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# Biman to resume Dhaka-Delhi flight as Jet Air bows out

JEBUN NESA ALO

Biman Bangladesh Airlines is set to resume direct flight operations between Dhaka and Delhi after a five-year gap following Jet Airways' indefinite flight suspension that left no direct flights between the capitals of the two close partners.

The thrice-a-week direct flights will resume from May 13 to take the national flag carrier's tally of international routes to 16. The fare for the route, which will be serviced with a 162-seater Boeing 737-800 aircraft, is yet to be fixed.

The national flag carrier is restarting the route with cautious optimism: it had suspended it in 2013 after it became commercially unviable due to low occupancy as flyers opted for Indian airlines Jet Airways and Air India.

But Air India stopped the direct flights in 2015, while Jet Airways' return is uncertain.

"We will have a monopoly market this time, and there is a huge demand for direct flights to Delhi for business and treatment purposes," said Shakil Meraj, general manager of Biman.

But aviation experts are less sanguine. "Suspension of flights by Jet Airways



will not make Biman's operations to Delhi commercially viable," said Kazi Wahidul Alam, a former director of the state-owned carrier.

The reason being passengers have the economic option of catching a domestic flight to Delhi from Kolkata. At present, there are more than nine direct flights between Kolkata and Dhaka.

Those who are pressed for time tend to opt for the direct flight and even then Biman does not serve their interests properly due to the route not being serviced by daily flights.

"The passenger will have to wait an extra day or two to catch the return flight," said Alam, now an aviation expert.

The only way the route can be profitable for Biman is if it can attract Indian passengers from Delhi looking to fly to Singapore, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur via Dhaka.

"Biman tried several times in the past to make the route viable," he said, adding

that the Delhi-Dhaka route for Jet Airways was mostly full as 60 percent of the passengers were onward bound from Europe.

The flight frequency on the Dhaka-Delhi route will gradually be increased to five times a week, Meraj said.

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## NBR makes tax rebates easier

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The National Board of Revenue has asked its field offices to clear tax rebates of up to Tk 25,000 within a week as it looks to encourage people to pay tax.

A tax refund or tax rebate is refund on taxes when the tax liability is less than the taxes paid.

The move comes at a time when taxpayers are complaining about difficulties in getting tax refund owing to reluctance of taxmen.

"We have taken the initiative to encourage individual taxpayers, particularly salaried persons," said an official of the NBR.

Many individual taxpayers have refund claims but they are just 2-3 percent of the total refund claims, he said. The bulk of the refund claims are made by firms.

In the letter issued last week, the tax administration also directed its offices to report to headquarters within 10 days of clearing the refund.

At present, the deputy commissioner of taxes can approve refunds of up to Tk 5,000. For amounts upwards of Tk 5,000 they must be approved by the joint commissioner.

## Growth at cost of environment Says ActionAid Bangladesh

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh's industrial sectors, especially garment, are growing at the cost of environment, said ActionAid Bangladesh, a non-governmental organisation, yesterday.

"Although the garment industry in Bangladesh contributes significantly to the economy, it raises a number of environmental concerns," said Farah Kabir, country director of ActionAid.

All aspects of the industry -- be it spinning, weaving, knitting, wet processing and apparel manufacturing -- process pollute air, water and soil.

Textile and garment sectors and their entire supply chain make 1.40 crore tonnes of carbon dioxide emission annually and consume 60,000 crore litres of water.

"So, time has come to go through a massive technological upgradation to keep the industrial development sustainable," she said at a seminar styled 'Voices and solutions: Achieving growth through sustainable production and consumption in the fashion industry'.

ActionAid Bangladesh and Fashion Revolution jointly organised the event at the capital's Brac Centre Inn.

The garment sector has ensured the wellbeing, dignity and safety of workers, said Atiqul Islam, mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation.

The sector has installed state-of-the-art environment-friendly machines in factories but a lot more needs to be done to reduce environment contami-

nation, said Islam, also a former president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

Globally, the textile sector is the second highest user of water, contributing to water waste by 20 percent, and the apparel industry emits 10 percent of carbon dioxide alone.

