



Airliners at the Dhaka airport have been facing space shortage at the terminal and apron areas since the lone runway has remained closed from 12:00am to 8:00am every day from December 10 last year.

PHOTO: STAR/FILE

Wait for Fly Dhaka, Air Astra lengthens

New airlines not getting nod to operate flights for ongoing development activities at HSIA

RASHIDUL HASAN

The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (Caab) has decided not to grant permission to any new airlines to operate flights from Dhaka due to a shortage of space at the terminal and apron areas at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA).

So, it is delaying the process to give air operator's certificate (AOC) to Air Astra and Fly Dhaka, two new private airlines, causing a delay for them to begin operating flights, M Mafidur Rahman, chairman of the Caab, told The Daily Star.

Aircraft at the country's biggest airport has been facing space shortage at the terminal and apron areas since the lone runway has remained closed from 12:00am to 8:00am every day from December 10.

The move is aimed at paving the way for the construction and expansion of taxiways for the two existing terminals.

The eight-hour suspension is already causing disruptions in flight schedule and passenger handling. Officials of various airlines operating to and from the HSIA say they are finding it very difficult to operate flights on time due to the prevailing situation.

Mismanagement and chaotic situation prevails everywhere at the airport, including inside and outside the terminal, airlines' check-in counters, immigration, baggage loading and unloading, and boarding bridges as the authorities have failed to ensure



Workers are busy constructing the third terminal of the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, scheduled to open in 2024.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

facilities to cope the situation, they say.

HSIA officials also admitted that they are struggling to deal with the tight new schedule.

Around 110 to 115 flights of 28 airlines are now operating to and from the HSIA, carrying 20,000 to 21,000 passengers during the reduced travel time.

Mafidur Rahman said amid the present situation, they are not giving permission to any new airlines to operate from the airport.

"Once the situation becomes normal

after the completion of the construction and expansion of the taxiways, we will consider the matter."

Fly Dhaka and Air Astra have already secured the no-objection certificate from the Caab. But they are yet to get the AOC.

Rahman says they have asked the two new airlines to go slow to complete formalities, including procurement of aircraft.

"We have already told them that they can operate flights in other domestic

destinations rather than in Dhaka."

Imran Asif, chief executive officer of Air Astra, which receive the NOC in November, says the process to lease three ATR 72-600 aircraft is at the final stage.

Anisul Islam Mahmud, a lawmaker of the Jatiya Party and managing director of Fly Dhaka, says they are waiting for the AOC.

The two new airlines will take the number of private operators in Bangladesh to four. US Bangla and Novoair currently operate flights.

Air Astra has unveiled the livery of its initial fleet of ATR 72-600 aircraft.

The warm yellow that Air Astra has chosen as the predominant colour to reflect the happiness and optimism that the airline wishes to bring forth in air travelling is boldly used on the livery, accentuated by the grey that reinforces the airline's attention to class and quality, according to the company.

Fly Dhaka Airlines Ltd aims to make flying accessible and affordable for all and to establish itself as a world-class airline. The company says it has the best professionals.

Led by Anisul Islam Mahmud, a reputed entrepreneur who has set up several industries, and with Mollah Fazle Akbar as its chief executive officer, the airline hopes to progress rapidly and hold a major position in Bangladesh's aviation industry.

Initially, Fly Dhaka will operate on the domestic routes before expanding to international destinations.

Towards seamless border connectivity in South Asia

PRABIR DE

In the South Asian region, borders are still the main culprit for the low level of integration. Freedom of movement of trade and transportation is limited in South Asia and the Bay of Bengal regions.

However, starting in the last decade, the change has started happening. Following the Bangladesh model, India has introduced massive reforms in border management since 2012. Border connectivity has helped mitigate disruptions since the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

Not only at the borders, South Asian and Bay of Bengal countries have also introduced several behind the border trade and transport facilitation initiatives.

