Dhaka Int'l Airport's flight, passenger numbers to surpass pre-pandemic levels soon

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Dhaka: Flight and passenger numbers at the capital's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) are growing so rapidly that in no time the figures would reach or even surpass the pre-pandemic levels.

Group Captain Muhammed Kamrul Islam, Executive Director of HSIA said this while talking to The Bangladesh Monitor at his office recently.

The Executive Director shared, HSIA currently operates 140 international and 150 domestic flights, daily on average, including arrival and departure, while handling 20-22 thousand international and 6-7 thousand domestic passengers per day.

In 2022, till June, HSIA operated a total of 20,034 international flights including arrival and departure, compared to 9,422 international flights of the same period in 2021.

Also, till June 2022, the airport handled 34,64,015 international passengers including arrival and departure, compared to 15,08,552

passengers of the same period in 2021.

In domestic, the airport operated 24,414 flights including arrival and departure till June 2022, compared to 18,565 flights of the same period in 2021.

 GC Md Kamrul Islam, ED, HSIA

Furthermore, the airport handled 12,055,55 passengers in domestic till June 2022 including arrival and departure, compared to 1,52,790 passengers of the same period in 2021.

Meaning, including both international and domestic as well as arrival and departure, till June 2022, HSIA operated 44,448 flights in total and handled 46,69,570 passengers.

This shows that year-on-year, flight and passenger numbers at HSIA have had such high growth that soon it would reach or even top pre-pandemic levels, added the Executive Director.

"From the pandemic period till now, we have been able to keep air travel open for all with utmost safety, thanks to CAAB, MoCAT and others concerned. This is an astounding success story for Bangladesh, I believe," said Kamrul Islam.

"Even amid runway closure at night due to expansion work, we did not reduce the number of flights operated at HSIA. Every willing passenger was able to travel. We scheduled all the flights of the 24-hour window to 16 hours," said the Executive Director, adding, "This was possible due to the concerted effort made by all the stakeholders."

The Executive Director agreed that this resulted in some challenges. As such a huge number of flights had to be operated in a finite time, some administrative burden for flights, passengers and luggage followed. "However, we addressed those issues on time," added Kamrul Islam.

Exec Director added that the authority was able to finish the runway/high speed taxiway work of the airport ahead of its scheduled time and since May 2, 2022, the airport has been successfully operating 24/7.

"The NOTAM for runway closure was supposed to end on June 10. However, it was finished a month earlier," noted Kamrul Islam.

However, some of the airlines already sold tickets of the month as per their previous timings. Hence, they are now gradually shifting their timings by adjusting their summer schedule while the airport is trying its best to optimise it and distribute slots uniformly across 24 hours, as far as possible, expressed the Exec Director of HSIA.

Thus, there are less incidents of airport queues and delays now as there are less clusters of flights, he further mentioned.

However, some incidents of delay at luggage, immigration, parking or check-in remain during the rush hours in the morning and evening.
Cargo growth.

It may be mentioned here cargo operations at HSIA is booming exponentially.
Currently, 250 cargo flights are being operated at the airport monthly, carrying over 15,000 tons.

In 2022, till May, 2,026 cargo flights have been operated carrying 1 lac ton in total, compared to 6,503 cargo flights carrying 2.6 lac ton in 2021.

"However, we have capacity, infrastructure, machineries, international protocol adherence and security compliance for more cargo operations. If the airlines and exporters are willing, we can facilitate them further," said Kamrul Islam.

Currently, three scanning machines are fully functional at the cargo village of Dhaka Airport.

"We are sending 100 per cent of the cargo load we are receiving right now," mentioned the airport Executive Director, adding, "We can handle more cargo every day if required by the airlines and exporters,"

Further development works underway. The Executive Director further mentioned several renovation and construction works are underway at the airport.

High-speed taxiway at the runway has been completed recently. Due to this, once the Third Terminal opens, aircraft will be able to vacate the runway quickly.

To make waiting for flights easier for domestic travellers, another

spacious floor at the domestic departure has been constructed with additional seating arrangements, prayer room and passenger amenities, mentioned Kamrul Islam.

The [aviation](#) industry is growing more in these post-pandemic times apparently. New airlines are in the pipeline to emerge, said the Exec Director.

Regarding WiFi internet facility at the airport, The Executive Director added that there is free WiFi available all around the airport. Any passenger with Bangladeshi SIM card can log in instantly. As per the [BTRC](#) regulation, after collecting necessary information, passengers without Bangladeshi SIM cards are provided with the OTP from Help Desk counters to use free WiFi.

For improvement of immigration, he mentioned that, recently 24 E-Gates (12 in arrival and 12 in departure) have been installed. Passengers with e-passports can easily complete the immigration faster with proper authentication and verification.

Kamrul Islam also assured that, HSIA authority is steadfast to improve the passenger satisfaction and facilitation while keeping the safety and security in mind.

Prior to joining Dhaka Airport as Executive Director, Group Captain Muhammed Kamrul Islam was in the Armed Forces Division as a Colonel Staff in the Prime Minister's Office.