



TAMING CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE

Rescue package needed to salvage aviation industry

US-Bangla Airlines Managing Director Abdullah Al Mamun says

RASHIDUL HASAN

Bangladesh should unveil a rescue package and cut various charges to salvage the local aviation industry after it crash-landed because of the coronavirus pandemic, said the top official of a private airline.

The government has already announced incentives for various sectors but nothing specific for the aviation sector, said Abdullah Al Mamun, managing director of US-Bangla Airlines.

"If the airlines survive, travel agencies, tour operators and even the hotel industry will survive. Otherwise, there will be extreme anarchy in the aviation and tourism sector," he told The Daily Star in an interview recently.

The comments from the chief executive of the country's largest private carrier came as the aviation industry in Bangladesh has remained largely grounded, much like those in other countries, for the last couple of months in order to stop the spread of the killer bug.

In the middle of March, Bangladesh banned passenger flight operation with all countries except for China to contain the spread of coronavirus, plunging the sector into mounting losses. The novel coronavirus could inflict a 9 per cent loss in passenger volumes in Bangladesh in 2020, according to an estimate of the International Air Transport Association.

Loss in passengers will wipe out \$190 million, or Tk 1,615 crore in revenue from airline operators, this year alone.

The first industry to suffer losses because of the pandemic was aviation, Mamun said.

"Today, the coronavirus crisis has become a global problem. Until a vaccine is invented to get rid of this virus, there is no chance of providing any definite direction to come out of the pandemic."

US-Bangla Airlines is the largest private carrier with 13 aircraft in its fleet. It operated flights on eight international and seven domestic routes before the coronavirus pandemic upended the aviation sector.

In April 2018, it became the first Bangladeshi airline to fly to China. It had been operating regular flights on Dhaka-Guangzhou route since then.

With the cooperation of the government, the airline is operating a number of special flights to bring back stranded Bangladeshis and several cargo flights to keep the country's imports and exports active.



Abdullah Al Mamun

Although most flights have come to a screeching halt, bringing income down to its knees, the operators have to bear all costs, including aeronautical and non-aeronautical charges, leasing costs, insurance costs, bank interest, staff salaries and office expenditure.

"We are burdened with huge losses as we are sitting idle." And the longer the pandemic drags on, the bigger the losses.

"I'm not sure when the situation will return to normalcy. I have no idea when we will return to the pre-coronavirus situation even if that happens. That means the crisis is likely to be long and deep."

In order to survive with foreign airlines, aeronautical and non-aeronautical charges should be waived for the next five years. The aeronautical charges on international routes should be equal to the rates applicable for domestic routes.

If the price of jet fuel for domestic routes is fixed at international rate, Bangladeshi airlines would be able to survive in the global competitive market.

The government should bring down annual surcharge on arrears to 6-8 per cent from 72 per cent now. Hangar facilities are urgently needed for passenger airlines.

"In order to reap the benefits of the third terminal, Bangladeshi airlines need to be sustained."

He touched upon various challenges the aviation industry is set to face in the coming days.

Private airlines will face extreme pressure when it comes to retaining jobs of a huge number of people.

Maintaining the workforce, reducing the losses and sustaining the service will be a big challenge, he said.

Many established airlines around the world could go bankrupt. Budget airlines are likely to have no concept. Unreasonable rental competition is likely to be reduced. "My idea is that the competition to increase the number of passengers will decrease."

At present, travel could be availed at relatively low fares in the aviation sector all over the world.

In the changed context, there is a possibility of trimming the number of passengers and at the same time there is a possibility of increasing the fare.

Depending on the size of the aircraft, the airlines will be able to carry 70 per cent passengers on international routes and 50 per cent passengers on domestic routes, the CEO said.

At present, 70 per cent market share of the Tk 8,400-crore aviation market in Bangladesh belongs to foreign airlines and the rest 30 per cent to domestic airlines.

Bangladeshi airlines account for 0.3 per cent of the national income.

"If there is no direct cooperation from the government, the current market share is likely to go to foreign airlines, depriving the government of direct foreign exchange earnings."

The local airlines industry has not flourished in Bangladesh despite having potential.

The history of the country's private airlines is not very long. Earlier, the state-owned airline was the only carrier, Mamun said.

"State institutions have some advantages that private companies do not have. We have to accept these limitations."

