

Local airlines cut flights to India over poor passenger numbers

- A Monitor Report

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Dhaka : Bangladeshi airlines which fly to various destinations of India have shrunk their services significantly over poor passenger numbers currently.

Despite India resuming visa services for Bangladeshis partially, after temporary suspending it following the ousting of the former Awami League government, the number of visas issued remains significantly low, which is, in turn, leading to a fall in passenger numbers.

Currently, Biman Bangladesh Airlines, US-Bangla Airlines and Novoair are three local airlines which fly between Bangladesh and India, from Dhaka to Kolkata, Delhi, Chennai and Mumbai.

As per reports, Novoair suspended its flights on Dhaka-Kolkata route from September 16, due to low passenger numbers.

It may be mentioned here, the airline used to operate one daily flight on the route. However, from August 1, 2024, the airline had shrunk services down to three weekly flights.

Even the flag carrier has reduced the number of its flights to India due to the fall in passenger numbers over the past few weeks, said reports.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines used to operate two daily flights from Dhaka to Kolkata, however, now it is operating only one.

Also, the airline's flights to Delhi have been reduced from three to one per week. Similarly, the national airline reduced its frequencies on Dhaka-Chennai route, from three to one.

Reports claimed, even after reducing frequencies, Biman is witnessing only 50 per cent load factor on the aforementioned routes. However, reportedly, there are little more passengers on the return flights to Dhaka.

The largest private carrier of the country US-Bangla Airlines is also undergoing the same cruel fate. As per reports, the airline has reduced its flights from Dhaka to Kolkata from 14 weekly to six weekly.

On top of it, the airline suspended its daily flights from Chattogram to Kolkata and reduced its flights from Dhaka to Chennai from 11 to five weekly.

Stakeholders of the industry hoped, the governments of both the countries will quickly resolve the visa issue, as the airline, mainly local ones, are suffering from significant losses over the shortage of passengers.

On the other hand, Indian airlines operating in Bangladesh like Vistara, Air India and IndiGo are not suffering from the same woes, as they mostly carry a large number of passengers beyond India to the global destinations in their respective networks, unlike our local airlines who mainly fly point-to-point.

Following the ousting of the former Awami League government and the escape of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina to India, the neighbouring country suspended its visa services for Bangladeshis. Now, the Indian government is issuing visas to Bangladeshis on a limited scale for medical and study purposes only.

As a result, those planning to visit India for travel or other purposes are being denied, resulting in a continued passenger crisis on flights.