

CAAB emphasizes need to strengthen firefighting capabilities after HSIA cargo fire

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 21 October, 2025



Dhaka: Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) Chairman Air Vice Marshal Md Mostafa Mahmud Siddiq has stressed the need to further enhance the firefighting capabilities at the country's airports, following the recent fire at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport's (HSIA) cargo complex.

Speaking at a press briefing at the CAAB headquarters on October 21, the chairman said that while airports under CAAB already have firefighting units in place, there is still room for improvement. "I won't say we lack capability, but it must be strengthened further," he noted.

Addressing media queries, he dismissed allegations that fire-fighting vehicles faced any obstruction while entering the airport during the blaze. "No vehicle was delayed in reaching the site. Neither the Fire Service nor any other agency made such a claim," he clarified.

He also cautioned against the spread of misinformation about the incident. "Various rumors are circulating, which are not helpful. These should be avoided for the greater interest of the country," he said.

Commenting on the severity of the fire, Air Vice Marshal Siddiq explained that the presence of flammable materials in the cargo area made it difficult to contain the flames in the early stages. Preliminary findings suggest that the blaze may have originated from the Import Courier Section, though the exact cause will be confirmed after investigations conclude.

According to the CAAB chairman, the airport's own fire unit responded within 30 seconds of the fire breaking out, with reinforcements from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Fire Service joining soon after. "Within 10 minutes, three fire trucks arrived from the Air Force's AK Khandaker Base, and two more came from Bashar Air Base within 20 minutes. In total, more than 40 firefighting vehicles took part in extinguishing the blaze," he detailed.

The incident led to the temporary rerouting of 15 flights to alternative airports. However, normal operations resumed within six hours, and all affected passengers reached their destinations by 4 p.m. the following day.

"No lives were lost, and a major disaster was prevented due to prompt and coordinated action," Siddiq said, describing the swift restoration of operations as a significant achievement.

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