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**AGENTS** can win a trip for two to Tokyo, including flights with All Nippon Airways and accommodation with Mimar Apartment Hotels, when they complete the new Tokyo Tourism Expert program.

For more information, see the [back page](#).

## Tourism pipeline boom

**AUSTRALIA'S** tourism investment pipeline skyrocketed by \$11.8 billion (27%) last year, ballooning from 244 projects worth a total of \$44.5 billion in 2021-22, to \$56.1bn across 307 projects in 2022-23, according to new data from Tourism Research Australia (TRA).

Contained in the *Tourism Investment Monitor 2022-23* report, the arts, recreation and business services sector saw the biggest investment growth, up a whopping 56% in 2022-23.

Racking up a total value of \$18.8bn in 2022-23, the aviation sector has also seen healthy growth, up by five projects and \$2.1bn compared with the previous year's pipeline.

A fair chunk of the aviation investment cash pool comes from the proposed Koo Wee Rup Airport in Melbourne, worth \$7bn, and the new Western Sydney Int'l Airport, currently being built to the tune of \$5.3bn.

The accommodation sector saw a modest increase in both the number and value of projects in the pipeline, with 49 new projects worth \$2.4bn, 50 under construction (\$3.2bn), and 89 (\$8bn) in the planning phase.

Queensland accounted for 42% or \$4.9bn of the total increase in the investment pipeline, with planning for the 2032 Olympics well underway, while NSW claimed the largest slice of the pie overall, accounting for 26% of the total number of projects. *JM*

## SKYE-high romance

**SKYE Suites** has partnered with *Married at First Sight* for the fifth year in a row, as the popular Aussie reality TV show kicked off its 11th season last week.

Viewers will get to see inside the luxurious SKYE Suites Green Square in Sydney, where the couples will settle in during tonight's episode, which will air on television screens across the country via Channel 9 and 9NOW at 7.30pm.

"The show is highly successful globally giving us wider int'l brand awareness," SKYE Suites Group's Area Director of Sales & Marketing, Ari Foo, said.

"To this day we receive hundreds of enquiries and bookings specifically asking about the hotel after seeing it on *Married at First Sight*."

Learn about SKYE Suites' accommodation packages [HERE](#).

## Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today features eight pages of news including a photo page from **Virtuoso** and our **Sustainability** page, plus full pages from:

- CLIA
- Tokyo Tourism

## EK returns to ADL

**EMIRATES** has announced it will make a return to Adelaide, with the carrier to fly daily between South Australia's capital and Dubai from 28 Oct.

"[The Emirates service] is set to deliver an estimated \$160 million in tourism expenditure and freight exports and create more than 315 full-time tourism-related jobs for South Australians," enthused SA Premier Peter Malinauskas.

Emirates first launched its Adelaide services in 2012 and by 2019 was carrying 165,000 passengers on the route.


A B777-200LR (38 business & 264 economy) will be deployed.

**Wendy Wu Tours.**

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## Rail Europe tracks agents

**RAIL** Europe is pulling out all the stops to court travel agents in 2024, this morning revealing a brand-new trade campaign to make selling rail trips easier and more rewarding.

The wholesaler's 'Only Europe. Only by Train' marketing push includes a new detailed rail map that advisors can use and share to help plan clients' itineraries, with the goal of reducing the planning time for sellers and to help travellers bring down costs.

Rail Europe also revealed that from mid-Mar agents can win their dream European rail adventure through a new competition, with those who describe their ultimate rail journey to go in the running for a prize to make the trip a reality.

In addition to the reward of first class passes, the winner will also be provided with financial aid by Rail Europe to help fund airfares and ground arrangements.

Education will also be ramped up this year, with the wholesaler to release weekly updates and tips which will be shared in the form of short how-to videos to so that advisors can get the most



out of its B2B platform.

In focus will be its new Multi-Providers feature (**TD** 23 Nov 2023), which enables agents and RailAPI partners to book tickets with different providers under a single journey, as well as broader functionality hints and advice.

The bite-sized videos will complement Rail Europe's helpdesk and also encourage more connectivity between agents.

Moving forward, the company also revealed advisors can expect more AI integration in the platform to help provide more intuitive functionality.

After a tumultuous COVID period which saw a restructuring of Aussie operations in 2020 (**TD** 11 Aug 2020), Rail Europe is now seeing a strong bounceback in bookings across all markets - including Australia.