Sometimes, private operators face unequal competition. Doing business becomes difficult.

"My point is: give us a business parallel environment. Then we can give more revenue to the government, more investment will come and this will enrich the economy."

Lack of experienced manpower, shortage of pilots, inadequacy of aeronautical engineers are the barriers. There is shortage of boarding bridge, too.

The price of jet fuel is relatively high. The import process of aircraft or aircraft equipment is complex.

"If the problems are addressed, the aviation industry in Bangladesh has the potential to move forward."

ICT training goes online

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

To wrestle with the uncertainties of these extraordinary times, the ICT division yesterday launched an interactive online training programme to give a boost to internet-based working culture, especially freelancing, which holds huge promise.

Bangladesh has the second largest online workforce in the world with 6.5 lakh freelancers and the government wants to take the sector forward, said Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister of the ICT division, while inaugurating the first public sector training programme that will be conducted online.

"The initiative will also help youths become self-dependent and immensely contribute to the development of the economy."

Under the programme, the ICT division will train 40,000 youths who have passed HSC exams, according to Palak.

Initially, the plan was to conduct training programmes physically across the country, but in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, the government has decided to deliver training online.

"In the post-pandemic era, freelancing jobs will be in great demand as social distancing will be the new norm."

The government has a target to log in export earnings amounting to \$5 billion from the ICT sector by 2025 and freelancing will contribute markedly to that end.

The project will also help the government materialise its plan to create 10 million new jobs in the ICT sector within the next five years, Palak added.

The ICT division has so far received 185,000 applications. After an initial test, 40,000 will be selected and then divided into 15 batches, according to Akhtar Mamun, the project director.

The ICT division has designed a digital curriculum and selected 39 organisations to run it, targeting mostly graphics and web designing and digital marketing.

A total of 11,000 youths will be trained in graphics designing, 14,000 in web designing and the rest in digital marketing.

Students can choose Google Meet or Zoom to take part in the training that will run for 50 days. All the course materials will be uploaded such that anybody can access those.

"This was a massive decision to conduct such a training programme online," said NM Ziaul Alam, secretary to the ICT division.

The government is now running its regular meetings on online platforms, which has given it the confidence to run the training programme online, he added.

Apart from this project, the ICT division has earlier conducted many ICT-related training programmes to create a digital workforce, officials said.

Tea auction for this year finally kicks off today

Traders anticipating poor sales amid fallen consumption

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Ctg

The weekly bidding of the new tea auction year will finally take place in Chattogram today, two months later than its scheduled start on March 24, much to the relief of tea estates and small farmers, who are sitting on about 2 million kilograms of unsold tea.

About 1.83 million kg of tea was produced in the first three months of the year, according to data from the Bangladesh Tea Board (BTB).

And there is about 0.9 million kg of leftover stock from the previous year, which remained unsold for the cancellation of the first two auctions for the new year scheduled for March 24 and March 31 respectively.

Due to the delayed start of the new auction year, most of the 167 tea estates as well as 5,000 small farmers in Sylhet, Habiganj, Moulvibazar, Chattogram and Panchagarh are in acute financial crisis and are struggling to pay the workers' wages.

More than 3 lakh workers are currently engaged with the tea gardens.

But there now appears to be some movement.

Today's auction though would not be held at the usual venue in Agrabad but in the nearby conference hall of the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) at the World Trade Centre to maintain proper social



SHEIKH NASIR

distancing among the bidders as instructed by the tea board in the wake of coronavirus outbreak.

Tea traders and officials of different brokerage houses, however, are expecting weak sales as tea consumption dropped remarkably given that the tea stalls, restaurants and hotels are closed

for the countrywide shutdown over the past one-and-a-half months.

Plus, many buyers from Dhaka and elsewhere would not be able to attend.

"The bulk sales would be so poor," said Shah Moinuddin Hasan, chairman of the Tea Traders Association of Bangladesh.

BB seeks banks' updated bad loan, provisioning status

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

The central bank yesterday asked banks to send their figure of defaulted loans and provisioning of the first quarter of this year within tomorrow.

Banks have been also asked to provide their announced interest rate on both loans and savings for March, April and May within the next day, according to a Bangladesh Bank letter sent out to all managing directors of lenders.

The central bank earlier asked banks to provide the data within 10 days after completion of the ongoing general holidays declared by the government to tackle the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

But the government has extended the general holidays to longer than expected.

