

HSIA's annual pax, cargo handling capacity to be doubled : CAAB Chairman

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 16 August, 2023



Dhaka : As per the government's directive, the priority construction project of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport's Third Terminal (T3) is underway in full-swing. The new state-of-the-art terminal in the capital will be soft launched on October 7 not only to increase operational and traffic capacity of the airport but also to improve its service standard. Upon completion, HSIA's annual passenger and cargo handling capacity are expected to be doubled. It will be able to accommodate approximately 24-26 million passengers (including T1 and T2) and handle 500000 tonnes of cargo each year.

"Since air travel is estimated to increase by threefold in the next 10 years compared to the current eight million capacity of HSIA (T1 and T2), we will be launching the new Third Terminal to accommodate the rise in air traffic". Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman, Chairman of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh, said this to The Bangladesh Monitor during an interview held at CAAB head office in the capital recently.

The three-storied terminal building of 2.30 lac square metres will have 26

boarding bridges, 115 check-in counters, 64 departure and 64 arrival immigration desks, 27 luggage scanning machines, 40 scanning machines, 16 carousels and 11 body scanners.

Additionally, the upcoming Third Terminal will have new road connections, multiple hubs, additional connectivity with the runway, a huge apron area, and two new 63,000 square metre long cargo terminals for import and export as well as many other ultramodern facilities.

"We will also be incorporating an advance management system to manage traffic faster on the ground. We can accommodate more traffic this way with optimum utilisation of the runway," claimed Mafidur Rahman.

The new export-import cargo terminal at T3 will have ultramodern facilities, he further stressed.

It will be more automated and efficient with three times bigger capacity to store all the cargo inside the terminal. It will also save operational time by a lot, claimed the Chairman.

The Third Terminal will also feature a new car parking facility for 1,230 vehicles, and a 5.42 lac square metre apron for 37 aircraft, among others.

Functional by 2024

The construction work of the much-anticipated Third Terminal has reached about 81.6 per cent, mentioned the Chairman. The terminal building is now widely visible. The works for interior decoration and the installation of various equipment are underway currently.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will be soft launching the new terminal, shared CAAB Chairman.

He further mentioned, "We expect 90 per cent of construction work to be completed by October 2023."

As per the initial plan, the terminal, constructed at a cost of BDT 21,300 crore since December 2019, should be open to the public by April 2024 because test and trial runs as well as calibration works of the equipment at the new terminal will take six more months to be complete, added the Chairman.

Once T3 opens, parts of T1 and T2 will be used for domestic operations as domestic air travel is also on the rise, said CAAB Chairman.

He further mentioned, there are plans to construct a new domestic terminal. However, it will take some time.

Once T3 opens, renovation and retrofitting works will begin at T1 and T2 to increase their standards. Once the old terminals reach international standard, they will be connected to the new Third Terminal, explained Mafidur Rahman.

Radar project, air traffic control tower

Earlier, Bangladesh-following a Permanent Court of Arbitration judgment-laid claim to 19,467 square kilometres of sea area. However, Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport's outdated analogue radar system makes it impossible to detect aircrafts in the vast shoreline.

To solve this issue, the government is going to install a state-of-the-art radar system by Thales LAS, a French radar manufacturing company, at Dhaka Airport.



This new system will allow proper monitoring and identification of any aircraft in Bangladesh's airspace.

"This modern system-when installed-will help us bring the entire airspace of Bangladesh under surveillance. It will make the flights safer, and the country will benefit financially as well," said the CAAB Chairman.

He further mentioned that the radar is already here and will be installed by 2023 end.

Also, the CAAB Chairman mentioned, they are constructing an attractive air traffic control tower too beside the upcoming Terminal 3.

"The new air traffic control tower construction work will also be completed by 2023 end. However, it will become functional from the middle of 2024," noted CAAB Chairman.

Japanese company under consideration to operate T3

A Japanese company is under consideration to operate the new terminal's ground and cargo handling services.

He further mentioned that the Third Terminal will be operated and maintained under Public-Private Partnership.

Currently, Biman carries out the ground and cargo handling operations at all eight airports of the country including HSIA.

Amid widespread dissatisfaction of passengers, airlines operating in the country and high government officials over Biman's poor luggage handling services, CAAB seeks to outsource the job to a foreign company that can deliver international standard services and serve passengers in the best possible manner, stressed

Mafidur Rahman.

Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman also noted that they would finalise the deal on hiring a third party for ground handling with any suitable Japanese firm in the middle of 2024.

One limitation: single runway

However, amid all these massive development works, one limitation remains- Dhaka Airport only has one operational runway.

This is already inadequate to facilitate on-time operational performance of the number of airlines operating to and from the airport currently. With the launch of the new terminal, the number of airlines operating in Dhaka will only increase further. That will put more pressure on the airport and the single runway it is stuck with.

Hence, there are doubts by industry stakeholders whether the new terminal will bring any operational benefit during flight take-off or landing.

Addressing the issue, CAAB Chairman said, "To mitigate this crisis, we are constructing two new high-speed taxiways that will connect the runway to the apron. This will allow the planes to enter the apron area quickly from the runway."

"Nevertheless, we will need an alternative runway eventually as it is risky to depend on a single runway. Hence, we do have a plan to start the construction work of another runway in two years, once the construction work of the Third Terminal is complete," claimed Mafidur Rahman.