For more Rail Europe updates, see **page eight**. *AB*

## Gems of The Philippines

12 days Manila to Cebu from only \$2,899\*

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## Bali railway on track

**GOVERNMENT** officials in Bali say they are at different stages of planning but will ultimately build three new railway networks which will transform how locals and tourists explore the island.

Acting Bali Governor, Sang Made Mahendra Jaya, said the first of six railway lines will be a metro network that will connect Denpasar's Ngurah Rai International Airport with Canggu via Kuta and Seminyak.

The government is currently undertaking a feasibility study it hopes will be completed by Apr before construction can begin.

In conjunction with Indonesia's Central Government, the cost of Bali's future rail network, along with how it will be funded, is still being calculated.

Officials say they expect that once operational, 85% of people who use the new rail network will be tourists.

Acting Governor Mahendra Jaya added that a metro rail network was the preferred option to widening roads due to the density of infrastructure and narrow lane lines with hotels, bars, cafes and places of worship which may be displaced during construction.

## Four Points owners

**SAVILLS** Hotels has brokered a \$96 million off-market sale for Four Points by Sheraton Melbourne Docklands.

Binding contracts have now been signed for MA Financial to acquire the property from Singaporean owners Hiap Hoe Limited.

Four Points by Sheraton Melbourne Docklands opened to guests in 2017 and features 273 rooms, conference facilities, a swimming pool and restaurant.

**itravel**



**LEESA MCNALLY**  
*itravel Mobile, NSW*

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## He's not Dun yet!

**JAMES** Dun has this month started as Rex's National Account Manager after departing Delta Air Lines where he held a similar role.

Dun's first day on the job saw him out and about representing Rex at the Corporate Travel Management conference.

The experienced tourism industry staffer has also previously worked for Qantas Airways, Air Pacific, and more.

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## Bonvoy bonus deal

**REGISTRATIONS** are now open for Marriott Bonvoy loyalty members to take part in the 2024 edition of the hotel giant's popular Bonus Points promotion.

Members who have activated the offer will earn 1,000 bonus points and a bonus Elite Night Credit for each night booked from 13 Feb to 29 Apr.

More than 30 brands across the Marriott International network are included in the promotion.

Elite Night Credits will accelerate members' progress up the Marriott Bonvoy status ladder, with the incentive enabling Silver Elite status to be earned with five nights instead of the normal 10.

Silver status unlocks perks for members including late checkout and a 10% bonus earn on points.

Members can earn a maximum of 76,000 bonus points and 76 Elite Night Credits in the promo, with registration required before 15 Apr 2024 - **CLICK HERE**.

## Qld pitches for recovery

**THE** Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) has partnered with The University of Queensland (UQ) to unveil a resilience roadmap for the state's tourism workforce.

### Firenze has arrived

**CARNIVAL** Cruise Line has officially welcomed *Carnival Firenze* to its fleet, with sister line Costa Cruises handing the ship over at the end of last week.

Set to become the second ship featuring 'Carnival Fun Italian Style', *Firenze* will undergo a two-month refurbishment before she begins sailing year-round from Long Beach, California on 25 Apr.

Featuring Italian-inspired architecture and eateries, the ship will offer sailings to Catalina Island and the Mexican Rivera, calling in Cabo San Lucas, Mazatlan and Puerto Vallarta.

The three-year collaboration, which was led by Associate Professor Richard Robinson of UQ's Business School, resulted in a toolkit for employees, operators and other stakeholders.

The resource provides practical insights on building resilience in five of the state's key regions, with offering flexible work arrangements to employees and investing in staff mentoring and training programs among some of the recommended actions.

QTIC CEO Brett Fraser said "evidence-based, industry-led commentary must guide our future efforts in tackling tourism's workforce challenges".

The research was funded by the state government's Advance Queensland scheme.

Access the new 'Queensland Tourism Workforce Crisis Resilience and Recovery Strategy' toolkit **HERE**. JM

## Big Red dollars

**NORTH** Queensland residents are being encouraged to support the recovery of their local tourism sector following recent extreme weather via a new incentive from Big Red Group and Experience Oz.

In partnership with both the Queensland and Federal Govts, the 'Tropical Dollars' promotion offers 2,500 vouchers, each worth \$100, to 2,500 residents living in various Queensland postcodes from 4830 to 4895.

Each voucher is good for a \$100 discount on experiences priced at \$200 or more in the Cairns and Great Barrier Reef region, with vouchers now able to be claimed at the Experience Oz website.

Vouchers will be available until 29 Feb or once all have been claimed, whichever comes first, with an expiry date of 31 Mar.

