

AI Express plans fleet expansion by 2026

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dhaka: India's Tata-owned low-cost carrier Air India Express said on Tuesday (Oct 28) it plans to add 20-24 aircraft to its fleet by calendar year 2026, as competition intensifies in the budget aviation sector.

The airline will also retrofit 50 Boeing 737-8 aircraft with ergonomic synthetic leather seats, thicker armrests, improved legroom, in-seat USB-C charging, ovens for hot meals, new carpets, and Boeing Sky Interior mood lighting. The first aircraft with factory-fitted Collins Aerospace seats will be delivered in December.

Over the past six months, Air India Express has added 15 aircraft to its fleet, taking total capacity to 115, including Airbus A320/321, Boeing 737, and 737 Max planes.

On market share, managing director Alope Singh said Air India Express holds about 11-12pc of the domestic market, while the Air India group

accounts for roughly 30pc.

Since September 2025, the carrier has been optimising its network to strengthen hubs, increase frequency, and enhance connectivity.

Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru accounted for 62pc of domestic departures in April 2025, expected to rise to 74pc by November.

Bengaluru-based operations have added Bangkok, Jeddah, Kuwait, and Riyadh to the short-haul international network for the Winter 2025 schedule.

By season-end, Air India Express will operate over 2,700 weekly domestic flights across 114 routes and around 780 international flights on 70 routes, a more than 25pc increase from Winter 2024, including 48 new domestic and 10 new international routes.

Singh noted the airline's network mix has shifted from 60pc short-haul international and 40pc domestic two years ago to roughly 50-50 today, with domestic operations expanding faster.

The airline has also launched a brand campaign, "Xplore More, Xpress More," highlighting its modern fleet and growing network.

Chief marketing officer Siddhartha Butalia said the campaign reflects Air India Express' promise to offer a distinct flying experience, enabling travellers to explore more and express more.

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