

## **AirAsia reaching beyond Bangladeshi labour market, towards tourists: Group CEO**

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Dhaka : During the pandemic, AirAsia had to mostly rely on the labour market of Bangladesh as there was almost no leisure-travel demand over restrictions in place globally. Now, in the post-covid times, with the air travel demand rising, AirAsia has been discussing with its Bangladeshi partner, its Global Sales Agent in Bangladesh, TAS Aviation Ltd, on how to go beyond, to the promising leisure travel market.

Bo Lingam, President (Aviation) of Capital A and Group Chief Executive officer of AirAsia Aviation Ltd, said this to The Bangladesh Monitor in an interview at a city hotel recently.

The Group CEO arrived in the capital on May 30 for a three-days official visit to Bangladesh.

The renowned budget carrier AirAsia's growth in the Bangladesh aviation market has been steadily increasing. Pre-covid, the airline had only three flights a day to and from Bangladesh. And currently, from Dhaka, it operates 14 weekly flights to Kuala Lumpur and four weekly flights to Bangkok.

Bo Lingam said, AirAsia has its hub in Malaysia's Kuala Lumpur and another huge hub in Thailand's Bangkok, while it is the largest carrier in Southeast Asia with the most connecting points in the subcontinent and China.

The airline offers great opportunity for the people of Bangladesh to travel via AirAsia across the subcontinent and the people of ASEAN to travel to Bangladesh using one of the connecting points in Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur or Jakarta, added Bo.

Following the covid-19 pandemic, the airline still has plenty of aircraft in the hanger. It will take till July 2023 to make all the aircraft serviceable. Afterwards, the CEO shared the airline will be able to expand its operations to other cities of Bangladesh.

The CEO noted, the airline's motto has always been to offer passengers the lowest fares. This allows ordinary people to fly, claimed Bo.

Moreover, the airline's products are also very dynamic. Take AirAsia Superapp for example, mentioned the CEO.

"It is a one-stop solution to all your travel needs, from booking air tickets to hotels, taxi, wellness products, or money transfer and so on. AirAsia Superapp offers customers the entire tourism ecosystem in one place and at the lowest rates," he said.

"Bangladeshis should start using the app," urged the CEO, adding, during his official visit, they aimed to promote the initiative in the country and will create more awareness in the next few months.

However, it may be mentioned here, AirAsia, being a low-cost carrier, charges passengers for inflight meals.

In response, the CEO said, "Passengers can order food as per his/her wish if needed. The airline does not forcefully give meals to passengers and bill it into the fare."

Also, there has been reports that, at times, taking advantage of the market demand, the airline increases its airfare structure, up to almost similar to a legacy carrier's in Bangladesh.

In response, the CEO claimed, AirAsia always offers the fair price. That is why, its flights are always full.

However, if fuel price goes down, the fares will also come down, stressed the CEO.

Also, to get the best fair, passengers need to book early, he expressed.

"In the next 3-6 months, the airline will be coming out with products best suited for Bangladeshis," concluded the Group CEO of AirAsia.