Proof of residency is required to claim a voucher, with additional verification conducted by checking the user's IP address.

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## Window Seat

A FOOTBALL star's quick thinking helped to save a passenger's life during a mid-flight medical emergency.

Mark Andrews, an NFL player for the Baltimore Ravens, was said to have assisted in stabilising the heart rate of a woman during a Southwest Airlines flight from Baltimore to Phoenix last Thu.

After the medical personnel attending to the pax couldn't find a strong pulse, Andrews - who is a spokesperson for individuals with diabetes - suggested it could be her blood sugar, and told them to use his diabetic testing kit.

As a result, the passenger's heart rate balanced out and paramedics were able to attend to her once the flight landed.

## Murray's Star opens

BOOKINGS are now open for 2025 sailings aboard Murray River Paddlesteamers' new five-star riverboat, *PS Australian Star*, with 10% commission available for agents - info [HERE](#).

MEANWHILE, Natalie Freeman has been appointed as the operator's first Sales Manager; she brings extensive industry experience, including previous roles at Crystal Cruises and Creative Cruising.

## SWISS to Seoul

SWISS International Airlines (SWISS) has unveiled plans to add Seoul to its Asia network for its 2024 summer schedule, connecting the South Korean capital with Zurich.

The thrice weekly, non-stop service will kick off on 07 May, with SWISS to deploy an Airbus A340 on the new route, offering first, business, premium economy and economy class.

## Room-Res adds pay later

WHOLESALE booking platform Room-Res has introduced a new Book Now Pay Later function, allowing travel agents to secure reservations and rates until the customer is ready to pay.

The deferred payment option has been the most requested update to the platform over the last year, with Room-Res pointing out it has "heard from agents that this flexibility is crucial, especially when planning long-term or high-value trips".

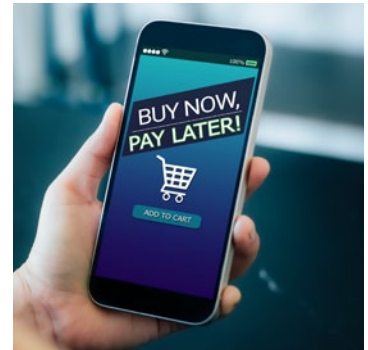
Designed to empower agents, the Book Now Pay Later option offers clients more options and time to make decisions without missing out on desired bookings, as well as making it easier to secure higher value itineraries thanks to flexible payment terms.

At the same time as launching the new functionality, the ATAS-accredited business also unveiled an improved room selection interface, which now offers

filters to narrow down to certain rate types, such as breakfast or refundable rates.

"We believe that the Room-Res' Book Now, Pay Later feature and improved site functionalities are game-changers for our users," the Sydney-based company said.

"This feature reflects our ongoing commitment to providing tools and services that are not just about facilitating transactions but empowering agents to win business and enhance their client satisfaction." JM



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## Aussies fuel Singapore sling

**SINGAPORE'S** tourism sector enjoyed a strong recovery in 2023, driven by growing demand from several of its key source markets, including Australia.

The country recorded 1.1 million Aussie visitor arrivals over the 12-month period, in line with Malaysia and India, putting it in third position only behind China (1.4m) and Indonesia (2.3m).

International visitor arrivals into Singapore reached 13.6 million in 2023, representing a solid recovery to 71% of pre-COVID 2019 levels, with tourism receipts estimated to hit between S\$24.5-26 billion, surpassing the previous forecast of S\$18-21 billion.

During the first nine months of 2023, Australia contributed around S\$1.5 billion (A\$1.7bn) in tourism receipts for the Asian hub.

Visitors also spent more time in Singapore than they did before the pandemic, with the average length of stay increasing from 3.4



days in 2019 to 3.8 days in 2023.

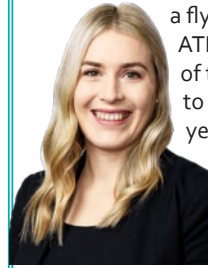
“The robust performance in 2023 signals a promising recovery for tourism, in line with increasing flight capacity and growth in international travel demand,” Singapore Tourism Board (STB) Chief Executive Melissa Ow said.

“Our strategy to attract a healthy and diverse visitor portfolio, comprising long and short haul markets, has significantly contributed to our overall visitor arrivals, longer length of stay and growth in tourism receipts.”