A safe and secure border is the sine qua non for enhanced trade and integration in South Asia and the Bay of Bengal. Seamless transportation requires connected borders. Proper management of borders is vital for national security. But, managing borders is not an easy task. There are many challenges in the areas of coordination, diplomatic, security, legal, regulatory, boundary disputes, to mention a few.

Multilateral trade facilitation initiatives over the past decade triggered border development in South Asia. Two agreements are worth noting: first, the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), and, second, the United Nations Cross-border Paperless Trade Agreement (UN-CPTA).

The ratifications of the WTO TFA and UN-CPTA aimed at strengthening border connectivity through facilitating the electronic/paperless exchange of information along international supply chains. From South Asia, Bangladesh was the first country to ratify the UN-CPTA in 2021.

In order to encourage the cross-border movement of people and goods, some of the South Asian and Bay of Bengal countries have invested heavily in border connectivity (integrated check posts), transport (multimodal corridors) and trade facilitation (simplification of the trade procedures).

India, for example, has extended quite substantial resources for modernisation of border posts and streamlining border activities, particularly at the land borders, including aligning with the global practices. It has set up the Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI) through an Act in parliament in 2010 under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

So far, the LPAI has developed a total of nine ICPs: Attari, dealing with India's trade with Pakistan; Agartala, Petrapole, Srimantapur and Sutarkandi, all handling India's trade with Bangladesh; Raxaul and Joghani, both handling India's trade with Nepal; and Moreh, which deals with India's trade with Myanmar. There are 14 new ICPs coming and the total number of ICPs is likely to touch 24 by 2030.

Bangladesh, the pioneer in border connectivity, has a set of 10 land ports in operation, of which four land ports are operated by the Bangladesh Land Port Authority (BLPA),

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Managing borders is not an easy task. There are many challenges in the areas of coordination, diplomacy, security, legalities, regulatory affairs and boundary disputes

Ban on Russian oil import to double price to \$300

Moscow warns

REUTERS, Lviv

A Western ban on Russian oil imports may more than double the price to \$300 a barrel and prompt the closure of the main gas pipeline to Germany, Moscow warned on Monday, as talks on Ukraine hardly advanced amid efforts to agree on civilian safe passage.

Russia's invasion, the biggest attack on a European state since World War Two, has created 1.7 million refugees, a raft of sanctions on Moscow, and fears of wider conflict in the West unthought-of for decades.

Sieges and the bombing continued as Kyiv rejected possible humanitarian corridors to Russia and Belarus, but said some limited progress had been made on agreeing logistics for the evacuation of civilians.

Moscow would give the residents of the Ukrainian cities of Sumy and Mariupol the choice of moving elsewhere in Ukraine on Tuesday, setting a deadline in the early hours for Kyiv to agree, Russian news agencies reported. Seeking to ratchet up the pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin, the United States said Washington and its European allies were considering banning Russian oil imports. Oil prices spiked to their highest levels since 2008.

"A rejection of Russian oil would lead to catastrophic consequences for the global market," said Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, saying the price could more than double to over \$300 per barrel.

US President Joe Biden held a video conference call with the leaders of France, Germany and Britain as he pushed for their support on the ban.



A Russian state flag flies on the top of a diesel plant in the Yarakta Oil Field, owned by Irkutsk Oil Company, in Irkutsk region of Russia.

PHOTO: REUTERS

WB approves extra \$489m for Ukraine

AFP, Washington

The World Bank on Monday approved an additional \$489-million package in support for Ukraine, to be made available immediately and dubbed "Financing of Recovery from Economic Emergency in Ukraine."

On March 1, the Washington-based institution announced it was preparing emergency aid worth \$3 billion for Ukraine, of which at least \$350 million were to be released immediately.

The board of directors decided to disburse a larger amount on Monday.

"The package approved by the Board consists of a supplemental loan for \$350 million and guarantees of \$139 million," it said in a statement.

"The fast-disbursing support will help the government provide critical services to Ukrainian people," it said.