

'Ready to face any untoward situation'

Says CTTC chief in conversation centring Taliban takeover of Afghanistan

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Taliban forces have taken control of Afghanistan's Kabul; the whole world is now observing the country's political situation. But the question is, how will all this affect Bangladesh, a country that is so intertwined with the region's issues?



Md Asaduzzaman

In an interview with The Daily Star, Md Asaduzzaman, chief of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit and additional commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, shares his views and steps to deal with the situation.

The Daily Star: Taliban has taken control over Afghanistan. How are you seeing this development as CTTC chief?

Asaduzzaman: There are some Taliban supporters in our country, and it's natural they're excited, as their supported group, whose ideology they follow, have won.

But we are vigilant about these supporters, who get inspiration from Taliban, so that they cannot find any scope of organising to carry out subversive activities.

DS: Some returnees from Afghanistan were responsible for the rise of militancy in Bangladesh. At present, how concerned should Bangladesh be, following recent developments?

Asaduzzaman: It's true that the first militant outfit of our country -- Harkat-ul-Jihad (Huji) -- was started in coordination with the returnees. Later, the outfit tried to conduct many subversive activities.

But due to police drives, the outfit was dismantled, and a number of their leaders were arrested. And you

will find that all the outfit's activities were thwarted by police, and those responsible were held.

I can now say that the outfit formed by the returnees has vanished from the country.

We had witnessed the formation and rise of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). They were trained by the Pakistani militant outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba.

Shaikh Abdur Rahman, the founder of JMB, had experience of interacting with Lashkar-e-Taiba, which also came up in his statement.

But their supporters in our country have nothing to be excited about, as we have adopted a zero-tolerance policy against militancy. We are not observing any problems regarding them.

We had dealt with them earlier, and if anything happens in the upcoming days, we have the capacity to face any untoward situations.

DS: Some youths were trying to go to Afghanistan from Bangladesh. Do you have any specific data on how many people actually went there?

Asaduzzaman: We have no exact information indicating that someone actually went there. But in many of their platforms, they have tried to invite and inspire people to go to Afghanistan.

We have arrested two militants recently, and their conversations involved going to Afghanistan.

We have so far received information that three went out of Bangladesh for militancy. But we are not sure whether they actually went to Afghanistan.

Arun Mazumder, proprietor of Skyjet Tours and Travels, said travel agents now need to get in touch with a Biman call centre and then send an

SUSPENSION OF ONLINE TICKETING

People suffer as Biman's row with sales partner drags on

RASHIDUL HASAN

Like other times, Anisur Rahman, a London-bound passenger, was planning to purchase tickets from Biman Bangladesh Airline's website using his phone.

For Anisur, this is convenient and time saving, but above all, a safe way of getting tickets amid the pandemic.

However, when he tried to buy tickets online, he couldn't, due to an ongoing suspension of the service. He even tried with other online platforms where they usually sell Biman tickets, but to no avail.

"Now, I'll have to go to a Biman sales centre, which is not only time consuming but also risky," he told The Daily Star recently.

Anisur is not the only one. Hundreds of intended passengers are bearing the brunt of the situation, as online sale of Biman's air-tickets has remained suspended for almost a week.

"Biman is our national flag carrier. We don't expect such unprofessional behaviour from them," said Doha-bound passenger Md Aminul Islam.

Meanwhile, Biman authorities blamed Travelshop Limited, the exclusive service provider of Biman for selling tickets online, for suspending their services.

Travelshop, on the other hand, claimed that they were forced to suspend the service, as Biman didn't pay its dues.

Amid this row, passengers looking to buy tickets online continue to crowd Biman ticket sales centres, that too, in this prevailing pandemic situation.

Proprietors of different travel agencies also said they are finding it difficult to sell Biman air-tickets, due to the suspension.