To sustain growth in 2024 and beyond, STB said the focus will be on cultivating strategic partnerships, as well as investing in new and refreshed products and experiences. *JM*

## ATIA UPDATE

from Ingrid Fraser, Director of Public Policy & Advocacy



**THE** year is off to a flying start at ATIA, and one of the key goals to kick off the year has been a project to address recruitment, skills and workforce issues across the travel industry.

As part of this, we've launched ATIA's Skills and Workforce Survey, which will provide valuable data to make the case to Federal and State Governments that jobs in the travel industry should be prioritised for Government support and programs.

Our success is only as good as the engagement and data we have across the industry, so if you're experiencing recruitment or training challenges, we'd love for you to provide your insights to help maintain some of the recent wins we've had and ensure the industry has the skilled workforce it needs - **CLICK HERE** to do so.

Today, Federal Parliament starts up again after a summer break, and Dean and I are in Canberra

representing ATIA members with key Ministers and Departments.

Aviation competition is a key area of focus, and we are pushing for changes in the way airlines receive airport slots domestically so cancellations are discouraged and there are opportunities to boost competition.

Our recent report found that just a 5% drop in travellers due to flight cancellations could lead to an estimated \$405 million loss in domestic tourism revenues and also touches on the impacts of cancellations on intermediaries, airports and travellers.

To address these issues, we're meeting with the offices of the Minister from Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for Tourism, and Assistant Minister for Competition as well as other members of Parliament.

We're also meeting with the Australian Border Force, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade including the Passport Office to discuss improvements to the traveller experience. We're very much looking forward to continuing to represent member priorities throughout 2024.

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## Two decades of luxury across the Tasman Sea

**GLOBAL** luxury travel network Virtuoso has celebrated its 20th year of operating in Australia and New Zealand, hosting a luncheon on Sydney Harbour last week, with over 100 agency members, partners, and team members on board *The Jackson*.

Chair and CEO Matthew Upchurch welcomed guests as he said, “witnessing the growth of Virtuoso in Australia and New Zealand, as well as our continued expansion around the globe, is a testament to the enduring values that have been the cornerstone of our success”.

Virtuoso’s embodiment of its core principles of human connection sets the standard for luxury travel around the world, whilst offering clients unparalleled access to the world’s finest destinations.

The network across Australia & New Zealand now includes 60 esteemed members and over 1,700 advisors since the inaugural member agency of Mary Rossi Travel joined Virtuoso in Australia in 2004.

“Our members and leadership in Australia and New Zealand have also been instrumental in helping us be a better organisation that is both globally consistent and regionally relevant,” Upchurch added.

For more info on Virtuoso’s global network of travel agencies, advisors and partners - [CLICK HERE](#).



**ANTHONY** Goldman, Goldman Travel; Kelly Gelfand, Tribe Travel; Sharyn Kitchener, Mosman Travel; Matthew Upchurch, Virtuoso; Melinda Gregor, Gregor and Lewis; Anna McMutrie, Wentworth Travel; and Mike Dwyer, Main Beach Travel.



**CLAUDIA** Rossi Hudson, previously Mary Rossi Travel with Matthew Upchurch, Virtuoso.



**THE** Virtuoso network enjoying lunch onboard *The Jackson*.



**TINA** Killeen, Spencer Travel; Matthew Upchurch, Virtuoso; and Louise Brown, Spencer Travel.



**RACHELLE** Matheson, Jigsaw Travel; Kelly Gelfand, Tribe Travel; Tony Freedman, Freedman, Langhorne & Turner Travel Associates; and Sally Bird, Edge Connections.



**FIONA** Dalton, Virtuoso; Anthony Goldman, Goldman Travel; and Matthew Upchurch, Virtuoso.



**THE** celebrations begin onboard.



**VIRTUOSO'S** newest members: Brad and Jacinta Blundel, Caboolture Travel with Matthew Upchurch.



**THE** Virtuoso flag.



### A strong Heart

**SWEDISH** hybrid-electric aircraft maker Heart Aerospace has raised US\$107 million in Series B funding.

The new round represents another significant stepping stone toward sustainable regional air travel, Heart said.

It has now raised total financing of US\$145 million, with investors including Air Canada and United Airlines.

“This investment furthers our mission to decarbonise and democratise air travel,” Chief Exec and co-founder Anders Forslund said.

“To decouple the tremendous growth in aviation from its emissions... we believe ES-30 is the first stepping stone.”

## VERTIIA SECURES FIRST CIVIL CUSTOMER

**ZERO-EMISSION** aircraft designer AMSL Aero has secured its first civil customer order for 20 of its Vertiiia vertical take-off and landing aircraft (render **pictured**).

