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## **Finnair traffic grew 10 percent in 2008**

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HELSINKI, Finland (AP) - A record 1.3 million passengers flew Finnair on Asian routes last year, increasing the carrier's traffic to the region by 16.5 percent, the Finnish carrier said Thursday.

In all, Finnair traffic grew 10 percent in 2008 compared to the previous year.

In October, Finnair warned of cuts and layoffs after reporting a third-quarter net loss of euro17 million (\$22 million), down from a profit of euro40 million a year earlier.

Despite tough competition and rising costs, the airline said it will continue with plans to modernize its long-haul fleet. It is increasingly attracting "gateway" passengers flying between Europe and the Far East and has ordered 12 wide-bodied Airbus aircraft to go into service in 2007-2011.

"Our successful Asian strategy will be an essential part of our scheduled traffic also in the future," Finnair spokesman Christer Haglund said.

Separately, the airline announced Thursday that the Danish government had entered a two-year deal to use Finnair exclusively for all flights from Denmark to Finland and Thailand.

Finnair PLC, which is 56 percent government-owned, flies to 50 destinations with a fleet of 60 aircraft. Last year, 8.3 million passengers flew Finnair.

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