

## **Akij Air offers premium Hajj, Umrah services, targets 1,000 pilgrims in 2026**

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Dhaka : Akij Air, one of the newest players in Bangladesh's aviation and travel sector, is making a strong entry into the country's religious tourism market with exclusive Hajj and Umrah packages, backed by its own management, hotels, and visa services. The airline has set an ambitious target of carrying at least 1,000 Bangladeshi pilgrims for Hajj in 2026.

Talking to The Bangladesh Monitor, Abu Ammar Abdu-llah, Deputy General Manager of Akij Resource, who oversees the Hajj operations of Akij Air, said that the company is committed to offering premium services at competitive rates while ensuring safety and convenience for pilgrims through a fully integrated system.

Premium, economy Hajj packages

Akij Air is currently offering three Business Class Hajj packages, priced at BDT 13.7 lakh, BDT 15.7 lakh, and BDT 20.7 lakh, along with an Economy Class package at BDT 7.5 lakh. Among them, the BDT 13.7 lakh Business Class and BDT 7.5 lakh Economy Class packages have emerged as the most popular choices.

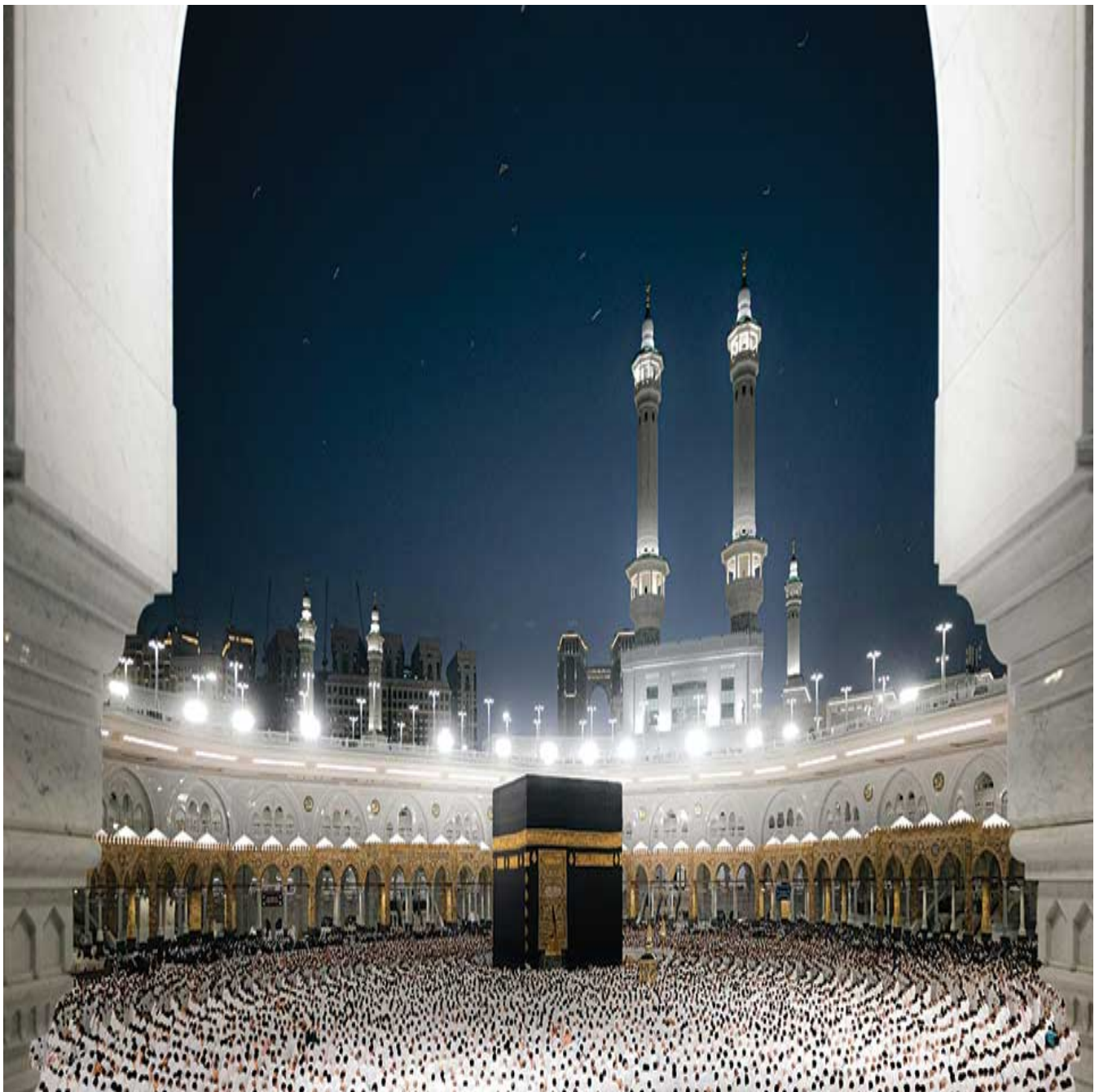
Pilgrims opting for Business Class will enjoy zero-meter proximity to the Kaaba, staying at world-renowned hotels including Hilton, ZamZam Tower, Swissôtel, and Mövenpick in Makkah. On the other hand, the Economy package offers residences within 300 meters of the Kaaba, ensuring both affordability and convenience.

