

## US-Bangla launches flights to Jeddah, adds new feather in cap

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Dhaka : Country's largest carrier US-Bangla Airlines successfully stepped into its 11th year of operations on July 17, 2024, marking a milestone that no other private airline in Bangladesh has ever achieved. On the occasion, the airline has added a new feather in its cap by launching direct flights to and from Jeddah, the main gateway to Saudi Arabia as well as Mecca, the holiest city for the Muslim Ummah.

From August 1, 2024, US-Bangla is operating daily flights on Dhaka-Jeddah route with wide-body Airbus A330-300 aircraft, offering comfortable seating for up to 436 passengers in all Economy Class. The airline's move is aimed at providing Saudi Arabia-bound passengers with better services, said Mohammed Abdullah Al Mamun, Managing Director of US-Bangla Airlines, while talking to The Bangladesh Monitor.



"The new route caters to the significant Bangladeshi expatriate community in Saudi Arabia and provides Muslims wishing to perform Umrah pilgrimage with convenient access," he added. The airline's chief also extended his best wishes to the passengers on the occasion of the airline's 10th anniversary.

While talking to The Bangladesh Monitor, Abdus Salam Aref, President of Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (ATAB), appreciated and welcomed the new initiative of US-Bangla. He mentioned, it is delightful that Umrah pilgrims, migrant workers and even newly emerging leisure travellers now have an alternate choice-that too a local one-to fly between Dhaka and Jeddah.

Bangladesh should take pride in a new local airline spreading its wings to an international destination. This will prevent foreign airlines from taking away the revenues that the country's airlines can tap and keep inside Bangladesh, helping the nation in return, the ATAB President rejoiced.

The move brings more competitiveness in the market, which can lead to a price drop that will eventually benefit passengers, he informed. Aref further expressed his hope that US-Bangla will continue its sustainable practices and continue offering same ticket rates to every agency fairly, unlike some others in the market, according to him.



***Mohammed Abdullah Al Mamun***

Due to quality service lacking on the route, US-Bangla is welcoming a great response from the market. Talking to The Bangladesh Monitor, M Shafiqul Islam, Head of Marketing and Sales of US-Bangla, informed, the airline is witnessing almost full load factor on the coming flights between Dhaka-Jeddah. "Even the return flights from Jeddah to Dhaka are receiving almost full load factor, thanks to the confidence the Umrah returnees are showing in US-Bangla," he expressed.

US-Bangla also offers convenient flight times on the route, making it an ideal choice for Umrah pilgrims. The airline's flights from Dhaka depart Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 5:15 pm and reach Jeddah's King Abdulaziz International Airport at 9:10 pm.

It may be mentioned here that US-Bangla has not appointed any sales agent in Jeddah and operates its own office in the destination. The airline is also eyeing significant cargo load factors in the coming days as its Head of Sales Shafiq informed, plenty of cargo bound to Europe are transported through Jeddah.

  
***Shafiq Islam***

With quality service, sales support, on-time performance and fleet, US-Bangla intends to stand out on the route from its counterparts. There had been reports citing complaints in the market by passengers about poor quality of service from the airlines operating in the route. US-Bangla, country's largest carrier at the moment, aims to eliminate the inconvenience of the passengers-mainly remittance worriers and Umrah pilgrims-with its bolstered fleet and services.

Explaining how the airline aims to stand out, Mohammed Abdullah Al Mamun, Managing Director, US-Bangla Airlines, said, "In this competitive age, we are ready to take on any kind of challenge. In today's world, there is no alternative to brand new aircraft for ensuring quality passenger service. For this purpose, US- Bangla is constantly adding new aircraft to its fleet."

Currently, the airline's fleet comprises 24 aircraft including two Airbus A330-300s, nine Boeing 737-800s, 10 ATR 72-600s and three Dash 8-Q400s. The airline also boasts a record of more than 90 per cent on-time flight operations. US-Bangla promises to deliver international passenger luggage in only 15 minutes after arrival as well.

  
Abdus Salam

It is also in constant efforts to increase its route network internationally. Currently, the airline operates international flights to Jeddah, Kolkata, Chennai, Male, Muscat, Doha, Dubai, Sharjah, Abu Dhabi, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Bangkok and Guangzhou. In the domestic sectors, US-Bangla operates flights to/from all airports of the country: Dhaka, Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Sylhet, Jashore, Saidpur and Rajshahi.

Furthermore, US-Bangla plans to launch flights to Delhi, Riyadh and Dammam soon. By 2025, the airline aims to launch flights to London and

Rome as well as to New York and Toronto by 2027 (subject to approval). Currently, the airline has 3000 officers and employees at home and abroad.

Soon, the airline will be setting up its own MRO facility in the country, informed Abdulah Al Mamun adding US-Bangla has also taken an initiative to establish a flying school as well as an engineering school in the country to develop skilled human resources.