

Saudi air traffic hits new heights

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Riyadh – Saudi Arabia’s aviation sector soared to new heights in 2023, with a significant increase in both flight numbers and passenger traffic, according to a report by the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA).

In a statement released by GACA, it was revealed that the Kingdom experienced a remarkable 16pc surge in total flights, rising from 701,290 to 814,995 over the course of the year. Concurrently, passenger numbers saw an impressive 26pc jump, reaching 112 million compared to the previous year’s 88 million, surpassing pre-pandemic levels.

This surge in air traffic is credited to the successful implementation of the Saudi Aviation Strategy, which has bolstered global connectivity for the Kingdom. Currently, Saudi Arabia boasts connections to 148 destinations with at least 52 daily flights to and from the country.

President of GACA, Abdulaziz Al-Duailej, said these achievements were

“a testament to the strategic vision of the Saudi Aviation Strategy, positioning the Kingdom as a leading force in the Middle East.”

“Saudi Arabia is now more connected globally than ever before, achieving record double-digit growth in flights and passengers during 2023, ” he further said.

“Saudi Arabia is creating unprecedented opportunities for global aviation and the private sector. Today’s announcements mark a pathway for further growth, with the Madinah Airport’s capacity set to double — a reflection of the success of this Public-Private Partnership project,” Al-Duailej added.

Al-Duailej also highlighted the significant role played by low-cost carriers (LCCs) in driving the growth of passenger traffic, particularly within the domestic market. LCCs now command 44pc of the domestic market share, up from 27pc, indicating evolving traveler preferences and increased competition.

Regarding international flights, LCCs saw their market share double from 16pc before the pandemic to 32pc in 2023, reflecting similar trends in the global aviation landscape.

Speaking further on the achievements, Al-Duailej stated, “Saudi Arabia is creating unprecedented opportunities for global aviation and the private sector.” He announced plans for the expansion of Madinah Airport, with its capacity set to double from 8 to 17 million passengers annually, as part of a Public-Private Partnership project.

Saudia, the national carrier, also announced plans to enhance its operations at Madinah Airport, including the addition of dedicated aircraft and increased capacity to better serve pilgrims and other travelers.

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