have the added advantage of having years of experience providing such a service.

"The opportunity is not just in Malaysia, but also in Thailand and Indonesia," said Izham at the launch, here, yesterday.

He said Indonesia in particular, with a Muslim population 10 times larger than Malaysia's, was an under-served market.

"We aim to establish an air transport system and infrastructure dedicated to haj and umrah for Muslim pilgrims from Asean countries," he added.



Economic Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Azmin Ali (seated, left) and Saudi Arabia ambassador to Malaysia Mahmud Hussein Saeed Al Qattan (seated, right) at the launch of Amal in Sepang yesterday. With them are (from second left) Amal chief executive officer Hazman Hilmi Sallahudin, Amal chairman Tan Sri Zamzamzairani Mohd Isa and Malaysia Aviation Group chief executive officer Captain Izham Ismail. PIC BY MOHD FADLI HAMZAH

Amal chief executive officer Hazman Hilmi Sallahudin said the charter airline was expected to contribute between 10 and 15 per cent in revenue to MAG over the next two years, from five per cent now.

"We want to position Amal as the preferred regional pilgrimage airline, penetrating the Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand markets.

"We are trying to increase our market share to about 55 per cent from an expected 250,000 pilgrims performing their umrah this year," he said.

Amal is also aiming for 10 per cent of Indonesia's expected one million umrah pilgrims in the next two years, and 13,000 more from Thailand.

"We have six A380 aircraft specially designated for umrah and haj charter services.

"It is a privilege to be part of our pilgrims' remarkable journey and we envisage Amal to be the best pilgrimage carrier in the world through an enriched onboard experience," he said.

Hazman is hopeful that Amal will improve the overall quality of

services in the pilgrimage market, which is often associated with non-premium services.

"As Saudi Arabia aims to quadruple the number of pilgrim arrivals to 30 million by 2030, Amal is honoured to play a part in making Saudi Arabia's vision a great success," he said.

Amal's unique onboard experiences include Talbiyah (pre-umrah/haj prayer), Doa Musaffir (special prayer for pilgrims), Azan (call of prayer) and Tazkiyah, as well as Miqat announcement. **Ayisy Yusof**