

## Country's air travel growth continues another year

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Dhaka : Air travel to/from/ across Bangladesh continues to grow year on year, as Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital served a staggering 9,317,430 international passengers across 51,420 flights in 2024, up till November. Additionally, the number of domestic passengers traveling through the airport was 2,016,848 across 40,785 flights.

Hence, the total number of passengers served by Dhaka Airport in 2024, up till November, was a striking 11,334,278 across a total of 92,205 flights. Astoundingly, by November alone, HSIA reached 97 per cent of 2023's entire year long figures in passenger segment and 86 per cent in flight segment.

In 2023, the number of international passengers traveling through the airport was 94,89,444 across 54,707 flights. Additionally, the number of domestic passengers in 2023 was 2,191,706 across 53,057 flights.

Meaning, the total number of passengers at Dhaka Airport in 2023 was 11,681,150 across a total of 107,764 flights.

It may be mentioned here, The Bangladesh Monitor reached Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport officials for the data before the month of December ended. Hence, the airport officials could only share statistics till November 2024. However, the figures still reflect the growth of air travel to/from/across Bangladesh.

Thereby, taking the month of December into consideration, the actual figures of 2024 would be way more, even higher than 2023. For instance, in December 2023, to and from Dhaka Airport, on average, 30,000 air passengers per day were travelling on international flights, while the domestic air passenger number was 7,000-8,000 per day.

Altogether, 37,000-38,000 passengers were flying to and from Dhaka Airport every day. During the festival seasons, the number even increased further, according to Kamrul Islam, Executive Director of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

The growth spans across the cargo transportation segment too, as HSIA handled a total of 229,481 tonnes of cargo in 2024, up till November, across 1,843 flights. In 2023, the number was 276,787 tonnes across 2,647 flights. Meaning, by November alone, the airport reached 83 per cent of 2023's entire year long figures in cargo segment.

Also, the growth is a result of the country's economic progress, people's increasing affordability, the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism's support to the sector, the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh's development efforts in aviation, the private sector's participation in the trade, and foreign investors' keen interest in the market, Dhaka Airport's Executive Director Kamrul once said to The Bangladesh Monitor.

Since the beginning of the post-pandemic times, the numbers of international flights, air travelers as well as domestic and international airlines operating in Bangladesh have been increasing respectively year on year. Already, almost 40 airlines are operating in Dhaka including 2024's new entrants Ethiopian Airlines, Air China, China Southern, Air Premia, Fits Air, and Drukair.

The international flight number increase is not only owed to new airlines

starting operations in Dhaka but also the existing carriers' gradual increase of frequencies, mentioned Kamrul Islam. However, due to countrywide railway connectivity development, air travel to some domestic destinations has taken a hit compared to last year.

Nevertheless, with such ever-increasing growth, there can be no alternative to the importance of passenger facilitation and quality service at the busiest airport in the country, stakeholders have been stressing for long. Over the years, there have been incidents and reports of many challenges passengers, stakeholders as well as the authorities faced across a range of areas at the airport.



On a positive note, the airport and civil aviation authorities have taken a range of measures to tackle the issues and develop the passenger

service standard at the airports of the country.

At Dhaka Airport, measures have been taken to ensure quick release of passenger luggage. Free Wi-Fi, help desk, and telephone booths have been established to better serve passengers. Moreover, with the launch of a dynamic web portal, 24/7 call centre, and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software, HSIA has taken a major step towards modernization of passenger services.

Furthermore, two new facilities—the Waiting Lounge and the Probashi Lounge—were inaugurated in 2024. The Waiting Lounge, inaugurated on November 14 by Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus, is located on the first floor of the airport's multi-level car park area. It offers a clean, quiet space for families to wait, while their loved ones navigate the airport's departure procedures.

Inside the departure terminal, another facility—the Probashi Lounge—caters exclusively to migrant workers. This lounge was inaugurated by the Chief Adviser on November 11. It offers outbound workers a comfortable space to relax before their flights, accessible only after completing immigration formalities.

Also, Dhaka Airport's Instrument Landing System (ILS) is on its way to be upgraded from Category 1 to Category 2. Once done, flights that would have previously diverted to other destinations amid heavy fog or natural disasters will be able to land at Dhaka airport.

Additionally, thanks to the new state-of-the art radar installed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital, surveillance of the country's entire airspace will be fully automated by early 2025, said Md Monjur Kabir Bhuiyan, Chairman of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh.

The full operation of the airport's ultramodern radar system will also improve aircraft safety. The move is also expected to generate significant revenue from over-flying fees. Along with the radar, a new Air Traffic Control (ATC) tower and operation building at Dhaka Airport has been established.

However, the long-awaited Third Terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital will not be opening in 2025; it will take a year from now, once said the late AF Hassan Arif, former Adviser

to Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, before his departure.

Nonetheless, with the opening of Terminal Three, the number of passengers will only increase further. The full opening of Terminal Three at Dhaka Airport will pave the way for more development at Dhaka Airport, Kamrul Islam claimed earlier.