

India soars to 5th in global aviation

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Dhaka: India has officially emerged as the world's fifth largest aviation market, handling 241 million passengers in 2024, according to the latest World Air Transport Statistics (WATS) released by the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

Among the busiest flight routes, Mumbai-Delhi ranked 7th globally, marking India's growing dominance in global air travel.

India recorded 241 million air passengers in 2024, a 11.1pc increase from 2023, when the figure stood at 211 million.

This strong performance pushed India ahead of Japan, which handled 205 million passengers, growing 18.6pc. India is now behind only the US, China, UK, and Spain in the global rankings.

"The U.S. remains the world's biggest aviation market with 876 million passengers in 2024 on the strength of its domestic market, growing

5.2pc year-on-year.

"China was the second-biggest passenger market, with 741 million passengers, a growth of 18.7pc compared to 2023," it said in a release.

While India stood at the 5th place, the U.K. at the 3rd spot (261 million passengers) and Spain at the 4th position (241 million).

The figures include all international and domestic passengers departing or arriving in each country.

Among the top 10 airport pairs, Mumbai-Delhi was the 7th busiest, carrying 5.9 million passengers in 2024.

"Asia Pacific dominated the ranking for the world's busiest airport pairs, with Jeju-Seoul (CJU-GMP) the most popular route globally, with 13.2 million passengers flying between the two airports in 2024.

"In the top 10, only one airport pair — Jeddah-Riyadh (JED-RUH) — was not in the Asia Pacific region," IATA said.

As per the grouping, international premium class travel — business and first class — grew 11.8pc, outpacing growth in global economy travel of 11.5pc.

In 2024, the total number of international premium class travellers was 116.9 million or 6pc of the total international passengers.

"Leading the regions in terms of percentage growth was Asia Pacific with a year-on-year growth of 22.8%, with 21 million premium passengers — although it was outpaced in growth by economy class passenger numbers, up 28.6pc to 500.8 million.

"Growth in premium travel exceeded economy class travel in Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and North America.

Europe remained the largest market for international premium travel, with 39.3 million premium passengers, while premium travellers as a percentage of all travellers were highest in the Middle East at 14.7pc," IATA said.