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Dubai International now 18th most internationally connected airport

Muzaffar Rizvi/Dubai

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Emirates dominates the Dubai International airport with 45 per cent of flight operations. (File photo)

Emirates dominates the airport with 45 per cent of flight operations

The Dubai International Airport (DXB) has improved its global ranking among mega aviation hubs by climbing two positions in a latest index released by OAG.

The world's number one airport in terms of international passenger volume is now the 18th most internationally connected airport as it improved its score in a connectivity index from 183 to 194 in OAG Megahubs International 2018 Index.

The airport, which is going to complete Dh28.8 billion worth of expansion to handle 90 million passengers this year, has also improved its ranking in the top 25 Low-cost International Megahubs Index by two notches at 11th position. However, the airport retained its seventh position in Europe, Middle East and Africa region.

"As Dubai continues to establish itself as a global aviation hub, flydubai remains committed towards supporting Dubai's economic development by creating free flows of trade and tourism and changing the way passengers fly to and from the region," Ghaith Al Ghaith, chief executive of flydubai, said.

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The Dubai International airport, which celebrated its 58th anniversary on Sunday, plays a key role in Dubai's economic expansion and generates an estimated 22 per cent of total employment and 32 per cent of the emirate's gross domestic product by 2020. It handled 88 million passengers last year and facilitates more than 140 airlines to connect over 270 destinations across all six inhabited continents.

Emirates dominates the airport with 45 per cent of flight operations, according to OAG. The airline still has room to improve its presence at the airport, which is considered the world's busiest airport for A380 and 777 movements.

Emirates' fundamentals as an airline remain grounded in optimally connecting people from all corners of the globe and through our hub in Dubai. Keeping our customers at the heart of all we do, and investing in talent, products and the latest technology will always be key pillars of our strategy," an Emirates spokesperson said.

"We also work closely with all stakeholders in the aviation ecosystem to support the government's vision and efforts to continually develop Dubai's capabilities as a world-class travel and aviation hub.

"We believe the prospects for both our airline and Dubai remain bright and we are planning ahead to ensure we are well-positioned to support and maximise growth opportunities. This year, Emirates will continue to grow our fleet and network with 16 aircraft deliveries and a multitude of destination and A380 launches," the spokesperson elaborated.

Addison Schonland, a partner at airline consulting firm AirInsight Group, said Dubai is bound to rise in the ranking as its primary airline keeps acquiring A380s. Interestingly, Emirates only accounts for 45 per cent of hub traffic. This is considerably lower than some other hubs with a higher concentration from key home-based airlines, he said.

"DXB ranks even higher among the low-cost international mega hubs. As long as Emirates and flydubai keep growing, DXB will rise in the rankings. The rise of DXB among global mega hubs to date has already been quite outstanding," Schonland told *Khaleej Times*.

Saj Ahmad, an analyst at London's StrategicAero Research, echoed similar views and said performance numbers can be sliced and diced to suit any eventual report.

"While DXB has fewer city pair connections than other airports, DXB still reigns when it comes to international traffic passing through the hub. Dubai International doesn't need to top the city-connection(s) chart – because it dominates the one metric, the only metric that counts – and that is as the world's busiest international airport," Ahmad said.

Harvey Monk, executive manager at grmc Advisory Services, said one of the biggest challenges for DXB in joining top 10 mega aviation hub nations will be the introduction of new generation ultra-long haul aircraft connecting far and distant destinations directly – particularly Australasia and Europe, thus undermining the aviation hub model.

"Over the coming years, we expect strong improvement in DXB's connectivity index as a result of Emirates and flydubai partnership which offers unparalleled connectivity for Emirates passengers to tier two cities served by flydubai," he said.

In top ranking

The London Heathrow airport scored 333 in the connectivity index – 27 points higher than the second most connected international airport, Chicago O'Hare. Germany's Frankfurt airport secured third position with 302 points.

Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta and Singapore retained the top three positions in the top 25 Low-cost International Megahubs 2018 Index. Manila Airport has jumped up the rankings from 12th place in 2017 to fourth place this year, with low-cost airline Cebu Pacific remaining a dominant carrier at the airport by operating a third of total flights.

OAG is a provider of digital flight information and their customers span the entire global travel ecosystem from airlines, airports, government agencies and aircraft manufacturers to travel technology leaders and service providers. It is headquartered in the UK with global operations in the US, Singapore, Japan, Lithuania and China.

– muzaffarrizvi@khaleejtimes.com

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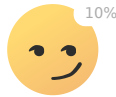
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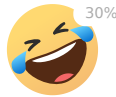
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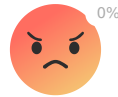
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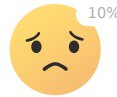
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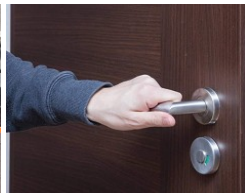
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