

NOVOAIR flying into int'l skies in 2024

-A Monitor Report

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Dhaka : One of the leading private carriers of the country NOVOAIR, following 11 years of successful operations, will be spreading its wings in international skies from Q1 2024.

Mofizur Rahman, Managing Director of NOVOAIR said this while talking to The Bangladesh Monitor at his office in the capital.

The airline will be launching daily flights to three popular international destinations in Southeast Asia-Thailand's Bangkok, Malaysia's Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.

Not only that but also the airline will be commencing daily operations to Middle East as well, mainly in fan-favourite destinations such as Dubai, Sharjah and Muscat.

For the international expansion, the airline is currently in process of bringing three Airbus A321 aircraft with all-economy configuration,

mentioned Rahman, adding, there is strong demand of this aircraft variant both at home and worldwide.

NOVOAIR will receive delivery of two A321s soon, with which the airline will commence its international operations in Q1 2024. Later, with the delivery of another (third) A321, the airline will have launched flight operations to all the six aforementioned destinations by 2024 end.

It may be mentioned here that the airline already operates scheduled flights to India's Kolkata. However, the frequency on the Dhaka-Kolkata route will remain the same, mentioned the Managing Director.

Speaking of the domestic sector, Rahman mentioned, it is witnessing a negative growth currently, due to multiple factors such as better road connectivity and air travel cost increase.

He informed, Jashore's demand is now down 80 per cent and Barishal sees zero demand. The Russia-Ukraine war has led to decreasing affordability among people. Hence, family travel segment is shrinking domestically apart from Cox's Bazar. However, with the newly launched railway service, demand of air travel to Cox's Bazar will also come down 50 per cent in 2024.

The constant increase of aviation charges and taxes are making air travel costlier. Since the lion share of air travellers belong to middle-class, domestic travel in the coming days will have a very thin overall growth, stressed Rahman.

However, the current 6-8 per cent growth in international air travel will continue, foresees Rahman. Hence, to sustain, the airlines of the country will have to rely on international operations more, he further claimed.

Nevertheless, amid aggressive competition with Middle Eastern or Indian airline giants, it will be difficult to sustain for Bangladeshi airlines on international routes without government support, commented the Managing Director.

The policies in the country's industry are not conducive to airlines, he stressed. The tax burden continues to increase.

For airlines, the minimum tax on import of aviation spare parts is 26 per cent which is not at all sustainable, claimed the Managing Director.

In line with the rest of the world, Bangladesh, like other South Asian countries, must adapt and bring changes in its tax regime. Otherwise, the number of air travellers will drop significantly in the coming days, concluded Mofizur Rahman.