Automated docking is here

MANCHESTER

The first automatic taxiway and docking guidance system of its type in the world has been successfully demonstrated at Manchester International Airport. Following the trials, the airport intends to install the system on all its 17 stands at a cost of about £180,000.

According to Manchester’s head of technology Jim Shepherd, who developed the system, it will cut the annual costs of docking aircraft at Manchester from £150,000 to £6,000. It will achieve this saving because once an aircraft on final approach has been identified, gate selection, illumination of the appropriate taxiway, and guidance to the gate is fully automatic.

The computer illuminates a single runway exit and as the aircraft follows the lights, the nosewheel passes over pressure pads which activate a fibre-optic docking display. The display gives manoeuvring instructions according to the position of the nose-wheel. Individual lights are automatically extinguished once the aircraft has passed over them.

The system can be further refined by adding in automatically operated airbridges, such as those recently introduced at Stockholm/Arlanda’s new domestic terminal. The technique forms part of a computer system known as ADIS—airport digital information system. ADIS was developed at Manchester as a way of using computers to integrate disparate information available at airports, to automate as many functions as possible.

Accord at MEA?

LEBANON

Three employee unions at Middle East Airlines are close to agreement with management on a four-point package, which will cut most staff salaries by 15 per cent, according to employee union secretary Atef Mourtada.

The package calls for a 15 per cent pay cut to be taken from all employees whose salaries exceed $260 a month; postponing all employees’ 2-5 per cent cost-of-living pay increase until July 1; for MEA stockholders to increase their contributions to the company’s operating capital; and committees to be formed to study methods of reducing the airline’s expenditures.

MEA’s general director Youssef Lahoud confirmed that the employees’ union have agreed in principle to the package deal, providing that the board increases the carrier’s working capital by $15 million or more. The negotiations have yet to be approved by MEA’s board of directors.

The last time the carrier called for a pay cut was in 1976 when it was forced to cut employee salaries by 75 per cent to cover wartime operating losses. MEA planned a 50 per cent wage cut in November last year during the closure of Beirut International Airport, but dropped the proposal when the airport re-opened after 17 days.

Despite their union’s approval many employees are not satisfied with the pay cut proposal. One employee said: “They not only put a freeze on all promotions and pay us poor wages, but now they want to reduce our wages by 15 per cent. This is a bit too much”.

In a separate agreement the unions and management recently agreed to defer part of the employees’ “13 month” bonus pay. The airline traditionally pays the bonus on January 26 each year, but this year it will defer paying 50 per cent of it until June.

Egyptair’s Boeing 767s will replace its 707s on routes from Cairo to Europe, the Middle East, and East and West Africa. They will have 206 seats, in a three-class layout.

People

Robert Shults, president of Scheduled Skyways, is the new president of the 12-member Regional Airline Association. Shults succeeds Gordon Autry, president of Rocky Mountain Airways.

Mike Ricketts has been appointed Head of Press and Public Relations at the Export Credits Guarantee Department. He succeeds Gerry Moggridge who has become Information Advisor to the UK’s Lord Chancellor.

Peter Smith has been promoted from chief planner to planning director at British Caledonian. Smith will be responsible for the airline’s commercial, corporate, and economic planning activities.

Trevor Thorpe has taken over from Brian Keep as Director of Civil Aviation in Hong Kong. Keep has taken up the post of technical advisor in the Government’s Civil Aviation Department in Bahrain.

John Barnes has been named general manager UK and Ireland for Air Canada, succeeding James Tennant. Tennant has been appointed senior director human resource planning and development for the airline in Montreal.

Billy McEvoy has been named head of marketing at Belfast International Airport. He succeeds Gerry Willis who recently took over the post of chief executive at the airport.

Gianpiero Gabotto is Alitalia’s new regional director for Central and Western Europe. Gabotto, who will be based in Alitalia’s London office, takes over from Enrico Pacchiarotti. He has been appointed regional director, Italy.

Thomas McMillan, part-time member of the UK Civil Aviation Authority, is to take over responsibility for monitoring the finance and fitness of airlines and air travel organisations. He succeeds Brian P. Smith, who after three years on the CAA board, is returning to his former company, PA Management Consultants.