

Elon Musk joins video call at 38,000ft to present Qatar Airways' new Starlink WiFi

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Dhaka: Qatar Airways launched its first flight featuring Elon Musk's Starlink internet. The carrier's flight QR1, operated by a Boeing 777, took off from Doha for London Heathrow around 8:00 am ET on October 22. On a previous test flight, Elon Musk joined a video call onboard with Qatar Airways CEO Badr Mohammed Al-Meer.

From 38,000 feet, Al-Meer showed Musk around the cabin as well as the view from the flight deck, while the SpaceX CEO was at home in the US. Internet download speeds onboard were as fast as 215 megabits per second, faster than many home internet connections.

"That's super cool. I'm on Starlink right now at my house," Musk said on the call. Saad bin Ali Al-Kharji, Chairman of Qatar Tourism, said, he found the inflight connection better than the internet on the ground. "It's only going to get better," Musk replied. "We keep making

improvements: We launch new satellites, and we keep improving the software. So over time, I think you'll find it just gets better and better," he added.

Qatar Airways plans to roll out Starlink to a total of 12 Boeing 777-300s by the end of 2024 and to all of its 777s and Airbus A350s next year.

Starlink WiFi is also free for passengers in all cabins, whereas the airline's regular inflight WiFi costs USD 10 for a full flight—at speeds around 5 Mbps.

The higher speeds mean passengers can make video calls, stream videos, and play games online. For business travellers, Starlink is set to be a productivity game changer, given that regular inflight WiFi commonly suffers from slow speeds and connectivity problems.

"By providing Starlink reliable, seamless internet on board, we are connecting people to things they love the most even at 35,000 feet, making every journey with us a memorable one," Al-Meer said in a release.

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