Cotton farming is responsible for 24 percent of insecticide and 11 percent pesticide production.

workers are needed, said Faruque Hassan, a former vice-president of the BGMEA.

"Please don't blame us only -- we are trying hard," he said.

Most of the factories in Bangladesh are located along the river banks, so waste is dumped into the rivers, ActionAid said.

Asif Ibrahim, a former president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, hopes that the BGMEA will



### FASHION INDUSTRY: A BIG POLLUTER

Value of global industry: \$3 trillion

2nd biggest polluter in the world

2nd highest user of water

Accounts for 20% of total wastewater

Emits 10% of carbon dioxide

Only 15% of textile waste is recycled, rest is sent to landfill

Chemical dyes contaminate surface and groundwater

ALARMING FORECAST: FASHION INDUSTRY'S GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS AND WASTE TO RISE 60% BY 2030

Furthermore, only 15 percent of the textile waste is recycled, whereas the remaining 85 percent is sent to landfill, thus negatively impacting the environment.

The wastes, as they decompose, release methane, which is a significant contributor to global warming.

Chemical dyes used in the process leach into the soil, contaminating surface and groundwater, it added.

The garment sector is working to reduce environmental pollution, but huge investment and efficiency of

continue to work to reduce environment pollution through introducing modern facilities.

Hazardous chemicals are being discharged into the water bodies affecting the marine ecosystem, reducing fish population and resulting in unsuitable land for cultivation. Many rice paddies are now inundated with toxic wastewater.

Nawshin Khair, country coordinator of Fashion Revolution, and Imran Rahman, dean of the ULAB School of Business, also spoke.

## Airbus sets sights on Bangladesh market

WASIM BIN HABIB, back from Toulouse, France

The aviation market of Bangladesh is growing rapidly and expected to expand at a faster rate in near future, generating interest from European aerospace giant Airbus.

"With the GDP growing at the rate that it is in Bangladesh -- at 5 or 6 percent -- this probably means about 10 to 12 percent in terms of traffic growth. Bangladesh is growing very quickly," said Sheel Shukla, senior sales director of Airbus Customer Affairs.

"It's great for the economy and for the people to travel out of Bangladesh to enjoy the region. And we've got a great set of products to do that," he said last month.

He was speaking to a group of Bangladeshi journalists



STAR

An Airbus aircraft gets the finishing touch at the plane maker's headquarters in Toulouse of France.

visiting the Airbus headquarters in Toulouse of France, where the final assembly of most Airbus aircraft takes place.

During his presentation on the global aviation industry focusing on Bangladesh, Shukla said the country witnessed 99 percent growth in international traffic (passengers) over the last seven years.

In the recent years, the economy is growing at much faster rate and would grow at 5.4 percent on average in the next 20 years from 2017 to 2037, above the world average of 2.8 percent.

At this rate, the aviation industry of Bangladesh would double in 15 years -- at par with the global growth rate of the aviation industry, he said.

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## Summit LNG arrives at Moheshkhali

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Summit LNG, a vessel with floating storage and re-gasification unit (FSRU), has arrived in the Bay of Bengal ahead of schedule to supply 500 million cubic feet of re-gasified LNG to the national grid every day.

It is now moored 6 kilometers off the island of Moheshkhali in Cox's Bazar, said Summit Group in a statement yesterday.

Summit has hired the vessel from USA's Excelerate Energy for 15 years and carried liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Qatar.

If weather permits and Petrobangla wants re-gasified LNG, Summit LNG will be able to send out the gas to the national grid in seven days, said an official of Summit Group.

This is the second FSRU that will re-gasify and supply gas to Bangladesh, after Excelerate Energy began supplying re-gasified LNG to Bangladesh from its terminal in Moheshkhali in August last year.

In the statement, Muhammed Aziz Khan, founder chairman of Summit Group, said: "Summit is working towards achieving power and energy sufficiency in Bangladesh."

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## 4th BPO Summit begins today

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A two-day event on business process outsourcing (BPO) is set to begin in Dhaka today with a view to presenting the local and international markets' prospects before the country's digital industry.

The Directorate of ICT (DoICT) under the Information Communication Technology Division in association with the Bangladesh Association of Call Centre and Outsourcing (BACCO) will organise the event at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel.

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