

SriLankan Airlines contributes to YoY travel growth between Bangladesh, Sri Lanka

- A Monitor Special

Date: 16 September, 2024



Dhaka : By mid-August 2024, Sri Lanka clocked nearly two million arrivals, for the first time since 2019. Last year, over 17,000 Bangladeshis visited the popular island destination and the number is expected to increase by 2024 end. Behind the year-on-year growth of travel between Bangladesh and the island nation lies the contribution of the latter's flag carrier-SriLankan Airlines.

Sujeewa Rodrigo, Country Manager-Bangladesh, SriLankan Airlines, said this while talking to The Bangladesh Monitor at his office in the capital.

The airline operates daily flights on Dhaka-Colombo route with five widebody A330s and two narrowbodies A320 and A321.

SriLankan Airlines not only serves the passenger market but also the

cargo industry of the country, informed Rodrigo, adding, this is one of the reasons why the carrier operates widebodies on the route.

According to Rodrigo, the airline transports plenty of cargo to Europe, Canada and Australia, mainly RMG.

However, the airline wants to establish itself as a leisure friendly airline, claimed the Country Manager.

The airline's package to the Maldives with a stopover in Colombo is quite popular among Bangladeshis.

Rodrigo is now planning to turn it the other way around, with a stopover in the Maldives and a stay in Sri Lanka, he added.

The reason behind these efforts is the fact that the airline currently focuses on promoting Sri Lanka as a travel destination, possibly through packages combined with Thailand, Malaysia and the Maldives, according to the Country Manager.

Another popular stopover package of the airline is on the Dhaka-Colombo-London route. During the 23 hours stopover (transit) in Colombo, the airline even offers passengers hotel rooms, meals and everything else, said Rodrigo.

Moreover, SriLankan Airlines offers an attractive special fare of BDT 38,000 on Dhaka-Colombo route for tour operators who want to promote the nation as a travel destination.

He further mentioned, the airline also carries plenty of onward traffic to the Middle East, the USA, Canada, Australia, the UK and Fareast.

Plenty of labour traffic flies to Saudi Arabia and Qatar on Sri-Lankan Airlines. The airline even serves a good number of passengers flying onwards to Europe and the North America through codeshare.

It may be mentioned here, as a Oneworld carrier, the airline boasts the alliance's huge connectivity as well as a large global network extended with codeshares.

The legacy airline also flies student passengers to Narita with its staggering number of daily flights.

Of the total traffic the airline carries from Dhaka, 30 per cent flies to

Colombo and the rest onward to the aforementioned destinations, mainly the Middle East, claimed Rodrigo.

Rodrigo also expressed their plans, eyeing the introduction of some new routes in India.

Notably, Australia and London Heathrow are two of the strongest routes of the airline in terms of passenger numbers.

Talking about the recent mass uprising in Bangladesh, Rodrigo claimed it did not disrupt the airline's operations to and from Dhaka.

Even when the internet was down amid the unrest, many Bangladeshi freelancers visited Sri Lanka to finish their urgent work, thanks to the easy visa on arrival facility the latter offers, informed Rodrigo.

However, soon the visa on arrival facility will close and electronic travel authorisation (e-visa) will begin, concluded Rodrigo.

The Country Manager boasts an illustrious career spanning 30 years at SriLankan Airlines.

Over the years, he has proved his expertise in various capacities across stations in India, the Maldives, China and Saudi Arabia, apart from Bangladesh.