Against the backdrop, the central bank asked banks to send their information to update its

regular statements.

The BB will give the same instruction to banks for their other data needed to update its all monthly, quarterly, half-yearly and other statements.

On the pretext of the shutdown, the central bank has stopped preparing its major economic statements -- -- the balance of payments, the growth of reserve and board money and their multiplier effect, government borrowing, private sector credit growth and many other statistical reports -- since February. It has just prepared the import figure yesterday after a pause and that too only of April and not March.

This will help the central bank to monitor the money market and financial sector smoothly during the ongoing meltdown.

"Updated information is highly important to fight against the ongoing economic fallout. So,

this is a good decision beyond doubt," said a managing director, wishing not to be named.

In a separate move, the central bank said employees of banks will not get special incentive after May 28.

The BB asked banks on April 12 to provide the incentive to their employees who are working during the shutdown.

As per the central bank instruction, bankers will get a month's basic salary if they work at least 10 days during the ongoing shutdown.

The special incentive will range from a minimum of Tk 30,000 and a maximum of Tk 100,000 a month during the shutdown.

But the latest central bank notice said that the government had taken different initiatives to revive the economy. As part of the move, the central bank has moved to extend the banking hours instead of limited banking.

Islam named new BSEC chair

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government yesterday appointed Shibli Rubayat Ul Islam as the chairman of the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) for four years.

He is the seventh chairman of the stock

market regulator and replaces M Khairul Hossain, who helmed the position for nine years.

Islam is the professor and dean of the business studies faculty at the University of Dhaka and chairman of state-run Sadharan Bima Corporation.

He has been in the field of finance and banking education for more than two decades.

He is the author of the Finance and Banking textbook taught at secondary-level education and has more than 15 research publications and five international research paper presentations to his name.

Zila Parishad Jamalpur www.zpjamalpur.org	
Memo No. 46.30.3900.001.01.001.20.458(3)	
Date: 17 May, 2020	
Invitation for Tender (Works) e-Tender Notice No. 05/2019-2020	
01 Ministry/Division	Local Government Rural Development.
02 Agency	Zila Parishad, Jamalpur.
03 Procuring entity	Chairman, Zila Parishad, Jamalpur.
04 Procuring method	LTM.
05 Tender publication date	17.05.2020
06 Source of fund	Revenue.
07 Last selling date & time	04.06.2020 at 5:00pm
08 Tender submission date & time	07.06.2020 at 12:00 Noon.
09 Tender opening date & time	07.06.2020 at 12:00 Noon.
10 Terms & condition	Only Zila Parishad, Jamalpur, enlisted e-GP registered contractor will participate in this tender.
11 Tender ID	453566, 453568, 453569, 453570, 453572, 453573, 453574, 453571, 453575, 453576, 453577, 453578, 453579, 453580, 453581
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of 15 (fifteen) groups works which is given in online. This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches up to 04 June, 2020 at 4:00pm. This Tender Notice is brief. Details can be seen from the office of the undersigned during office hours. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd). The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tender without assigning any reason whatsoever.	
Md. Amzad Hossain Assistant Engineer Zila Parishad, Jamalpur E-mail: aei@jamalpur.org.bd Mobile: 01728-443405	
GD-858	

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Local Government Engineering Department Second Rural Transport Improvement Project Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Dhaka-1207 www.lged.gov.bd					
Memo No. 46.02.0000.726.07.032.2020.2898					
Date: 17/05/2020					
Corrigendum of e-GP: Tender Notice (4th)					
Due to some unavoidable circumstances, following amendment has been made to the Tender ID No. 437197.					
Sl. No.	ID No.	Name of supply	Field name	Old value	New value
1.	Tender ID 437197	Supply of Computer, Laptop, Printer, Multimedia Projector, UPS and other accessories (Package No. AF-G 1)	Tender document last selling date & time	18 May 2020 17:00	09 June 2020 17:00
			Last date and time for tender security submission	19 May 2020 12:00	10 June 2020 12:00
			Tender closing date & time	19 May 2020 13:00	10 June 2020 13:00
All other terms and conditions will remain unchanged.					
Md. Sohrab Ali Project Director Tel: 9120218 E-mail: pdrtip2.lged@yahoo.com					
GD-862					