

Nok Air tempts star investor

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Nok Air's outstanding revenue growth in the second quarter has sparked global interest in the Thailand-based budget airline.

With a 39% year-on-year rise, the SET-listed low-cost carrier was ranked last week among the world's fastest-growing airlines by *Airline Weekly* magazine.

Jim Rogers, a billionaire US investor and author of *Street Smarts*, also told Reuters last Tuesday that he was investing in the carrier, currently best-known abroad for its glamour calendar.

"One of the main reasons I bought it [Nok shares] is because they're going into Myanmar, and Myanmar, in my view, has a great future," he said.

Nok is returning to international flights with three routes: Mae Sot-Mawlamyine,



Vitai: Surprised by sudden attention

Mae Sot-Yangon and Bangkok-Yangon.

In the second quarter, Nok's revenue totalled US\$87 million for a net profit of \$9 million.

With its 39% second-quarter revenue rise, Nok comfortably

outpaced Singapore's Tiger Airways, which notched up a 30% increase.

Meanwhile, Thai Airways International (THAI), which owns 49% of Nok Air, saw its turnover slip by 2%.

In terms of profit, Nok's 10% margin in the quarter placed it fourth globally, according to *Airline Weekly*.

Nok Air shared this ranking with Allegiant and Aegean, behind Copa (14%), Cebu Pacific (13%) and Spirit (11%).

But THAI's profit dipped 8%, according to the Sept 16 issue of the Florida-based publication.

Vitai Ratanakorn, Nok's chief financial officer, said the airline had not expected such global recognition.

"Maybe our growth caught international eyes and this bodes well for our position in the stock market and image as a whole," he told the *Bangkok Post*.

Maybank Kim Eng Securities (Thailand) expects Nok to post 9.9 billion baht revenue for 2013, up from 8.21 billion last year.

Net profit for this year is estimated at 1.45 billion baht, up from 504 million in 2012.