

DHAKA AIRPORT Momen blasts officials over sufferings of passengers

DIPLOMATIC
CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday slammed officials at Dhaka airport for the sufferings of the passengers who often have to wait for hours for their baggage upon arrival.

The minister said the complaints he heard frequently from expatriates were found to be true when he arrived at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport from Portugal yesterday.

"I arrived around 10:30am and saw long queues of passengers waiting for their luggage. I discovered that a flight from Dubai landed at 8:45am, but luggage was not put on the belt even at 10:45am," Momen told reporters at the foreign ministry later in the day.

Many of the passengers did not find any cart to carry the luggage from the belt to the exit, he said.

The minister then called the manager concerned and asked about the delays in baggage handling and why carts were not found.

"The manager said many flights landed at the same time and then there was an [end of] shift [for employees] in the morning and the employees of the next shift were yet to arrive," Momen said, adding that he got angry at that point.

"Terminate them if they don't come on time and recruit new people," I shouted."

He then called Mahbub Ali, the state minister for civil aviation and tourism ministry, and informed him of the passengers' sufferings.

Momen went to Rwanda to attend the 26th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting on June 22. From there, he flew to the UK and then attended an ocean conference in Portugal.



A man takes a bull to the cattle market at the capital's Gabtoli. Farmers and traders are bringing cows and goats from across the country ahead of the Eid.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

GLOBAL EMOTIONS REPORT 2022

Bangladesh 7th saddest nation in the world

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Bangladesh has ranked seventh among the world's angriest, saddest and most stressed nations, says a new global survey.

The country scored 45 on the index while Afghanistan topped the list with a score of 59, says the recently revealed report titled "2022 Global Emotions Report".

Higher scores on the Negative Experience Index indicate that more of a population is experiencing these emotions, said the report that measures the well-being of nations every year.

A total of 1,000 people took part in the face-to-face survey that was conducted in Bangladesh between February 27 and March 30 this year.

The polling group surveyed 127,000 adults in 122 countries spanning the globe and found that 2021 was more stressful than 2020.

The survey included questions like whether the person felt physical pain, worry, sadness, stress and anger.

Jon Clifton, the global managing

partner of Gallup, which did the survey, said the world is suffering from war, inflation and a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic.

Any one of those would make the world worse, but the global rise of unhappiness started long before any of those issues made headlines. In fact, unhappiness has been rising for a decade, he said in the report.

The report said about 42 percent of respondents say they are going through a lot more worry, a two percent increase from 2020.

It added that policymakers must understand why so many people are having unprecedented negative emotions, and focus on the drivers of a great life.

Mentioning the reasons for the unhappiness, the report said there are five significant contributors to the rise of global unhappiness: poverty, bad communities, hunger, loneliness and the scarcity of good work.

It added that over three in 10 people surveyed experienced a lot of physical pain (31 percent), more than one in four sadness

(28 percent), and slightly fewer some forms of anger (23 percent).

Afghanistan is the most stressful country with a negative index score of 32, which is the lowest since the Gallup started surveying 16 years ago, while Panama is the least stressful country with a positive index score of 85.

The report said the world was a slightly sadder, more worried and more stressed-out place than it was the year before — even if people were a little less angry.

"Worry rose two points, while stress and sadness increased one point," it said, adding that Latin American countries dominate the list of countries where people report a lot of positive emotions each day.

Panama topped the list with the score of 85 in Positive Emotions Index. With scores in the 80s, Paraguay, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua are not far behind. Several countries outside of Latin America that ranked among the most positive in 2021 are Iceland, the Philippines, Senegal, Denmark and South Africa.

China wants to build

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feasibility study and concept designs of the four-lane Dhaka-Chattogram highway, according to documents of the multilateral lender.

In 2009, the daily average number of vehicles on the highway was between 20,000 and 25,000. Forty percent of them were trucks. It was expected that the number could reach 66,000 in 2030, according to the documents.

In March 2013, the cabinet committee on economic affairs approved the expressway project under PPP. The government signed a deal with the ADB the following month to carry out a feasibility study and make a detailed design spending Tk 97.87 crore.

Over two years later, the study was placed the before prime minister who gave consent to building the expressway consisting of elevated sections. The estimated construction cost for the 217km expressway was \$2.5 billion at that time, sources said.

Consultants were even appointed for necessary assessments to implement the project under the PPP framework, RHD sources said. But the prime minister in October 2019 ordered cancellation of the expressway project, giving directives for construction of service lanes on either side of the existing four-lane highway, sources said.

In October last year, the same cabinet committee formally scrapped the plan. Abdus Sabur, then chief engineer of the roads and highways department, told this correspondent that the prime minister was in favour

of building a high-speed rail system between Dhaka-Chattogram.

BR already completed the feasibility study and detailed design for high-speed rail, spending around Tk 110 crores.

As per the study, the 224.64-km rail line, which would bring travel time between the capital and the port city down to just 55 minutes (73 minutes with stops), would cost Tk 93,350.93 crore.

But talking to this correspondent in October last year, Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujjan said the government would "go slow" considering the expenses.

Meanwhile, China Railway Group Ltd, another Chinese state-owned company, has proposed carrying out the project under the G2G-PPP framework and Chinese Ambassador in Dhaka Li Jiming in April wrote to the railways minister for signing a memorandum of understanding between the company and BR "as soon as possible".

But prominent transport experts questioned the viability of a project with such huge investment. Some said BR lacks the capacity to complete this "highly ambitious" scheme.

CHINESE PROPOSAL FOR EXPRESSWAY

In its letter sent to the principal secretary to the prime minister on May 29, the CSCEC said they "understood" that the Bangladesh government wished to implement the expressway on a G2G-PPP basis.

