

AAPA reports Asia passenger volumes remain severely depressed

Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA) reports that passenger numbers in the region reached only 8.1% of pre-pandemic levels in January 2022, due to a combination of continued and reintroduced travel restrictions.

International passenger numbers in the region in January 2019 reached 35.2 million for the month, whereas in January 2022 that figure was only 2.7 million PAX. Available seat capacity in Jan 2022 was 17.9% of volumes for the same month in 2019, and the international passenger load factor averaged 41.3%. Air cargo remained strong, showing a 5.1% YOY increase.

Commenting on the results, Mr. Subhas Menon, AAPA Director General said, "Travel restrictions along with uncertainties resulting from the rise in Omicron infections dampened the anticipated recovery in international travel at the start of the new year. Nevertheless, in the light of increased vaccination rates and the relatively reduced risk of severe illness from the transmission of the Omicron variant, an increasing number of Asian governments have since adapted to living with COVID-19, including reversing or reducing international travel restrictions. As we move into 2022, recovery in international air travel should gain momentum."

He commented on the positive numbers for air cargo in the region, adding: "Airlines still face challenging operating conditions. The current escalating conflict in Ukraine may have a wider operational and economic impact on Asian airlines, whilst elevated fuel prices threaten to suppress earnings in an industry already struggling to survive. While travel restrictions have been relaxed, much more progress can be achieved to increase confidence in the travel process, with greater harmonization and easing of cross border travel measures based on risk assessment. To this end, AAPA continues to work cooperatively with industry stakeholders and governments for the safe and sustained recovery in air travel."