

Sri Lankan Airlines recovers 50-60pc of pre-pandemic levels

A Monitor Report

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Dhaka : Sri Lanka's state-owned carrier SriLankan Airlines has recovered 50-60 per cent of its pre-pandemic level of operations and, in the next couple of months, the airline will be able to recover fully and reach pre-pandemic levels.

V Ravindran, Regional Manager, India and Bangladesh, said this while talking to The Bangladesh Monitor at a programme of the airline held in the capital recently. In these post-pandemic times, SriLankan Airlines has even increased capacity in terms of the number of seats and space for cargo, added the Regional Manager.

The flag carrier of Sri Lanka currently operates daily flights to and from Dhaka with wide-body A330-300 and A330-200 aircraft with an occupancy of over 90 per cent, said Sharuka Wickrama Adittiya, Manager, Bangladesh, Sri Lankan Airlines. Dhaka is a vital market for Sri Lankan Airlines, mentioned the Regional Manager Ravindran.

"To Dhaka, we have inbound passengers from the airline's network, specially the Middle Eastern countries, Europe and Far East. Vice versa, there is a good traffic from Dhaka to those destinations," he noted.

This, being such a major market, makes SriLankan Airlines continue flight operations to and from Dhaka daily, the Regional Manager claimed.

Sharuka Wickrama Adittiya, Manager, Bangladesh, SriLankan Airlines shed further

light on it.

He said, "In last one year, the airline has transported 5000 passengers out of Dhaka (one directional) and 300 thousand tonnes of cargo monthly on average."

Since, Dhaka is a trunk route for SriLankan Airlines, the carrier is offering attractive tour packages for passengers from Dhaka, mentioned the Manager.

"We have tour packages to Colombo and Maldives for Dhaka customers," he added.

Also, the leisure arm of the national carrier SriLankan Holidays has appointed two franchisees in the Bangladesh market so that they can offer these attractive tour packages to customers in Dhaka on their behalf, mentioned the Manager.

The Manager further mentioned that the airline sees a very good leisure movement to Sri Lanka, Maldives and Dubai from Dhaka.

Since SriLankan Airlines is the flag carrier, it has the responsibility to bring tourism to Sri Lanka from anywhere it is operating, said the Regional Manager Ravindran, adding, "to bring more passengers from Dhaka to Sri Lanka, we have introduced tour packages to Sri Lanka and beyond incorporating Sri Lanka as a stopover."

The airline is also expanding its distribution channels, appointing holiday franchisees and contemplating to appoint PSAs in other parts of Bangladesh besides Dhaka for instance in Sylhet and Chattogram which are promising markets to generate more passengers, claimed the Regional Manager.

Also, to come out bigger and better from the pandemic crisis, the airline has expanded its network by introducing many new destinations, said the Regional Manager.

The carrier tested out some new destinations during the pandemic which later became permanent additions in its network such as Kathmandu, Incheon, Frankfurt and Paris.

Sri Lankan Airlines is also planning to fly to two new destinations in India in the coming months, added the Regional Manager.

However, recent reports cited that the Sri Lankan government is attempting to privatise the airline.

In this regard, the Managers of the airline was not able to give any update.