AMSL received a deposit for 10 of the Vertiiia aircraft, with an option for 10 more, from regional airline group Aviation Logistics.

The aircraft are intended to service its Air Link, AirMed and Chartair services from its seven bases across Australia, from as early as 2027.

AMSL Chief Executive Officer Max York said this year is going to be “huge” for the company, as it continues to fly-test its aircraft.

“We are thrilled to kick-off with our first civil order for Vertiiia... we are honoured to have Aviation Logistics as a partner - with 50 years’ pedigree flying aircraft



across Australia’s vast terrain and operating in three of our core target market segments: aeromedical, logistics and passenger transport,” he said.

“This deal catapults Vertiiia from world-leading development aircraft to commercial reality.”

Aviation Logistics said the deal marks a significant milestone in the group’s fleet replacement and growth strategy, as well as representing a notable investment in an Australian-based aircraft designer.

“Today’s announcement is a sign of our commitment to the future development of sustainable air transport in Australia and represents a significant investment that will secure Aviation Logistics future as one of Australia’s leading aviation companies,” Executive Director Matthew Kline said.

The aircraft, which are still subject to regulatory approval, are designed to be the world’s most efficient long-range zero-emission VTOLs. *MS*

### PNH milestone

**PHNOM** Penh International Airport has achieved a new carbon reduction milestone, attaining the “level 3 optimisation” certificate in ACI’s Airport Carbon Accreditation program.

The program requires the monitoring of the airport carbon footprint and the implementation of actions to reduce emissions.

PNH has invested heavily in highly efficient chiller systems, has replaced all light sources with LED, and more.

### Loganair, CAeS

**UK REGIONAL** carrier Loganair has revealed plans to operate a hydrogen fuel cell-powered aircraft from its base in Kirkwall in the Orkney Islands by 2027.

The carrier will work with Cranfield Aerospace Solutions (CAeS) to introduce into service the hydrogen-powered Britten-Norman BN-2 Islander plane, in an agreement which it says could “enable the first zero-emissions pax air service”.

### A Coral Bouquet

**TOURISM** Fiji is inviting lovebirds to give an eco-conscious gift to their partner this Valentine’s Day, in the form of a “coral bouquet”.

All of the proceeds from the purchase will help support the work of coral restoration NGO Coral Gardeners Fiji, who will plant and nurture a beautiful coral cluster.

Buy a Coral Bouquet **HERE**, which includes a digital card with a picture of the coral to send on 14 Feb.

### EK joins Solent

**EMIRATES** has become the first international airline to join The Solent Cluster, a UK initiative that aims to reduce CO2 emissions in the South Coast of England.

Made up of over 100 members, the initiative aims to create a sustainable aviation fuel plant with a fuel production capacity of approx 200,000 tonnes per year.

If given the green light, the SAF plant could begin operations by 2032.



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## MONEY

**WELCOME** to Money, *TD's* Tue feature on what the Australian dollar is doing.

**AU\$1 = US\$0.648**

**ALL** eyes are on the Reserve Bank of Australia ahead of its decision on interest rates today, with financial experts predicting little chance of the RBA changing the current mark at 4.35%.

The Australian dollar has drawn back slightly ahead of the monetary policy, where it was also hit by the surging greenback, backed by the US jobs report incoming on Fri.

*Wholesale rates this morning.*

US	\$0.648
UK	£0.517
NZ	\$1.071
Euro	€0.604
Japan	¥96.40
Thailand	฿23.21
China	¥4.644
South Africa	12.36
Canada	\$0.878
Crude oil	US\$77.33

## VietJet takes off

**VIETJET** recorded a 60% surge in its revenues for 2023 after adding 33 new international and domestic routes, bringing its total number to 125.

Over the 12 months, the low-cost carrier operated 133,000 flights with 25.3 million passengers on board - a rise of 183% year on year.

In the fourth quarter alone, the carrier's consolidated revenues VN18.8 trillion (approx. US\$768.86 million), up 49% YOY.

## Easter Euro, Spain on track



**RAIL** Europe is in the process of bolstering the range of product available on its B2B platform, with two key Eastern European markets to be added this year.

While in town visiting key Australian partners this week, the company's Chief Commercial Officer, Florence Pasquier, lifted the lid on the pipeline of new product coming online in 2024.

"This year we are planning to reinforce Eastern Europe, so after Austria, which launched in Dec (*TD* 14 Dec 2023), we are launching Poland in [northern] summer and Czech Railways, which will be good so we can combine all of those markets together," Pasquier said.

