

## New government decision for online travel agencies

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Dhaka: To ensure good governance in the travel agency business, prevent artificial ticket shortages, and stop harassment of migrant workers, the government has issued a new ordinance by amending the Bangladesh Travel Agency (Registration and Control) Act, 2013.

President Md Shahabuddin promulgated the ordinance on January 1 under the powers conferred by Article 93(1) of the Constitution. The Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division has published the related gazette, the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs informed on January 2.

Under the new ordinance, separate bank guarantee requirements have been introduced for online and offline travel agencies. According to the

amended law, the bank guarantee amount for offline travel agencies will be BDT 1 million, while for online travel agencies it has been set at BDT 10 million (BDT 1 crore).

The ordinance strictly prohibits creating artificial ticket shortages through “false booking” or fake seat reservations. It also states that no travel agency may buy or sell tickets from another agency (B2B transactions), and ticket sales must be conducted only through government-approved financial channels.

To protect consumer interests, the ordinance further specifies that no travel agency may collect advance payments through false promises, fraud, or misleading advertisements. In the case of migrant workers, purchasing or selling tickets via a third country and changing passenger information after ticket confirmation will also be considered criminal offenses.

The amended law introduces stricter penalties. Any person or agency violating the provisions of the law may face up to one year of imprisonment, or a fine of up to BDT 1 million, or both. In special cases, to prevent fraud or corruption, the registration authority has also been given the power to impose travel bans on the concerned individuals.

Regarding registration renewal, the new rules require licenses to be renewed every three years, and agencies must submit annual reports to the government along with financial statements and overall activity details. Additionally, any loan defaulter will be considered ineligible for travel agency registration.

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