

## **Biman flies world's second longest direct flight from Dhaka to Toronto**

A Monitor Report

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**Dhaka :** Marking the great Independence Day on March 26, Biman Bangladesh Airlines made history for the country by operating the world's second longest direct flight from Dhaka to Toronto in Canada.

After the world's longest direct flight on Singapore-New York route, the Dhaka-Toronto flight comes a close second with a flight time of 18 hours and 35 minutes.

Biman Bangladesh flight BG305, with 70 passengers, departed Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital at 11:04 local time on March 26 and landed at Toronto Pearson International Airport at 7:38 local time on March 27.

The return flight BG306 left Toronto for Dhaka at 10:00 am local time on March 29, and arrived in Dhaka at 12:15 pm local time the following day after flying 16 hours and 15 minutes eastbound.

The flight was operated by a Boeing 787-9 with 30 business class seats, 21 premium economy seats, and 247 economy class seats.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Md Mahbub Ali inaugurated the Dhaka-Toronto route by cutting a ribbon after special prayers on March 26 at Dhaka Airport.

RAM Obaidul Muktedir Chowdhury, Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, Abu Saleh Mostafa Kamal,

Managing Director of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, and representatives from Canadian High Commission in Dhaka were also present on the occasion, among others.

However, with this maiden flight, Biman did not commence regular commercial flights on the route. The national flag carrier announced that the flight on March 26 was a never heard before "experimental commercial flight" from Dhaka to Toronto, allegedly with a poor number of commercial passengers but a large member delegation team flying for free - making the airline waste crores of takas - while scheduled commercial services on the route will not begin any sooner than June.

For this unusual move, the national flag carrier was caught under heavy fire at a press meet organised by the High Commission of Canada in Dhaka at a city hotel on March 24.

Md Mahbub Ali, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism attended the press meet as the chief guest while Dr Lilly Nicholis, High Commissioner of Canada to Bangladesh, was present as the honourable guest.

Dr Md Mahbub Jahan Khan, Director, Corporate Planning and Training of Biman was also present on the occasion in absence of the airline's Managing Director and CEO Abu Saleh Mostafa Kamal.

The State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Md Mahbub Ali, said, "Once Canada completes its boarding automation works at its Toronto airport, scheduled commercial flights will begin on the route from June with three weekly services."

At the press meet, it was brought up, Biman earlier mentioned the appointment of a general sales agent, consultation with Transport Canada Civil Aviation (TCCA) and setting up Biman's office in Canada, to be the purposes of this massive delegation's visit to the country. If that was true, such purposes do not require a massive member delegation to visit Canada.

Reports also claimed that the delegation visiting Canada on the one-off flight included officials of Biman, the Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry, and the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB), as well as their family members.

Meaning, such a complimentary or a pleasure trip, costed Biman crores of taka, while Dr Md Mahbub Jahan Khan, Director, Corporate Planning and Training of Biman, said at the event that the flight cost BDT 4 crore.

In response, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Md Mahbub Ali said that they went to Canada to inaugurate Biman's office.

Also, it is a matter of prestige for Bangladesh, he stressed. They decided to operate this historic flight between Bangladesh and Canada on the special occasion of the country's Golden Jubilee and 50th Independence Day.