

Country's airline industry can help grow GDP up to 10pc

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Dhaka : Aviation and tourism together contribute only 3 per cent to the country's GDP. However, the number can be upped to 10 per cent by the airlines, given that the government finally realises how huge the sector is and facilitate it with policy support and incentive. With the government's support, the airlines can retain USD 100 million foreign remittance a month.

Md Abdullah Al Mamun, Managing Director of US-Bangla Group said this while talking to a group of senior journalists from the country's print and electronic media in Male, Maldives, who were hosted by the airline on a three-day familiarisation trip.

It may be mentioned here that US-Bangla Airlines is the first Bangladesh airline to start direct flight operations to Maldives in November, 2021 with thrice a week flights. Currently, it operates four flights a week on Dhaka-Male route with a hope to make it daily shortly.

Talking about access to fund, he mentioned, the high interest rate banks take from airlines in the country is much higher than the 1-2 per cent the neighbouring banks charge in their respective countries.

"A small aircraft alone costs USD 25 million. Even if Bangladesh Bank finances us, it would be very difficult to make the airline sustain with such high interest rate," said

the Managing Director of US-Bangla.

Also, there is no landing or parking charge for the local airlines at neighbouring countries, while it is exorbitantly high in Bangladesh. No airline needs any permission to send engines for maintenance abroad. However, in Bangladesh, it takes an airline three months to send an engine, sighed Abdullah Al Mamun.

Moreover, the airline sales of the country have reached great heights. Currently, the country has a BDT 30-35 thousand crore worth huge sales revenue per annum, claimed Managing Director of the biggest private airline of the country.

"Sadly, Biman and US-Bangla can only retain BDT 3000-3500 crore of it, while the foreign carriers take away the rest," grieved Al Mamun.

Hence, by supporting the airlines, the government will be able to keep the remittance in the country and generate employment, urged the US-Bangla chief, reminding that due to the lack of government facilitation, 10 airlines in the country so far, since liberation, have had to shut down their operations. ❌ *Some of the members of the media team seen at the white sandy beach of The Standard Beach Resort in Huruvalhi Island in Maldives* _Photo : Monitor

For this purpose, the government must acknowledge the aviation sector's potential, further urged Abdullah Al Mamun.

Even professional career in the aviation sector now shows great promise, explained Al Mamun. After completing HSC, candidates can get into a flying academy. Once two-year training completes, he/she can join the airline as a First Officer with a starting salary of BDT 1 lac. To each of its pilots, US-Bangla pays BDT 5 lac salary, mentioned Abdullah Al Mamun.

He further noted, the airline has 200 captains and cabin crew, the latter also earns BDT 1.5 lac taka including all allowances. Altogether, US-Bangla Airlines has 2000 employees while the group has 5000.

Since US-Bangla launched its operations in 2014, the airlines' purpose has always been to bring more connectivity to the passengers. Currently, the airline has the biggest network of destinations in the country.

Daily 80 flights of US-Bangla are taking off from Dhaka, said Abdullah Al Mamun, adding, in every 45 minute, customers can find a flight of US-Bangla to reach any destination within the country in 1-2 hours.

In the domestic market, US-Bangla alone carries 50 per cent of the passengers currently, Mamun also said.

In September 2021, the airline reached another milestone and began cross-city long haul flights across the country, starting with Jashore-Cox's Bazar with full passenger load factor. And from Dhaka to Cox's Bazar, US-Bangla carries a staggering number of 3000 passengers daily.

US-Bangla spread its wings for the first time with two aircraft and now it is the largest private carrier of the country with a fleet of 16 aircraft, including six Boeing 737-800s and seven ATR 72-600s. Five of these ATRs are brand new while the rest two are six years old only.

He hoped, the airline will be expanding the fleet to 25 aircraft by 2022. In addition, the airline's fleet has always been up to the standard of international airlines. In terms of maintenance, foreign carrier such as SpiceJet carried out the maintenance work of its Boeing 737-800 by US-Bangla during maintenance transit at Dhaka Airport.


The airline is currently operating the Boeing 737-800s on 10 international routes: Chennai, Male, Kolkata, Sharjah, Dubai, Muscat, Doha, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Guangzhou.

US-Bangla reached a milestone with the launch of Dhaka-Guangzhou flights. After

independence, it was the first carrier to operate flights on the route. With this, the airline brought down the airfare on the route to BDT 35 thousand from BDT 80 thousand for economy class, mentioned Al Mamun.

Also, in Maldives, the airfare earlier was BDT 65 thousand without any direct connectivity. US-Bangla again made it affordable to the passengers to fly on the route by launching direct flights to Male at BDT 40 thousand per person.

On the other hand, on Dhaka-Chennai route, the airline is supporting plenty of medical travellers of the country with nonstop flights. 70 per cent of the passengers on the route are travellers needing urgent medical services, claimed Al Mamun.

With the airline's international operations, it retains USD 30 million foreign remittance a month now. In 2022, the airline aims to retain USD 50 million foreign remittance a month, expressed the Managing Director.  *A picturesque view of The Standard Beach Resort in Huruvalhi Island in Maldives* _Photo: Monitor

By June 2022, the airline is on its way to make headlines again by becoming the first in the country to have a second base at Chattogram. This will allow passengers to travel from Chattogram to Dubai, Sharjah, Oman, and Doha directly, Al Mamun further added.

US-Bangla Airlines is now working on backward linkage and is aspired to open a flying school in seven months. After that, the airline wishes to open an engineering school to help develop human resource for the industry.

These initiatives are aimed at building educated manpower and generate employment -- two things the group greatly prioritises right now, claimed Abdullah Al Mamun, Managing Director, US-Bangla Group.