

Saudi Arabian civil aviation sector posts 9% growth as passengers exceed 140m

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Dhaka: Saudi Arabia's civil aviation sector recorded a sharp expansion in 2025, with passenger traffic exceeding 140 million, up about 9 percent from a year earlier, according to the General Authority of Civil Aviation.

The figures were presented at the 19th meeting of the National Aviation Sector Strategy Activation Steering Committee in Riyadh, chaired by Abdulaziz Al-Duailej, president of GACA, according to a release published on January 31.

This comes as Saudi Arabia welcomed an estimated 122 million visitors in 2025, moving closer to its Vision 2030 target of attracting 150 million tourists annually and reinforcing aviation's role in economic diversification.

The year saw an expansion in global connectivity, with international destinations increasing to 176, while Saudi Arabia remained home to three of the world's busiest air routes.

Al-Duailej credited this performance to the “unlimited support” from the nation's leadership, identifying aviation as a key enabler of Saudi Vision 2030.

“He added that 2025 saw further strengthening of the competitive environment and the attraction of global investment through the approval of new national carriers such as Riyadh Air and the Air Arabia alliance, as well as the licensing of major international companies including FedEx and Swissport,” the release added.

The private aviation sector also saw further empowerment, while national airlines played a leading role in localizing the aviation industry and improving the efficiency of operational and engineering services.

Al-Duailej outlined key features of the 2026 plan, which focuses on empowering the private sector to develop airports and increase capacity, alongside the launch of more than 30 new routes.

“He stressed the importance of full preparedness by all operational teams and harnessing national talent to serve pilgrims, with the aim of delivering a seamless, spiritually enriching travel experience that reflects qualitative progress in logistics services and the Kingdom's global leadership,” the release added.

Al-Duailej also announced the official launch of the fourth edition of the Future Aviation Forum, to be held in Riyadh in April.

The forum has been formally endorsed by the International Civil Aviation Organization as a leading global platform to shape the future of aviation and tackle its greatest challenges through an ambitious Saudi vision, gathering industry leaders from around the world.

The meeting, attended by several top officials, also reviewed progress on the Aviation Sector Activation Program. This program, a cornerstone of the National Transport and Logistics Strategy, aims to transform the Kingdom into a global logistics hub connecting three continents and a leading aviation center in the Middle East.

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