

Gulf Air to Introduce Self Service Check-In Kiosks in Another First for the Middle East Airline

October 16, 2002 – Sophisticated self-service IBM kiosks will make airline check-ins faster and easier for Gulf Air passengers

Gulf Air, the national carrier of Bahrain, UAE, Oman and Qatar, will become the first Middle East airline to introduce self-service check-in kiosks at selected locations in the airline's network. The project to implement the automated service at Bahrain, Abu Dhabi and Muscat's International Airports will begin immediately and is scheduled to be introduced to the travelling public early next year. The contract was awarded to Gulf Business Machines (GBM), Sole Distributor for IBM Products and services in the Gulf, at a signing ceremony held at GITEX.

The kiosks, which will operate alongside 'traditional' check-in desks, use touch-screen technology to ensure a simplified process for passengers checking in with hand luggage in the first phase, thereby reducing queuing times and providing a range of benefits for the business traveller. It will also allow passengers to directly control their assigned seating.

"Automated check-in kiosks not only enhance efficiency both for the airline and the airport, but they also provide a level of passenger convenience not yet seen in the region," said Tariq Sultan, Assistant Vice President of Information Technology, Gulf Air.

For Gulf Air the focus is on increasing the level of customer services it offers. In the future the airline will consider introducing more kiosks at other airports, as well as other versions of the kiosks at hotels and other strategic city locations.

"The phased introduction of check-in kiosks is the result of a commitment by Gulf Air to 'go the extra mile for passengers' and reflects our acknowledgement of the value of time to our customers," added James Hogan, President & Chief Executive, Gulf Air.

Farid Metwaly, general manager of IBM Middle East, Egypt and Pakistan says the process is enabled by using the passengers' frequent flyers card, credit card, or ATB-2 coupon, any of which allow the kiosk to recognize the passenger and booking details in order to issue the necessary boarding card.

"The IBM check-in kiosks support CUSS (Common Use Self Service) standard, a new platform that IATA is adopting as an industry standard which allows passengers to access different airlines' self-service check-in applications from a single kiosk," he said.

"The kiosks are based on the latest IBM technology and integration services with a touch screen user interface. The operation status of the kiosk will be monitored utilizing IBM's Kiosk Manager software, an online monitoring tool that allows for all kiosks across Gulf Air's network to be managed from one central location."

"For Gulf Air the benefits of the solution include enhanced passenger handling, the provision of alternative check in locations and the ability to increase the level of customer services it offers," adds Abdulla Ishaq, General Manager, Bahrain Business Machines.

About Gulf Air

Gulf Air is the national carrier of Bahrain, Oman, Abu Dhabi and Qatar and the only truly PanGulf carrier in the region.

As a part of major recovery plans, the airline is embarking on a change strategy to enable it to regain its crown as the Gulf's leading airline. Core focuses of the strategy are on streamlining administration and creating greater efficiencies with particular attention to customer service and product enhancements.

About IBM

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About Gulf Business Machines

With roots stretching back 57 years, Gulf Business Machines is the largest locally situated IT solutions and service provider satisfying technology requirements of local, regional and international businesses and governments in the Gulf countries except Saudi Arabia. The company's comprehensive portfolio of IT solutions and services are complemented by a unique affiliation with an IBM community of more than 325,000 IT experts, as well as a number of international business partners. The company offers award-winning, globally acclaimed solutions and the security of its strong regional presence, extensive reach and its unrivaled market knowledge. More information can be found at <http://www.gbm4ibm.com>



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