Another major addition to be added this year will be the prominent high-speed Spanish rail operator Iryo, which Pasquier confirmed will be coming online in the middle of 2024, bolstering its range of Spanish itineraries already available via legacy operator Renfe.

Rail Europe's commercial chief also hinted that the company is currently working to add North American rail operator Amtrak to

its booking platform, but would not be drawn on a release date.

Speaking about Rail Europe's Australian performance, General Manager Asia & Pacific at Rail Europe, Richard Leonard, said the b2b business alone had managed to grow back to 78% of pre-pandemic volumes in 2022/23, and when combined with the b2c arm, was at 98% of 2019 levels.

Globally, Leonard also revealed Rail Europe had seen a 60% increase in bookings last year when compared to 2022.

Part of the recovery story in Australia has been about investing greater resources in reengaging the local trade, which Leonard said was key because of the structural changes to the travel agency space since COVID.

"Conservatively there are 30% fewer agents transacting with us compared to pre-pandemic but the level of enquiry is strong so the struggle is not finding the business but how they can transact the business with higher volumes," he said. **AB**

**Pictured:** Leonard, Pasquier and Key Account Manager for ANZ Grant Robertson.

## Lisa-Marie exhibit

**GRACELAND** in Memphis has opened an expanded exhibit dedicated to the life of Lisa Marie Presley, who was the only child of 'The King' Elvis Presley.

Titled 'Lisa Marie: Growing Up Presley', the exhibit focuses on the young Presley's life as a popstar in her own right along with being a loving mother and guardian of her father's legacy.

Visitors can see artefacts from her life including baby footprints, her personal golf cart, roller skates, clothes and Christmas cards along with school yearbook, photos and report cards.

## Dorchester's Lana

**DORCHESTER** Collection has made its debut in the Middle East after officially opening The Lana, its new property in Dubai on the Marasi Bay Marina.

The luxury hotel features 225 suites with an outdoor terrace and floor-to-ceiling glass windows, as well as eight new dining concepts, 50 art pieces, and an infinity rooftop pool.

The first Dior Spa in the UAE is also set to open within the property in Apr, with five treatment rooms and one couple's suite.

## MH boosts India

**MALAYSIA** Airlines will double its Trivandrum services from twice to four times weekly starting 02 Apr in response to "positive load factor performance and increasing demands".

The service boost follows the recent increase in frequency between Amritsar and Kuala Lumpur from 15 Jan.





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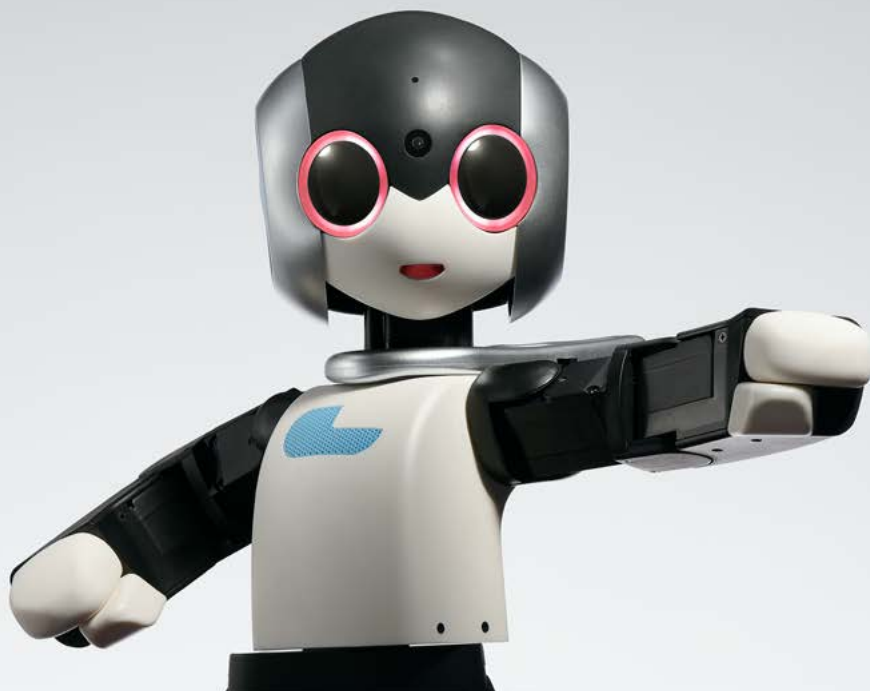
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