Arun Mazumder, proprietor of Skyjet Tours and Travels, said travel agents now need to get in touch with a Biman call centre and then send an

➔ Biman's online ticket service remains suspended for a week

➔ Intended passengers crowding its sales centres for tickets amid pandemic

➔ Travel agents going through hoops to get tickets

➔ Biman boss says it will take 2-3 months to 'fix' the issue

➔ National flag carrier blames sales partner for failing to provide service

➔ The partner claims Biman has not paid its dues

application to Biman authorities to get tickets for passengers. "This is time consuming and frustrating for both passengers and us," he said.

Contacted, Dr Abu Saleh Mostafa Kamal, managing director and CEO of Biman, said the national flag carrier hired Travelshop on a temporary basis in 2019 to sell tickets online, under a mutual agreement to encourage the country's service providers.

"But the company repeatedly failed at various stages in the full implementation of the expected activities. Finally, from August 10 [this year], they stopped providing relevant services to Biman in a completely unreasonable and unethical manner, and tried to create confusion in people's minds," he said.

"In order to dispel this confusion, we want to inform all that Biman is going to ensure the provision of advanced online services through a world-recognised service provider soon."

The Biman MD, however, said it might take two to three months to complete the total procedure in this

regard.

Asked if they have taken any measures to tackle the situation, he said, "If any passenger calls us, we will send tickets to their mobile phone or to their residence, if they inform our call centre."

He said the ongoing process of purchasing, changing and refunding tickets for all routes of Biman through its domestic and foreign sales offices, authorised travel agencies and call centres is underway.

In addition, the sales centre at Biman's head office in Balaka is open 24 hours a day, he assured.

When asked, SM Mukhtadir, chief operating officer of Travelshop, said they have sent at least 20 letters to Biman in the last 17 months to get their dues worth Tk 37 lakh.

"But Biman authorities didn't bother to respond, let alone pay our dues," he said.

"US-based company Amazon, who hosts our web server, gave us an ultimatum that they will stop their service unless we clear their dues within August 10. Informing this matter, we again wrote to Biman, but they didn't reply," said Mukhtadir.

He said Amazon suspended providing services to them from August 10, as they failed to pay their dues.

Asked about Biman's allegations, he said since the agreement, they had been providing services to Biman without any hindrance, and there was no complaint in this regard.

He also said tickets worth Tk 125 crore have been sold through Biman's online platform since the pandemic started last year.

"How were we able to sell so many tickets, if the quality of our services was not up to the mark? If you want to provide online services, you need a server at present, and Biman will have to pay for it. If the airline does not pay

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30-YEAR PLAN DSCC to prioritise ward-based dev: Taposh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh yesterday said they will prioritise ward-based development work in their 30-year master plan.

They have started preparing the 30-year master plan and have already appointed a consultant firm in this regard, Taposh said while addressing its ninth board meeting at the Nagar Bhaban.

"The consultant firm started its primary work, and we will give priority to ward-based development. We will consider the demands of a ward and will determine prioritisation based on the density of population within the ward," he said.

Urging councillors to provide demands and suggestions for their respective wards in the master plan, Taposh said they will sit with councillors and the consulting firm shortly in this regard.

"We have already held a meeting with the relevant government organisations along with the consultant firm," he said.

Among others, councilors and top officials of DSCC were present.



Tiger cubs Abantika and Durjoy were born this May 26. With their addition, the Dhaka zoo now has 11 tigers, with the last one being born way back in 2016. Authorities said they're among 400 animal offspring born in just the past four months. Beyond the baby boom, the absence of visitors is also allowing the cubs to grow up healthy, with ample space for play that these baby hippo and zebras are making full use of. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN, COLLECTED



Did you know you could buy a pair of deer for Tk 1.4 lakh?



Amid a baby boom of animals during the pandemic at Dhaka zoo, authorities are selling deer and peacocks to those who, according to officials, can properly take care of them.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

ASIFUR RAHMAN and SUKANTA HALDER

The National Zoo authorities have earned Tk 32.9 lakh by selling 47 deer this year, the same as the last five years' total.

The zoo still has a surplus of deer, currently hosting at least 100 more than capacity.

