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Dubai International Airport sixth fastest growing airport in the world

As the world prepares for the coming millennium, the Department of Civil Aviation, Dubai, is laying the foundations for creating what will be a hi-tech aviation city of the future in the Middle East. Over the last year, a number of expansion projects have been announced - some of which are underway and some near completion. While the year 2000 will herald a new era for aviation in Dubai, 1998 has witnessed glimpses of what's on the anvil.

Dubai International Airport has seen phenomenal growth in the last few years. The 1997 traffic statistics of 9.1 million passengers, analysed by Airports Council International (ACI), placed Dubai as the sixth fastest growing airport in the world and in the 33rd position for handling international passengers.

The ACI statistics and the overall ranking of the top 100 airports are based on the total number of passenger throughput - both domestic and international. According to the ACI statistics, Dubai International Airport ranks first in the Middle East and 31st in the world for servicing 9.1 million international passengers in the year 1997.

His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, President of the Department of Civil Aviation and Chairman of Emirates, commented: "This achievement has added another dimension to the efforts of the Department of Civil Aviation in providing a high quality of services and facilities. This ranking has reinforced Dubai International Airport as one of the major aviation hubs in the world.

"The ACI figures are not just empty words. The efforts of the Department of Civil Aviation in putting Dubai International Airport on the world aviation map has been recognised. It is our endeavour to continue our pursuit for excellence in the coming future and be listed among the topmost airports in the world."

With its growth of 13.7% in 1997, Dubai International Airport ranks ahead of Dublin Airport at 7th position with growth rate of

13.6%; Milan Airport at number 8 with 3.59% growth; Schiphol Airport at 9th position with 13.58%; and Sao Paulo at 10th position with 13.2% growth.

Brussels Airport stands at number one with 17.8% increase in growth, followed by Philadelphia at 16.1%, Orlando at 15.7 %, Munich at 14% and Manila at 13.9 %.

An important factor to be noted is the fact that these rankings are based on overall passenger movement - that is both international and domestic. For example, Philadelphia Airport, which ranks 2nd as the fastest growing airport - with an overall growth rate of 16.1 in 1997 - has only 1.9 million international passengers and 20.4 million domestic passengers.

While all the other airports in the top ten fastest growing airport list have considerable domestic passengers, Dubai, geographically, boasts of only international passenger movement.

The ACI has announced that Dubai International Airport has been upgraded to the rank of 94 in 1997 under the Top 100 International Airports of the World listing. In 1996 Dubai ranked 97. Dubai International Airport has jumped three places in one year - from 97 rank in 1996 to 94th in 1997.

In the Middle East, ACI report shows Dubai Airport as number 1 airport for handling international passengers - 9.1 million passengers in 1997, a 13.7 % increase compared to 8.2 million in 1996. Jeddah Airport is the only other airport in the Middle East which ranks within the top 100 airports worldwide. At 88th position, Jeddah services a total of 9.7 million passengers - out of which 5.2 million are international passengers and 4.38 million domestic.

HH Sheikh Ahmed commented: "The Department of Civil Aviation has launched a massive US\$540 million expansion programme designed to cater to the travel demands of the 21st century. It is expected that by the year



2000 Dubai International Airport will be handling an international passenger throughput to the tune of 14 million. As the economy of Dubai grows, the travel demands will also grow."

The number of passengers using Dubai International Airport in 1998 has gone up to 9.7 million as compared with 9.1 million in 1997, showing an increase of 6.8 %. Aircraft movement has gone up by 9.3% in 1998.

The number of airlines operating out of Dubai International Airport has gone up from 82 in 1997 to 90 in 1998 serving 130 destinations. This increase is due to the surge in interest by the international business community and tourism industry in Dubai. Executive flights registered at 1,312 in 1998, which was lower as compared with 1,624 in 1997, which saw a greater number of private flights because of the Dubai Airshow '97.

Experts predict a continuous and big growth in travel demands worldwide - which in the Middle East stands at 6% and is second in the world after China. The Middle East is an attractive market due to Dubai's role as a major business hub and as an up market tourist destination it will attract the lion's share in this market. Today the non-oil sector such as trade, manufacture, assembly, free zones, tourism is being encouraged to attract foreign investments and multinationals.

HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, President of the Department of Civil Aviation and Chairman of Emirates, commented: "Passenger movement has been growing steadily over the years setting Dubai International Airport on the road to joining the top 20 airports in the world. With the expansion projects, some of which are already underway, the Department of Civil Aviation, with the support of the Government of Dubai, aims to build the most important and advanced aviation hub for the future."

The Department of Civil Aviation, in preparation for the millennium made a number of major announcements with regard to the expansion plans in 1998.

To begin with on May 1st the new Terminal 2, an integral part of the US\$540 million expansion plan for Dubai International Airport, was opened in a bid to help alleviate congestion caused at the main terminal by the ever growing traffic and the construction work on the new Concourse.

This new spacious and user-friendly terminal caters to both scheduled, charter and executive flights along with special interest flights like the Haj flights. Terminal 2 is specially designed to handle in excess of 500 passengers per hour. In the eight months ending December 1998, the number of airlines operating out of Terminal 2 has gone up to 26 from the original 24. Total number of passengers using the terminal registered at 316,583.

Terminal 2 Duty Free, which has been specially designed by CIL, internationally renowned experts in the world of duty free, embodies the spirit of Dubai Duty Free - a wide range of top quality merchandise at the best value for money. There is also a special desk for bulk purchases.

In July 1998 the Department of Civil Aviation announced the Dubai Cargo Village expansion programme. With cargo throughput increasing steadily, the Dubai Cargo Village has witnessed phenomenal growth since its inception in 1991. The original building, which was designed to handle 250,000 tonnes of freight per annum has now had to deal with an excess of 425,000 tonnes per annum. In 1998 the Dubai Cargo Village handled a total of 442,492.64 tonnes of freight in comparison to 425,156.90 tonnes in 1997, registering an increase of 4.08%.

The Department of Civil Aviation hence announced a US\$200 million expansion programme to significantly increase the cargo handling capacity over the next ten years and plan a long term growth up to and beyond the year 2018.

Taking advantage of Dubai International Airport's strategic location, the Department of Civil Aviation had announced the establishment of the Dubai Airport Free Zone in 1997. 1998



witnessed a heavy demand for office space in the DAFZ which is slated to open in March 1999. To date 80% of the office space in the first phase has already been booked. Boeing, Federal Express, DHL are some of the companies which have already occupied offices and warehouses in the free zone. The second of the Dubai Airport Free Zone is at present under consideration.

To date from the 250 companies who applied, 48 companies have been granted approval to operate out of the Dubai Airport Free Zone. While construction work on the new Concourse is on schedule, major renovation projects which are underway are near completion. The new Departures lounge is slated to open in mid-1999. With this the check in desk will increase from the current 44 to 221.

The expansion programme is aimed at providing the best of infrastructure and facilities. Besides infrastructure, the Department of Civil Aviation also aims to provide excellent customer relations. Its new customer care programme "Dubai Airport Cares" was launched in October and inaugurated by HH Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Minister of Defence UAE.

This programme has been set up to initiate and maintain the highest standards of service for customers of Dubai International Airport. "Dubai Airport Cares" aims to improve human relations at Dubai International Airport in order to provide better and more efficient service to all airport users.

The campaign focuses on providing service which would help reduce queuing time, give better information to customers, reduce the amount of lost and damaged baggage and ensure all staff are polite and courteous to customers.

All front line staff working at Dubai International Airport from all the departments including DCA, Immigration, Customs, DNATA, Police, Dubai Duty Free and anyone who interfaces with the passenger, have completed a Customer Service Training Programme initiated in early 1997 by the DCA Department of Human Resources and Development. This training will continue to be given to all staff.

HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, President of the Department of Civil Aviation and Chairman of Emirates, commented: "As we move into the 21st century, the Department of Civil Aviation aims to have Dubai International Airport listed as one of the best airports in the world. Along with the construction work for the new Concourse and Cargo terminal, the Dubai Airport Cares is an integral part of the Dubai International Airport expansion programme.

"The Department of Civil Aviation aims to provide its customer not just with the best facilities but also with efficient and courteous service and helpful staff. As the gateway to the Emirate of Dubai it is our effort and aim to provide customers with a lasting impression - of warmth and friendliness."