

## Airfares to ME surge due to artificial crisis created by airlines : ATAB

- A Monitor Report

Date: 01 February, 2025



Dhaka : Airfares on several routes, particularly to Middle East, have surged by two/three times over an artificial crisis created by airlines, especially low-cost ones. This syndicate is a result of an uncontrolled market system and poor monitoring by civil aviation authorities.

Abdus Salam Aref, President of Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh, which represents around 4,000 registered travel agencies of the country, said this, while addressing a press conference held in the capital on January 26.

According to data from ATAB, at present, it costs about BDT 1.90 lac to fly to Saudi Arabia from Bangladesh, up from earlier BDT 45,000-50,000. On the contrary, it currently costs BDT 55,000-60,000 to fly to Saudi Arabia from Kolkata, which is a short flight away from Dhaka.

"After creating an artificial crisis, some unscrupulous groups are selling tickets at 3-4 times the actual fare," stressed Abdus Salam Aref, President of ATAB.

These malpractices are leaving the Bangladeshi migrant workers in woe. With limited means, they are suffering severely from the air ticket price hike as their travel cost has increased significantly.

According to ATAB, the primary reason behind the spike in airfares is the malpractice of booking group tickets without passenger names or travel documents by the airlines.

Carriers operating on Middle Eastern routes like Fly Dubai, Jazeera Airways, Gulf Air, and Salam Air are blocking group seats months in advance via emails without even passenger names, passports, visas, or work permits, claimed the association's President.

These airlines often partner with specific agencies, creating PNRs (Passenger Name Records) without providing any details of the travelers.

This way, as many as 60,000 seats on flights to Saudi Arabia of 11 airlines including Fly Dubai, Jazeera Airways, Gulf Air, and Salam Air are blocked, as per ATAB's findings.

"The prevailing situation will be resolved to a large extent if these blocked seats are opened up," urged Aref, while he called on the Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry and the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh to take necessary measures immediately on the discriminatory malpractice.

ATAB demanded the authorities to form a task force to conduct drives against such unscrupulous travel agents and airline staff.