



**INTERVIEW WITH Mr. NİHAT DEMİRKAN  
COMMERCIAL AVIATION MANAGER  
SABİHA GÖKÇEN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (ISG)**

**Q1. Can you please briefly tell us about yourself?**

I had worked in the commercial department of Turkish Airlines for 28 years; 18 years of this time was spent out of Turkey. My responsibilities included Country Manager for Netherlands, China (Beijing), Israel and Switzerland. After 4 years of General Manager experience in El Al Israel Airlines for Turkey, I joined the Sabiha Gökçen International Airport where I am still working as the Commercial Aviation Manager.

**Q2. Can you briefly tell us about Sabiha Gökçen International Airport?**

Sabiha Gökçen International Airport is one of the two major airports serving Istanbul in Turkey, and is the newest airport among those that have been constructed from greenfield' ('from zero', unlike most airports, which are build on existing configurations; 'brownfield'. The Airport (ISG) enjoyed the highest growth rate between the years 2002-2007. In May 1<sup>st</sup>, a consortium consisted of Limak Holding of Turkey (40%), GMR Group of India (40%) and Malaysia Airport Holdings Berhad (20%) acquired the operational rights for the next 20 years for Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport in a BOT (Build Operate Transfer) Project including the management of the existing terminal buildings, car parks, ground handling, cargo, aircraft refueling operations, Duty Free, F&B areas and the airport hotel.

The new international terminal building and its supporting, bringing the yearly passenger capacity to 25 million are scheduled to open on 29 October 2009.



Current domestic terminal capacity is 1,5 million/year. International Terminal Capacity is 3 million/year. The Airport serves 43 international destinations with 31 International and 3 domestic airlines serve the airport to 16 domestic destinations in Turkey. Cargo terminal enclosed area is 7.500 m<sup>2</sup> with 5 gates, 3 cold air rooms for export and 2 cold air rooms for import. 73 km of direct NATO pipeline from the refinery with a jet fuel capacity of 15,000 m<sup>3</sup> can supply fuel for 22 airplanes at the same time with a hydrant line. The airport is named after Sabiha Gökçen, the world's first female combat pilot.

I would like to add here that the Sabiha Gökçen Airport is the first step towards the "Advanced Technology Industry Park" project in the region, which intends to serve Turkey in fields such as transportation, foreign trade, aviation and technology, and act as a leader for conversion of the region into a technology base in the future.

### **Q3. Who is Sabiha Gökçen, the person the Airport is named after?**

Sabiha Gökçen, born in 1913, in Bursa, Turkey, is the first female combat pilot of the world. She was adopted by Atatürk in 1925 and given the surname of "Gökçen". Sabiha Gökçen enrolled with the Civil Aviation School "Türk Kusu" (Turkish Bird) of Turkish Aeronautical Association in 1935 and was awarded with High Glider brevets in Ankara. She completed her education in gliders in Crimea, Russia, and following her training at the Eskisehir Military Aviation School, she became a military pilot and flew with hunter and bomber aircrafts.



Appointed as the chief lecturer to Türkkusu of Turkish Aeronautical Association. Sabiha Gökçen has flied with a total of 22 different bomber and acrobatics aircrafts throughout her life. She died at the age of 88, one day after her birthday, on 22 March 2001. Sabiha Gökçen has been a source of inspiration for all female pilots of the world and her legend will continue to live with us.

### **Q4. Please tell us about the progress in Turkish civil aviation and the role of your Airport.**

Turkey is larger than any Western country in size. Given its large size and growing population and economy, Turks have come to rely on domestic and international air service. In 2002, the total number of airlines passengers served in Turkey was 33.5 million; in 2007, this number reached 70.4 million. 14% increase was observed so far this year. The popularity and demand for international and domestic flights to Turkey will continue to increase. İstanbul Atatürk Airport served 23 million passengers last year, and can not meet all the demands for İstanbul, the hub of Turkey.

The role of Sabiha Gökçen Airport was to create capacity to meet new demands to Istanbul, but with its progress and increasing capacity and as a second role, it has began to create new demands. I would like to note that in 2001 Sabiha Gökçen Airport serviced 47 thousand passengers, in 2007 this figure has reached 3.8 million. Sabiha Gökçen Airport will contribute to the progress in Turkish Civil Aviation, and meet Istanbul's requirements.