The zoo sells each pair of peacock for Tk 50,000 while each pair of deer goes at Tk 1,40,000.

Md Osman Gani, head of the national zoo's large animals section, said anyone who has obtained certificates or licences from the forest department can purchase deer from them.

"They are issued a licence if the inspection team of the forest department thinks they are capable of taking care of a deer. Post-purchase, they have to pay taxes and update the department about the animal every year," he added.

Though the zoo used to sell peacocks in the past, they haven't sold any this year. From 2017 to 2020, they sold a total of 54 peacocks and earned Tk 13.5 lakh.

Dr Md Waliur Rahman, head of the bird section at National Zoo, said, "Even though peacocks are in great demand, it's not a business for us. We only sell once we

YEAR	DEER SOLD	PEACOCKS SOLD
2016	21	0
2017	02	6
2018	12	20
2019	04	24
2020	08	4
2021	47	0

have more than our capacity," he said.

"Currently, we have 130 peachicks (aged 1-2 months) and 20-30 eggs in the incubator. We could start selling those from September," said zoo director Dr Abdul Latif.

Asked, the director said most peacocks have been sold to mini-zoos or heritage sites of various government departments across the country, including Uttara Gano Bhaban in Natore, Air Forces Museum, and the mini zoo of Border Guard Bangladesh.

On the other hand, deer are usually bought by mini zoos, private enterprises, or small farms.

Former MP Abdul Wadud, general secretary of Awami League's Chapainawabganj district, bought a pair of deer from the zoo a month ago.

"We have a park in my area where we keep them," he said. "We are trying to make the place more attractive for visitors. We have several ducks and peacocks too," he added.

Mohammad Wahiduzzaman, principal of Hossainpur Government College in Kishoreganj, bought two peacocks from

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Baby boom at Dhaka zoo

400 offspring born in four months

HELEMUL ALAM

Thanks to the pandemic, the animals in Bangladesh National Zoo in Dhaka have had a blissful year, spared as they were the usual chaos, sound of vuvuzelas and prodding from curious onlookers.

However, there has been a flurry of activity of a different kind. At least 400 offspring of different animals were born at the zoo in the past four months.

Zoo authorities attribute this rise in birth rate to a tranquil environment due to the closure of the Dhaka zoo in Mirpur since April 2.

"All the animals are in good health. They are lively and energetic and roaming around inside their cages without any fear of public

interference," said Dr Md Abdul Latif, director of the national zoo.

Two tiger cubs, 250 herons, 130 peacocks, 2 impalas, 2 African horses, 2 zebras, 1 hippopotamus, 4 monkeys, and 22 emus were born in the zoo during this time, said Latif.

Amid the lockdown, impala, a medium-sized antelope found in eastern and southern Africa, has given birth for the first time in the zoo. With the newborn, the zoo now has seven impalas, added the director.

The two tiger cubs were born on May 26. They are called Abantika and Durjoy. The fisheries and livestock minister named them at a programme on August 16.

Dhaka zoo now has 11 tigers, said the director, adding that the last cub was born in 2016.

Besides, the director said they now have 14 hippopotamus at the zoo.

With the baby boom, they also have 370 deer. But their capacity is 170. "We are selling the additional deer and peacocks to mini zoos and people with certificates from the forest department," he said.

These animals are accustomed to breeding in the forest in their favourable environment. Due to lack of human presence, an ideal condition was created for breeding, the director added.

"We are also making sure that they [animals] are being provided with a balanced meal," he said.

Meanwhile, animal rights activists have urged the government to limit the number of visitors it

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Mr. Iftekharul Islam, Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of Uttara Bank Limited and Managing Director of Aftab Group inaugurated the newly constructed Bank-building in Narayanganj City and the new premises of Narayanganj Branch & Narayanganj Zonal Office thereon through video conference from Bank's Head Office on 16-08-2021. Mr. Mohammed Rabiul Hossain Managing Director & CEO of Uttara Bank Limited and local dignitaries were also connected with this ceremony.

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