

## **Biman suspends flights to top tourism source market Japan, inbound tourism to be hit**

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dhaka: Biman Bangladesh Airlines' direct flight operations on Dhaka-Narita-Dhaka route will be suspended from July 1, 2025, as per a notice by the carrier.

The airline attributed the suspension to the pressure of Hajj flight operations, aircraft shortage, and commercial priorities.

However, the move is met by significant backlash by the tour operators of the country. According to them, Dhaka-Narita route was a successful and profitable venture, as Japan is the number one tourism source market for Bangladesh. From tourists and business travelers to expatriates and students, everyone preferred to travel on the route by the direct flights of Biman.

Faridul Haque, Chairman of Tour Planners, claimed the suspension to be a disaster. "I bring 60-70 groups of travelers to Bangladesh via

Biman each year. The flights on Dhaka-Narita route always remain almost full. There cannot be a commercial reason to suspend the flights, as Japan was emerging as a growing and vibrant market for the airline.”

“Due to the suspension, I will now have to suffer millions of losses from 50-60 group tour cancellations,” Faridul Haque sighed.

Md Masud Hossain, Managing Director of Bengal Tours, will also be facing 70-80 group tour cancellations due to the abrupt suspension of Biman’s Dhaka-Narita flights.

“They (the airline) should have informed three months ago. We have already invested in preparing tour packages for Japanese traveler groups. We have hired Japanese speaking guides but to no avail,” expressed Masud.

“Travel between Bangladesh and Japan remains vibrant all year round. There should be no justification behind this abrupt suspension of flights. This comes as a huge blow to the country’s inbound tourism industry as well as the economy.”

In the wake of increasing Japanese investment in the country at the moment, this move comes as a disaster, claimed the tour operators.

Masud claimed, Japanese love to visit Bangladesh due to the shortage of travel time, the relatable culture of Bangladesh, and affordability.

Even after travel alerts being in effect by Japan last year following the July-August political movement in Bangladesh, still 30-35 groups of travelers came under the management of Bengal Tours, informed Masud.

At present, there are no travel alerts and the market (travel between Japan and Bangladesh) was booming, he further claimed.

Tanvir Ahmed, Owner of Silver Wave Tours, also expressed his grief as the only direct flight operation between the two countries is about to be suspended.

“The suspension of the only direct flight operation on the route will surely affect the growing travel between the two countries,” he noted.

Still, since the airline claims the route is not profitable, they should utilize the agreement signed with Japan Airlines to carry Biman's passengers onward to other domestic cities of Japan as well as to the US and Canada, explained a former official of the airline.

Instead of doing that, they are suspending air connectivity with the east—which shows improper planning and lack of market policy from the airline's end, the former Biman official claimed.

It may be mentioned here, the national flag carrier suspended flight operations on Dhaka-Narita-Dhaka route in 2006. After 17 years, the flight was resumed on September 1, 2023, only to be suspended again from July 1, 2025.

Such haphazard moves shows that Biman lacks vision, proper planning, and market research, claimed industry experts, adding, due to these reasons the airline is falling behind year on year, instead of growing further.

According to Biman's notice, those who purchased tickets for Dhaka-Narita-Dhaka flights on or after July 1, 2025, will be able to receive a full refund. They will not have to pay any additional charges. Ticket holders are requested to contact the airline's office, counter or designated agents to complete the refund process.

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