

SalamAir flying its first A321 neo on Dhaka route from September

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Dhaka : Even amid the pandemic, SalamAir is doing so well that it is planning to expand operations by increasing flight frequency to and from Bangladesh as well as its network. Hence, the airline has added the first A321neo Aircraft out of four orders to its fleet. And this first A321neo has been deployed to operate on Dhaka-Muscat route as well from September 14.

Shahab Uddin, Country Manager, Bangladesh, SalamAir said this while talking to The Bangladesh Monitor recently at his office in the capital.

With the induction of the A321neo and the aircraft's extra range capability of eight hours meets the ambitious plans of SalamAir for network growth. SalamAir can now connect Oman further to new destinations in Europe, Far East, and Africa. The new fleet mix will enable SalamAir to diversify its portfolio and support the Sultanate of Oman's tourism industry vision.

"Bangladesh as a station has always been emphasized by SalamAir in its network." Hence, not only to Dhaka, but also the airline may later introduce the A321neo 212-seat capacity aircraft to Chattogram too, subject to market demand, mentioned the Country Manager.

Currently, the Muscat based airline is flying five weekly flights to and from Dhaka, compared to the double daily flights in pre-pandemic. From mid-September, the

airline is reinstating two weekly flights to and from the port city and plans to increase more.

During the pandemic, SalamAir has played an important role to carry large numbers of Bangladeshi Expatriate to Saudi while there was fewer capacity available in the market, mentioned Shahab Uddin.

"Throughout SalamAir network, we have operated many charter flights and even launched flights to new destinations such as Sarajevo of Bosnia."

In Bangladesh market, the airline now wants to increase frequencies to Dhaka and Chattogram to facilitate travel for large number of Bangladeshi expatriate travellers to Oman and other GCC Countries, said Shahab.

"As mass vaccinations are being rolled out across Bangladesh and GCC countries are successfully containing the spread of the virus, hence, there might be possibility of higher passenger demand and movements to Oman and other GCC countries," expressed Shahab with hope.

Another major market opportunity - Umrah - is also expected to begin from September this year. And SalamAir always preferred to carry Umrah pilgrims.

"Concerned authorities from both ends are working to resolve some pending issue," said the country manager.

About reaching pre-pandemic levels, Shahab Uddin said it is uncertain to determine when the aviation industry will be able to do so, not only in Bangladesh but also globally as mentioned by industry experts too. Currently, Dhaka is witnessing half of the pre-pandemic flight capacity because of health and safety concerns relating to Covid.

"Thus, reaching pre-pandemic levels depend how the corona situation persist in each country," noted Shahab.

"We are grateful to all regulatory authorities and our valued travel agency business partners for supporting SalamAir growth in Bangladesh market," concluded the country manager.