"So far, we have sold packages to 200-250 pilgrims, and we are well on our way to reaching our target of 1,000 hajis in 2026," Abdullah said.

Akij's own hotels in Makkah, Madinah

To further strengthen its presence, Akij Air will be setting up its own hotels in Makkah and Madinah by next year. Each property will have 30 rooms with the capacity to accommodate up to 200 hajis in total.

The Makkah hotel will be located 300-350 meters from the Kaaba, while the Madinah property will ensure similar convenience.



"We are going to Saudi Arabia this year to sign the agreement for our own hotels. Once operational, this will allow us to offer a more seamless and trustworthy experience to Bangladeshi pilgrims," Abdullah explained.

#### Integrated operations with no middlemen

Akij Air prides itself on operating without intermediaries, managing everything through its own systems. The company has its own visa agency in Bangladesh and will soon launch a dedicated travel agency in Saudi Arabia.

"Unlike many operators, we don't rely on outsiders. From ticketing and visa processing to guides and ground services, we are in effort to bring everything under our own management. This allows us to cut costs while

delivering better service, giving pilgrims peace of mind," said Abdullah.

Umrah packages every month

Beyond Hajj, Akij is also active in the Umrah segment. The airline offers four Umrah packages every month, ranging between BDT 1.35 lakh and BDT 3.5 lakh, depending on accommodation and service levels.

Currently, Akij manages 200-250 Umrah visas and tickets monthly, excluding its large B2B ticketing operations, which account for another 1,000 Umrah tickets per month.

"We have been handling ticketing from the very beginning, and now we have moved into offering full Umrah packages. Demand has been very strong," Abdullah noted.

Warning against fraudulent brokers

Abdullah cautioned Bangla-deshi pilgrims against fraudulent brokers who often take money without delivering services.

"Hajis usually suffer at the hands of dishonest intermediaries. We urge them to either book directly with Akij or, if they go through a B2B broker, to verify that the broker has an official agreement with us. At the very least, they should demand a receipt showing the broker has paid us," he stressed.

Call for government support

While Akij Air is investing heavily to improve services, Abdullah called on the Bangladeshi government to intervene on certain issues.

He specifically highlighted the exorbitant Hajj airfare of BDT 1.65 lakh, saying, "This rate is unreal. The maximum should be BDT 1.2 lakh. If Umrah airfare can be around BDT 90,000, why is Hajj so much higher?"

He also raised concerns over Saudi Arabia's plan to enforce mandatory Saudi catering for hajis, which may deprive Bangladeshi pilgrims of access to familiar local food.

"Our hajis want Bangladeshi meals. We request the government to negotiate with Saudi authorities to ensure this option remains available," Abdullah said.

