

Bangladesh should adopt digital travel solutions for better customer service

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Dhaka: Issues with baggage is quite a regular nightmare for air travellers to and from Bangladesh. For example, baggage missing flights or getting delayed to reach the belt or being misplaced, tempered and even stolen are some of the common sufferings that air travellers go through at airports of the country and even abroad. Comparatively, to mitigate such discomfort of passengers, other countries in the world have already begun adopting cutting-edge digital travel solutions for better baggage management-an area where Bangladesh greatly lags behind.

"Encouragingly, the airports of the developing Southeast Asian country currently do have the required infrastructure and resources to adopt state-of-the-art travel solutions that will help with such issues, ensuring better customer service as well as operational efficiency; and SITA, world's leading IT service provider, can come to the rescue of

Bangladesh in this regard."

Sumesh Patel, President-Asia Pacific of SITA said this while talking to The Bangladesh Monitor at an elite hotel in the capital recently.

The APAC President mentioned SITA's ultramodern IT service "Bag Journey" can be a game changer for the airports and the airlines operating in the country. Through this technology, SITA provides passengers with information about their baggage directly, every step of the way.

Meaning, once a passenger checks-in a baggage, he can track his baggage all the time during the journey on his phone. With it, passengers will be able to see if the baggage has been loaded to the plane, even in case of a connecting flight during transit, informed Patel, adding, the technology has already been launched by SITA at several airports around the globe, for instance, in Singapore, Thailand, India, Malaysia, Germany and many others.

"We are currently in discussion with stakeholders of Bangladesh too, regarding the adoption of this IT service here," expressed Patel.

Another interesting technology SITA offers, available in other countries in the world, is the Auto Re-flight feature.

"Thanks to this feature, if a baggage misses to board a connecting plane during transit, neither the passenger is required to file a complaint nor the airline has to check the baggage's status manually, because the technology automatically loads the passenger's baggage onto the next flight to the same destination," explained Patel.

Hence, passengers do not have to suffer from waiting in long queues or from filling forms for baggage loss. The app on the phone will apologise to the passenger and notify him that his baggage has been auto re-flighted.

SITA also offers another feature that informs passengers how long it will take for his baggage to reach the belt so that customers do not have to sit idle waiting. Through these services, airlines and airports in Bangladesh can reduce customer anxiety and ensure better service.

However, technology can only help track with data. To truly prevent pilferage of baggage-a usual phenomenon at the country's airports-the concerned manpower has to be trained well and laws has to be strictly enforced by the authorities for any mishap, stressed the APAC

President, adding, at the baggage hold of an airport, there must be CCTV surveillance and restricted access too.

He further mentioned, SITA also offers biometric credentials for baggage that matches the biometric of passengers. This way, there will not be any need for manual baggage tags to identify.

Speaking of which, Bangladesh should now look into advancing into biometrics and self-service in the air transport area, suggested Patel, as seamless, hassle-free and simplified travel is where the world is heading towards currently.

Patel stressed, since the country already has the necessary infrastructure and capacity across its airports, the expansion to next-level digital travel related self-services will not require any additional infrastructure investment, shared the APAC President.

"Using your face as your boarding pass is the new normal in developed countries," said Patel.

"With our technology, a passenger's face and biometric credentials are registered once he checks-in at the kiosk. That will generate a soft token. From then on, the passenger will not require to scan or submit any document at any point in the journey-from baggage drop counters or immigration desks to lounges or duty free shops. He only needs to show his face," expressed Patel.

It may be mentioned here that the information technology provider to the air transport industry-SITA-was formed in 1949 by 11 airlines. At present, 410 airlines and airports own SITA including our flag carrier Biman Bangladesh Airlines.

SITA operates in 210 countries and territories in the world. The company currently serves 1000 airports globally, including the three international airports in Bangladesh, and almost every airline in the world.

Recently, SITA and Biman celebrated their 50th anniversary of partnership, looking forward to more prosperous years together, mentioned Patel.

SITA's portfolio features over 150 solutions and some of it are being implemented at the Third Terminal of Dhaka Airport too, concluded the President.

