

Biman likely to get more Hajj flight slots from Saudi govt

-A Monitor Report

Date: 17 June, 2023



Dhaka : Dr Abdulfattah bin Sulaiman Mashat, Deputy Minister of Hajj and Umrah in Saudi Arabia, on June 8 assured that the Kingdom's government would consider approving 10 more slots of dedicated Hajj flights to Biman Bangladesh Airlines as per Bangladesh's request.

The assurance was made while Mohammad Javed Patwary, Ambassador of Bangladesh to Saudi Arabia, called on the Saudi Deputy Minister at Makkah on June 7, according to a message received on June 8.

During the meeting, the Saudi Deputy Minister lauded the devotion and discipline of Bangladeshi Hajj pilgrims and said the kingdom's government has taken different plan to make the Hajj management further improved.

Bangladesh had requested Saudi Arabia's civil aviation authority to

allow Biman to operate 10 more Hajj flights as the Bangladeshi flag carrier was forced to cancel several Hajj flights as some Hajj agencies were unable to arrange accommodation and secure visas for the Bangladeshi Hajj pilgrims before their scheduled departure.

As per reports, Shafiul Azim, Managing Director and CEO, Biman Bangladesh Airlines, said, they are optimistic to get permission from Saudi Arabia civil aviation authority to operate 10 more Hajj flights.

"We have some backup plan as well so that we can carry all Hajj pilgrims on time," he added.

Biman boss alleged that there was a lack of sincerity among some Hajj agencies, which resulted in financial loss for Biman. Additionally, the airline faced pressure to transport all Hajj pilgrims on time.

"We have already informed the matter to the the Ministry of Religious Affairs to take action against the responsible agencies as per the law," he claimed.

In the last two weeks, Biman Bangladesh Airlines had to leave over 6,000 pilgrims behind and cancel six Hajj flights.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs already sent show-cause notices to 90 Hajj agencies on June 11 blaming them for the situation.

In 2023, a total of 122,221 pilgrims from Bangladesh will perform Hajj. Of these, nearly 62,000 will travel via Biman Bangladesh Airlines, and the rest via Saudi Arabian Airlines or Flynas.