

Saudia launches first Hajj flight from Dhaka; 'Makkah Route' eases pilgrims' journey

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Dhaka: Saudia, the national flag carrier of Saudi Arabia, has inaugurated its first Hajj flight of 2026 from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, marking the formal start of this year's pilgrimage operations from Bangladesh.

The inaugural flight departed on Friday night amid a ceremony that also highlighted the continued implementation of the Makkah Route Initiative, aimed at streamlining travel procedures for pilgrims, read a press release.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Afroza Khanam Rita formally launched the program and greeted departing pilgrims with flowers, seeking their prayers for the country's peace and prosperity.

Among others present at the ceremony were M. Rashiduzzaman Millat,

State Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism; Dr. Abdullah Zafer H. bin Abiyah, Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Bangladesh; Fahmida Akhter, Secretary of Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry; Air Vice Marshal Md. Mostafa Mahmood Siddiq, Chairman of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh; Ahmed Yusuf Walid, President and CEO of Galaxy Bangladesh Group, the general sales agent (GSA) of Saudia in Bangladesh; and Salman A. Alali, Country Manager of Saudia in Bangladesh.

Officials said Saudia has undertaken extensive preparations for this year's Hajj operations, including the full digitization of its Hajj sales and distribution system to ensure greater transparency and efficiency.

Under the Makkah Route Initiative, key procedures such as immigration clearance, baggage handling, and other formalities were completed at the Hajj Camp in Dhaka prior to departure. This has significantly reduced airport congestion and made the journey smoother for pilgrims traveling to the holy sites.

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