**Q5. Which airlines from the UK fly to your Airport?**

Easyjet, currently flying from London Luton and Basel to Sabiha Gökçen Airport, will commence London Gatwick flights to Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen Airport on 12 December 2008.

**Q6. Which international routes are available in Sabiha Gökçen Airport?**

<b>Airline</b>	<b>City</b>
Air Arabia	Sharjah
Air Cairo	Cairo
Air Italy	Verona
Air Memphis	Cairo
Air Urga	Izmail, Nikolaev
Blue Wings	Duesseldorf, Stuttgart
Caspian Airlines	Urmieh
Condor	Frankfurt, Munich
Corendon Airlines	Amsterdam, Tel Aviv
Daghestan Airlines	Makhackala, Vladikavkaz
Deta Aviation	Shimkent
Easyjet	Luton, Basel, Gatwick (will start 12 <sup>th</sup> December 2008)
Fly Nordic	Stockholm
Germania	Berlin
Germanwings	Cologne, Dortmund, Hamburg, Stuttgart, Berlin
Hamburg International	Hamburg
Jazeera Airways	Kuwait City
Myair	Bergamo
Neos	Bologna
Norwegian Air	Oslo
Pegasus	Amsterdam, Bologna, Copenhagen, Duesseldorf, Lefkosa, Munich, Roma, Stansted, Stuttgart, Tehran, Vienna, Zurich
Podilla Avia	Khmelnyts'kyi
Privilege Style Airlines	Barcelona, Madrid
Pullmantur Air	Madrid
Royal Wings	Amman
Sayakhat Airlines	Aktau
Sham Wings	Damascus
Sky Europe	Bratislava
Spanair	Barcelona
Sunexpress	Berlin, Cologne, Hannover, Santorini
Taban Air	Tehran, Masshad, Tebriz
TUI Fly	Frankfurt, Hannover, Stuttgart
Turan Air	Ganca

**Q7. Which domestic routes are available in Sabiha Gökçen Airport?**

<b>Airline</b>	<b>City</b>
Pegasus	Adana, Ankara, Antalya, Bodrum, Dalaman, Diyarbakir, Gaziantep, Izmir, Kayseri, Malatya, Trabzon
Sunexpress	Adana, Antalya, Diyarbakir, Erzurum, Izmir, Kars, Sivas, Trabzon, Van
Turkish Airlines	Ankara, Antalya, Bodrum, Dalaman, Gaziantep, Istanbul, Izmir, Trabzon

**Q8. What are the key business management and finance issues involved in running an airport?**

**Business management:** An airport is a service industry that runs 24 hours, 365 days of the year. It is a gateway, an architectural showpiece, sometimes a

national icon. The stakeholders, of an airport are numerous; the relations and clients include civil aviation authorities, airlines, ground handling and transport companies, cargo agents, oil companies, concessionaires, shops, customs, immigration, health, telecommunications, land transport authorities, police, security, trade and tourism departments, public works, veterinary departments, and passengers, who are the ultimate customer of the airport. The airport must ensure efficient and economic operations while maintaining safety and security at all times.

**Finance:** Sabiha Gökçen Airport is owned by a private consortium consisting of Limak Holding of Turkey, GMR Group of India and Malaysia Airport Holdings Berhad, equipped with resources to finance major expansions of our airport and the know-how to continually improve the infrastructure and bring new business

**Q9. What are the challenges faced by Airports?**

Airport Operators are expected to provide safe and efficient airport operations and user friendly facilities and services. Airports must addressing the management of facilitation against security, commercial, financial and environmental considerations and targets. Pressure is there to meet expectations of many faceted airport users and stakeholders. The challenge for a 21st century airport is to balance these components speedily and correctly.

**Q10. Do you have a message for the Turkish British business communities in the UK?**

Currently there are two routes from Sabiha Gökçen Airport to UK for Luton and Stansted. In the near future (12<sup>th</sup> December 2008) Gatwick route is going to be available. We look forward to increase the routes from Turkey to UK. Therefore we plan to participate in the business briefings the TBCCI has planned in London later this year on the subjects of Travel and Tourism to Turkey.

**Thank you Mr Demirkan**