

ASIAN AIRLINE SAFETY CHALLENGED



among the dead.

A recent air accident in the Thailand's southern province of Phuket has caused a debate about air-safety standards. The accident has happened on September 16. Ninety people out of one hundred passengers on board the One-Two-Go flight from Bangkok have died, while the 40 who survived were left with injuries of varying degrees. Fifty-five of those who died were foreigners, including Iranians, Britons, Australians, Israelis, Americans, French and Germans. The Indonesian pilot and his Thai co-pilot were

Thai officials want to restore travelers' confidence in Thai budget airlines therefore they have planned to set up a national committee that should look into the country's air-safety standards. The deputy Transport Minister Sansern Wongcha-um claims that Thai air-safety standards are up to international requirements or even better in some aspects. He nevertheless admitted that operations are sometimes not well synchronized. The committee will hold monthly meetings to exchange views and propose necessary improvements to existing regulations. Thai officials hope the committee will enable airlines, airports and all responsible personnel to work more closely towards the collective improvement of aviation safety.

The accident, nevertheless, will not negatively influence the boom in the low-cost carriers business. According to the Sydney-based consultancy Centre for Asia-Pacific Aviation (CAPA), such a negative impact is unlikely. In fact, expectations look quite good for these carriers. The consultancy predictions for next five years speaks about 40-50 per cent annual grow in the Asian region. Current low-cost carriers (LCC) capacity is about 50,000 seats and CAPA's Derek Sadubin estimates it will rise to 160,000. It is also expected that LCCs' share of the total air passenger market will roughly double to 25 per cent.

The supply of LCCs's services is driven by the rising Asian middle class demand for this kind of transport, especially in China and India. This development causes that new LCC are mushrooming all over the region, which inevitably results in worse safety standards.

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