

Saudi envoy urges steps for direct Saudia flights on Saudi–Sylhet route

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 27 April, 2026



Dhaka: The Saudi ambassador to Bangladesh has urged the government to take necessary steps to launch direct flights by Saudia on the Saudi Arabia-Sylhet route, aiming to ease travel for millions of Bangladeshi expatriates.

The call came during a courtesy meeting with Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Adviser Ariful Haque Chowdhury at his office in Dhaka on April 27, according to a press release.

During the meeting, Ambassador Dr. Abdullah Jafar H. Bin Abiya highlighted the growing demand for direct connectivity between Saudi Arabia and Sylhet, noting that a large number of Bangladeshi workers—many of them from the Sylhet region—currently endure longer travel times and higher costs due to the absence of direct flights.

He specifically requested the government to facilitate the introduction of Saudia flights to Osmani International Airport, saying it would significantly improve passenger convenience and strengthen bilateral ties.

Welcoming the proposal, Ariful Haque Chowdhury said the matter would be discussed with the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism to explore necessary measures for launching the route.

The issue came alongside broader discussions on labor migration, recruitment processes, and workers' welfare in Saudi Arabia, where around three million Bangladeshis are currently employed.

The ambassador also raised concerns over irregular practices among some recruiting agencies and urged authorities to bring those violating rules—among the 990 registered agencies—under accountability. He further proposed developing a joint app with the Saudi government and embassy to ensure quicker resolution of workers' complaints.

If implemented, direct Saudia flights on the Saudi-Sylhet route are expected to reduce travel hassle, cut costs, and enhance connectivity for expatriate Bangladeshis, particularly those from the Sylhet region.

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