

New airline Air Astra launched as country projects 3x aviation growth in next 15 years

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 16 November, 2022



Dhaka : Bangladesh's aviation sector will grow threefold in the next 15 years as the aviation market has almost doubled in the past 10 years, while passenger and cargo transportation each has grown at a rate of about 10 per cent. The launch of the new Bangladeshi private airline Air Astra, on November 15, only strengthens this projection.

Md Mahbub Ali, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism, said this as the Chief Guest while inaugurating the new Bangladeshi private carrier Air Astra's launch date, flight schedule, ticket sales programme and official website through a ceremony held at the domestic terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital on November 15.

The growing aviation sector of Bangladesh is finally witnessing the emergence of a new private airline named Air Astra after nine years. Till now, private airlines - US-Bangla, NOVOAIR and national flag carrier Biman Bangladesh Airlines were the only Bangladeshi carriers operating on both domestic and

international routes.

Now, Air Astra, the new local airline, will grace the skies of the country, starting its operations with a maiden flight on Dhaka-Cox's Bazar route on November 24.

Initially, Air Astra will operate three flights on Dhaka-Cox's Bazar route and two flights on Dhaka-Chattogram route. The one-way minimum fare on Dhaka-Cox's Bazar route will be BDT 4799 and BDT 3694 on Dhaka-Chattogram route.

Gradually, the airline will start flight operation on all domestic routes of Bangladesh followed by international operations in the years ahead.

The government is working relentlessly for further development of the aviation sector, said the State Minister in his speech, while inaugurating Air Astra's launch.

Dhaka Airport is undergoing Terminal Three construction, 10 hanger constructions, lighting system development, and runway expansion. Sylhet Airport is witnessing runway expansion, and new terminal building construction. Chattogram Airport is having runway expanded and airfield ground lighting system placed. Cox's Bazar Airport is undergoing runway expansion over sea up to 10,700 feet, as well as new terminal building construction. Saidpur Airport is having its runway overlay and new terminal building construction, claimed Md Mahub Ali.

Along with infrastructure development, the government is in efforts to increase the quality of passenger service at all airports, mentioned the State Minister. The authorities are trying utmost to ensure security across all airports of the country. Even revolutionary works like setting ultramodern radar are being carried out, noted the State Minister.

These developments will only be complemented by the launch of new airlines. After Air Astra, 2-3 more Bangladeshi airlines are in the pipeline to spread its wings.

Along with other high officials and industry partners, M Mafidur Rahman, Chairman of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh was also present on the occasion as the Special Guest.

CAAB Chairman M Mafidur Rahman, in his speech, requested Air Astra to sincerely consider the matter of quality passenger service with utmost importance. Passenger service is what distinguishes an airline from others, he said.

Air Astra will be successful in their operations if they focus on increasing the quality of passenger service and safety, claimed the CAAB Chairman.

Domestic travel is increasing across the country and with the highest quality of passenger services, this new airline will go miles ahead, wished M Mafidur Rahman.

Imran Asif, Chief Executive Officer of Air Astra, in his speech, said Air Astra is proud to make its debut as a new airline in Bangladesh after so long. The airline is determined to establish itself as a reliable airline through safe and great passenger service as well as on-time performance.

Earlier, the new airline Air Astra received the Air Operator's Certificate (AOC) or final approval from the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh on November 13 to begin commercial flight operations.

It also underwent the International Air Transport Association's (IATA) Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) before starting commercial operations at its own training center in the capital on June 13-18.

The airline has already received deliveries of two ATR 72-600 aircraft in the capital and will take delivery of two more aircraft within December 2022. By 2023, Air Astra's fleet of aircraft will increase to 10 in total.

The State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Md Mahbub Ali along with other dignitaries cut a cake and a ribbon to mark the airline's launch.