

Local private airlines bringing in more aircraft to ramp up operations

A Monitor Report

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Dhaka : Local private airlines US-Bangla, NOVOAIR and the upcoming Air-Astra are in talks to bring in 13 aircraft, including Airbus 330, Dash 300 and Airbus 900, to their fleet late-2022, which now has 22 planes in total.

On October 7, the new private airline Air Astra's first plane ATR 72-600 reached Dhaka Airport.

The airline Air-Astra will add four aircraft to its fleet by 2022 to begin initial operations on domestic routes.

Initially, set back by post-Covid aircraft leasing market uncertainties hindering the airline's plans to launch by Q1 2022, Air Astra has secured three ATR 72-600 aircraft on lease.

By 2023 end, Air Astra plans to induct five more ATR 72-600 aircraft.

"We will operate flights on all domestic routes except Barishal if we get three planes this year," Air-Astra CEO Imran Asif said, according to reports.

The move for expansion is fueled by rising travel demand, and the opening of Third Terminal of Dhaka Airport next year, and better aviation infrastructure across Bangladesh, said reports.

Currently, the private airlines carry 5,000 passengers per day, said Captain Lutfor Rahman, CEO of US-Bangla Airlines.

The number of per day air travellers will be at least 7,000 next year, he added.

"A major chunk of the air traffic will be outbound. Therefore, we are going to operate more flights to Sharjah and Singapore," he further mentioned.

Alongside the current 11 international routes, the US-Bangla CEO said they will launch the Dhaka-Delhi route next winter while the new aircraft will also help to ramp up the capacity to the gulf countries.

With the new aircraft inductions, reports claimed, US-Bangla, NOVOAIR and Air-Astra altogether will have 30 planes in the first quarter of 2023 and 33 in the second quarter next year.

NOVOAIR, which now operates on domestic routes and only the Dhaka-Kolkata international route, approached Airbus recently for the Airbus 320, a narrowbody jet airliner.

Reports added that NOVOAIR too is in expansion mode.