

BD 3rd highest revenue generating country in WAIO region

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Dhaka : Bangladesh is the third highest revenue generating country for the Dubai-based airline Emirates in the West Asia and Indian Ocean (WAIO) region. Not only Bangladeshi migrant workers, but also tourists, business travellers and family visitors, now frequently travel to and from the USA, UK, Europe, Middle East and Far East even. Together with plenty of Umrah traffic, Bangladesh stands as one of the strongest routes in the region for Emirates and the Dhaka-Dubai route, in 36 years of operations, has never made any loss.

Ahmed Hashim Khoori, Senior Vice President, West Asia and Indian Ocean, Commercial Operations of Emirates said this while talking to The Bangladesh Monitor recently at the airline's head office in Dubai.

The Bangladesh travel market's strength is loud and clear to the legacy

airline as Emirates got to carry a staggering amount of over 11 million passengers to and from Bangladesh till date since its inception in 1986, further shared Ahmed Khoori.

Emirates currently operates 21 weekly flights to and from Dhaka with at least 80 per cent load factor. During the two peak seasons-summer and winter-the load factor increases to 90 per cent both ways and only 40 per cent of the total traffic that Emirates carry come to Dubai while the rest flies to onward destinations.

Fan-favourite

The reason Bangladeshis love to travel on Emirates is its world-class service, ultramodern aircraft, plentiful frequencies, wide network connections, award-winning catering and the best inflight entertainment it offers to passengers, said Khoori.

Emirates is currently the only international airline to serve Dhaka with First Class services - offering customers superior products and comfort in the air and on-ground.

Emirates' loyalty programme Emirates Skywards offers members exclusive privileges and benefits including flight rewards, upgrades, hotel stays, and money-can't-buy-experiences. Emirates Skywards has more than 30 million members worldwide with more than 110,000 from Bangladesh.

Passengers on an Emirates flight can access world-class entertainment on the biggest passenger TV screens in the industry with a library of over 1,500 films, 5,000 channels of on-demand entertainment, 1,500 hours of TV, as well as music, podcasts and audio books across 40 languages, including Bangla, five channels of live TV including news and two channels with live sport coverage.



A group of Bangladeshi aviation and tourism reporters seen with Ahmed Hashim Khoori, SVP, WAI0, Commercial Operations of Emirates at the airline's H0 in Dubai during a media visit on February 16-21

Also, Emirates inflight entertainment service 'ice' currently features six Bangladeshi movies too. Since 2007, Emirates has featured nearly 150

Bangla movies with English subtitle.

All these products and services allow Emirates to hold a major market share in Bangladesh, claimed the airline's SVP of WAIO.

Expansion plans

Khoori further mentioned, Emirates, in fact, has approval to operate four daily flights to and from Dhaka. Hence, the airline, while on its way to fully recover from the Covid-19, is eyeing to increase its frequency to and from Dhaka, not only to four daily, but also to five daily in the near future.

"We also have plans to resume flight operations to Sylhet and Chattogram too," shared Ahmed Khoori. "We are now working on the details of how we are going to make it viable commercially."

Emirates currently operates passenger services to more than 140 destinations across six continents via Dubai. Emirates has restored over 90 per cent of its pre-pandemic network and over 85 per cent of its pre-pandemic capacity.

"The reason Emirates has not yet fully recovered is that some restrictions from other governments of the world still remain following the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine War. Once, we all come to agreement from our respective positions, Emirates will return to full capacity for which the airline is already ready," claimed Khoori.

Leading with widebody fleet

The airline operates state-of-the-art widebody Boeing 777 on Dhaka-Dubai route. However, the airline is also adding Airbus A350s soon in its current fleet of 261 aircraft including 134 Boeing 777, 116 Airbus A380 and 11 dedicated B777-F freighters. "The A350 that is in the pipeline, hopefully, might be a part of our expansion plan for Bangladesh," expressed Khoori.

Emirates has always been operating long-range widebody aircraft but no narrowbody. Khoori explained that Dubai International Airport is designed to be a global aviation hub that connects west and east together. For this purpose, the airport requires to handle widebody aircraft that carry huge volumes of passengers.

Hence, smaller aircraft than widebodies will not work for Emirates-for its 430 daily flight operations globally to 140 destinations worldwide network, said Khoori, adding, high density widebody aircraft is perfect for Emirates' operations.

Hopeful about HSIA T3

Such high demand of air travel and strong flows of air passengers are sure to leave some constraints at Dhaka Airport, noted the airline's SVP of Commercial Operations in WAIO region. However, Khoori hoped, these issues will largely be dealt with, once the upcoming Third Terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital opens.

Khoori also mentioned once the Third Terminal opens at Dhaka Airport, the airline will be eyeing to open its world-renowned dedicated airport lounge in Bangladesh.

Multinational airline with Bangladeshi staff

It may be mentioned here, Emirates not only values commercial relations with Bangladesh but also people to people contact between Bangladesh and Dubai.

The multinational Emirates Group globally has over 40,000 employees from 169 nationalities. Of them, 500 are Bangladeshis. The airline has cabin crew of 130 nationalities speaking 70 languages including Bangladeshis, speaking Bangla language, deployed on the Dhaka-Dubai route in rosters.

Open sky policy key to be aviation hub

Bangladesh requires the most sophisticated airport and an open sky policy to become the aviation hub, the country's leaders aspire, suggested Khoori. Investments must be made to build an ultramodern airport and no restriction can be placed on flights, he further claimed.

For example, the global aviation hub Dubai International Airport, before Covid-19, had 3000 departures and arrivals a day. All the airlines in the world operate to and from DXB and the airport boasts a strong global network that connects the west and the east together.

Also, in case of Bangladesh, the country needs the national carrier Biman to be more active to help it reach its potential to be an aviation hub, concluded the airline's SVP of Commercial Operations in WAIO

region.