Under the G2G-PPP arrangement, Bangladesh may request other governments to provide

financial support and select state-owned or private entities to act as investors.

The company will build, maintain and operate the structure for a certain period and get money following the terms mentioned in the agreement.

No project under the G2G-PPP arrangement has yet to be implemented in Bangladesh. Discussions with several countries, including Japan and South Korea, have been going on to implement some projects under this model.

The company said they have completed numerous projects around the globe and were involved in 10 projects in Bangladesh so far totalling around \$1 billion contract value.

"Desires to be a partner in building this expressway, we hereby present ourselves for your kind assessment and consideration," reads the proposal.

Covid positivity

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overall recovery rate to 96.44 percent.

With this, the total number of confirmed cases rose to 19,78,689 and the total number of fatalities to 29,162.

After the transmission remained under control for around three months, it started rising early last month, indicating the beginning of the fourth wave of Covid-19 in the country.

A positivity rate below five percent for at least two weeks at a stretch indicates the end of the previous wave, according to experts.

A total of 29 Covid-19 patients have died since the current wave started, according to the DGHS data.

Austere times are here

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The A-category projects will go on as normal, while up to 75 percent of the allocation for the B-category projects can be spent.

All C category projects have been put on hold, but the ministries and divisions can re-route the allocations for the projects to the A-category ones being implemented by them.

While the notice has not articulated what constitutes an A-category project or a C-category project, The Daily Star has learnt from finance ministry officials that projects that will increase economic activities have been given the highest priority.

"Those are A-category

projects," said a finance ministry official involved with the proceedings.

Projects that will generate revenue for the government have been marked as B category.

"About Tk 30,000-40,000 crore can be conserved this way," he said, adding that the import component in the government's own-funded projects has been suspended.

Imports made under foreign-funded projects will continue as those will bring in foreign currency for the government, the official added.

"This was the right step and the right time to usher in austerity given the

pressure on the budget," said Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the Centre of Policy Dialogue.

Going forward, the government will have to make tougher calls regarding subsidies for gas, electricity, fertiliser and fuel.

"Would the government go for price adjustments for these now when inflation is rising?"

The government can also cut back on its expenses by way of good governance.

"Now is the time to implement the prime minister's zero-tolerance policy on corruption and wastage."

Rahman is also not on board with a blanket ban

on luxury imports.

"There are people who do not mind paying more for luxury items. Luxury imports bring in revenue for the government but they also drain foreign currency reserves. Both sides must be considered," he said adding that some luxury items can be discouraged.

He is also not on board with putting projects on hold as there would be a big bump in expenditure once those are resumed and that is not desirable.

"The ongoing projects must continue and the government must focus on finishing those. If those are put on hold, their costs will jump later."

Schoolteacher found dead in Rangamati

UNB, Rangamati

Police recovered the throat-slit body of an indigenous female school teacher from her house in Rangamati's Longdu upazila yesterday.

Pensy Chakma, 35, was a teacher at a school run by Unicef, said Ariful Amin, officer-in-charge of Longdu Police Station.

Babu Ajay Mitra Chakma, chairman of Atarakchara Union Parishad, said Pensy used to work as a local community worker and used to live alone.

"On Sunday morning, some children went to get tuition at her house and they found the body. Later, locals called police," said the UP chairman.

Student electrocuted in Sherpur

UNB, Sherpur

A college student was electrocuted and his paternal uncle injured at Bhati Langarpara Charband in Sherpur's Shribardi upazila yesterday.

Manjurul Islam Manju, 18, was a second-year student of Sherpur Government College.

Police said Manju and his uncle Anwar Hussain were watering their seedbed by a pump around 8:00am.

Manju got electrocuted while repairing electrical wire of the pump, they said, adding that Anwar was also injured as he tried to save Manju.

Biplob Kumar Biswas, officer-in-charge of Shribardi Police Station, said the victim's family requested them not to send the body for autopsy.

"We will take measures after discussing it with high officials."

Engr dies in train crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

An engineer of the under construction Bangabandhu Rail Bridge over the Jamuna River died Saturday night after being hit by a Jamalpur-bound train in Biaramaria area in Tangail's Kalihati upazila.

Jaber Khan Jony, 24, of the upazila's Kharshila village, was working as a site engineer of Toma Construction Company, a contractor employed in Bangabandhu Railway Bridge, said his cousin Bin Jayed.

Jayed, also a colleague of the victim, said Jaber was talking on his mobile phone while walking on the rail track in Biaramaria area Saturday afternoon.

At the time, Dhaleswari Express hit him, leaving him critically injured, he said. He died around 9:00pm.

India landslide death toll rises to 37

AFP, Guwahati

The death toll from a massive landslide in India hit 37 yesterday, authorities said, as rescue teams battled teeming rain to search for 25 others still missing three days later.

A wall of mud and rock swamped a camp housing railway construction workers and members of the Territorial Army in remote Manipur state in the northeast after heavy rain early on Thursday.

Hold talks with the opponents

China urges Myanmar junta

AFP, Beijing

China's foreign minister yesterday called for Myanmar's junta to hold talks with its opponents during his first visit to the country since the 2021 coup that plunged it into turmoil.

Beijing is one of the Myanmar military's few international allies, supplying arms and refusing to label the power grab that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's government a coup.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi said China expects all parties in Myanmar to "adhere to rational consultation" and "strive to achieve political reconciliation".

Wang also told counterpart Wunna Maung Lwin that "China sincerely hopes that Myanmar will be politically and socially stable," according to a statement on the foreign ministry's website.

In Beijing's highest-profile visit to Myanmar since the putsch, Wang is attending a foreign ministers' meeting with representatives from Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam attending.

His comments follow a junta spokesman indicating last week that talks between the military and ousted leader Suu Kyi to resolve the chaos were "not impossible".