

# Nok Air launches pilot training centre with ANA

## BOONSONG KOSITCHOTETHANA

Nok Air has formed a joint venture with Japan's ANA Group to set up a world-class pilot training centre in Thailand to cope with soaring global demand for flight crew.

The Thai budget carrier has a 15% stake in Pan Am International Flight Training Center (Thailand), the joint venture firm that will operate the centre, with ANA Holdings owning 75%.

ANA Holdings owns the shares in All Nippon Airways, ANA Wings, Air Japan and low-cost carrier Vanilla Air.

Assumption University, the first international Thai university to set up a flight training department for students with no flight experience, owns a 10% share in the joint venture, capitalised with US\$8.3 million.

The facility is aimed at turning Thailand into a prime pilot training ground to respond to surging global demand, with the International Civil Aviation Organization forecasting demand for 230,000 pilots in 2030, 4.5 times the current number.

The centre, located at Assumption University's Suvarnabhumi campus in Bangkok, is due to open next month, said Nok Air.

It will initially be equipped with an Airbus 320 jet simulator, with plans to expand to four — two A320s and two Boeing 737NGs. The first Boeing 737NG simulator will be available next January, followed by the second in April.

"For Nok air, the facility means we can cut our pilot training costs by up to 50%," said Nok Air chief executive Patee Sarasin.