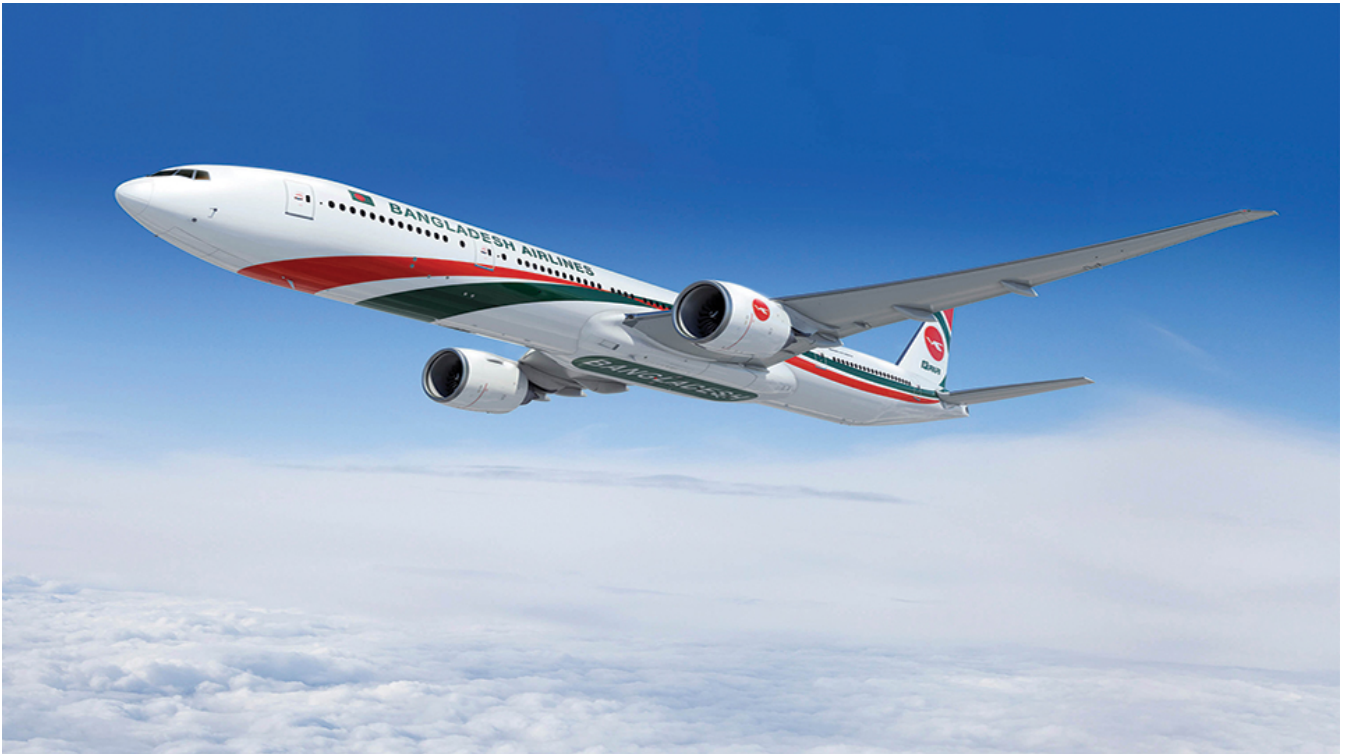


Biman in profit amid pandemic : Mahbub Ali

A Monitor Report

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Dhaka : The national flag carrier Biman Bangladesh Airlines is now a profitable organisation, thanks to the efforts and various initiatives taken by the government, said State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Md Mahbub Ali.

Addressing the "Dialogue" programme of the Bangladesh Secretariat Reporters' Forum (BSRF), State Minister Mahbub Ali also disclosed that Biman remained profitable even during the Covid-19 pandemic, defying the norm for airlines globally.

The salaries and allowances of all the Biman staff are paid from its own income, he added.

The programme was held on September 6 at the Secretariat in the capital.

Mahbub Ali said Biman had taken out a BDT 1,000 crore loan in the form of a government incentive during the pandemic period with soft terms.

Within a year, Biman repaid the loan with interest from its profits.

"The government does not allocate a budget for Biman," he added.

"Giants of the airline industry across the globe incurred losses during the pandemic. The tourism sector has gone through a massive disaster. But we worked relentlessly. We tried to communicate with the foreign embassies so that Biman could survive operating cargo flights."

Despite the unstable global market situation and the domestic hike in fuel prices, Biman received a positive response to its newly introduced Dhaka-Toronto-Dhaka

route, and the flights on this route were fully booked, claimed Mahbub.

As the Prime Minister directed to ensure necessary services for the passengers, the state minister and Biman's managing director are visiting airports regularly to monitor the services, Mahbub added.

Regarding developments in the tourism sector, Mahbub Ali said the sector had faced huge losses during the pandemic.

After lifting the restrictions given for the pandemic, the sector has started seeing profits again.

In the first three months following the lifting of restrictions, the sector had already posted profits of around BDT 6 crores.

BSRF President Tapan Bishwas presided over the programme while its General Secretary Masudul Hoque moderated.

The national flag carrier Biman Bangladesh Airlines is currently at risk of losing the ground handling business of Dhaka Airport as the authorities are now planning to give the ground handling responsibilities of the Third Terminal of Dhaka Airport through open tender.

However, Biman Bangladesh Airlines Managing Director and CEO Zahid Hossain said ground handling works at the airport only occupy 10 per cent of the airline's revenue.

Hence, it will not make much of a difference if the airline loses the tender of T3 of HSIA.

However, the Biman chief said they will give their best to earn it.