

Regional alliance among South Asian airlines in talks

- A Monitor Report

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Dhaka : It is high time South Asian airlines formed a regional alliance among them to sustain, capture more market share and increase customer satisfaction while competing against global mega carriers, stressed aviation experts and high officials of different airlines operating in Bangladesh during a roundtable conference titled "Greater cooperation among South Asian airlines" held at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka on February 10.

The move will help promote air connectivity in the region, boost trade, commerce and tourism as well as provide passengers with multifaceted benefits and packages, further claimed the speakers at the conference organised by The Bangladesh Monitor and presided by its Editor Kazi Wahidul Alam.



Aviation experts and top officials of several airlines operating in Bangladesh attending a conference on February 10 at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka -Photo: Monitor

Shafiul Azim, Managing Director and CEO of Biman Bangladesh Airlines attended the conference as the chief guest. In his speech, he said the idea of forging a collaborative alliance in the aviation sector is both timely and visionary. "By joining forces through this alliance, we have the opportunity to address these challenges collectively, leveraging our combined strengths and expertise," informed the Biman Chief.

He also mentioned, together they could increase operational efficiency, improve safety standards, and reduce costs, ultimately benefiting both airlines and the millions of passengers who rely on air travel for business and leisure.



Salahuddin Ahmed

"Together, we can create an aviation landscape in South Asia that is safer, more efficient and more accessible than ever before. Hence, let us work together for our common goal," urged Shafiul Azim.

Stressing the need of the hour to create greater cooperation among the airlines of South Asian countries while presenting the keynote paper, aviation expert ATM Nazrul Islam said, due to limited connectivity only 27 million passengers arrived in this region in 2019 from other regions whereas during the same period 198 million passengers arrived in North America, 968 million in Europe and 30 million in China.



Mesbah-ul Islam

He informed about 32 airlines of different South Asian countries operate from the region to different destinations. Unfortunately, the South Asian airlines are still far from such cooperation among themselves.



Ganesh Raja Ram

Nazrul Islam highlighted that the airlines of South Asian countries could not create any impact in the connectivity among the countries of this region. Neither could they establish themselves as competitive to other regions' airlines or alliances.



Morgan D'souza

He claimed, airlines of this region are ultimately losing revenue and

business to the giant airlines or alliances. They can overcome their weakness by cooperating and expanding their route network.



Mohammad Saiful Hoque

As per Nazrul Islam, cooperation among the airlines may be generated on the following areas: code sharing, interline agreement for route sharing, operation facilities sharing and training.



Morad Bourouffala

Salahuddin Ahmed, Acting Director, Sales and Marketing of Biman Bangladesh Airlines stressed the importance of connectivity, claiming that Biman's vision is to establish Dhaka, Chattogram, Sylhet, Saidpur and Cox's Bazar as an international hub so that the South Asian airlines can get the opportunity to explore this growing market and connect to other parts of the world.



Kazi Qyyum

At the seminar, Ganesh Raja Ram, Country Manager, Air India, said, "I am sure, once, we forge an alliance of this sort it will not only benefit India but also all the South Asian regions."

Addressing the seminar, Mesbah-ul Islam, Head of Marketing and Sales, NOVOAIR, said, the airline currently operates international flights to only Kolkata. However, by the end of the year, it will expand its wings to international skies. To better serve the purpose, there could be no alternative to regional cooperation between South Asian airlines, he stressed.

Morgan D'souza, Country Manager, Vistara also spoke on the occasion. He said, regional cooperation among South Asian airlines will be a great initiative. Discussions like this to collaborate and integrate in an effort to make things better are a need of time.

Mohammad Saiful Hoque, Country General Manager and CEO of Sabre Travel Network Bangladesh, Morad Bourouffala, Airbus Head of Bangladesh, Kazi Qyyum, Director of Expolanka Group and Zahirul Romman, CEO of Discovery Tours and Logistic, among others, also spoke at the conference.



Zahirul Romman

To take forward the idea of regional alliance The Bangladesh Monitor proposed an idea of organising a Regional Conclave with the participation of topmost executives of the South Asian airlines at a suitable time in near future in Dhaka.

The discussants appreciated the idea and pledged their support in this regard.