

Third terminal operation: Japanese consortium to submit revised proposal by late March

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Dhaka: Bangladesh and Japan on Friday, March 13, have resumed negotiations with a Japanese consortium in a renewed effort to operationalize the long-delayed third terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on a mutually beneficial basis.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Afroza Khanom Rita said the meeting was constructive and both sides were working toward an early solution to bring the new terminal into operation.

“We had a good meeting. We are trying to make the third terminal operational as soon as possible as per the instruction of Honourable Prime Minister Tarique Rahman. We hope to reach a win-win deal with Japan to open the new terminal,” she told reporters after the discussion.

According to a press release from the Civil Aviation and Tourism

Ministry, the meeting reviewed the proposal submitted by the Japanese side regarding the operation and maintenance of the terminal. Key issues discussed included the airport's embarkation fee, revenue-sharing arrangements, and upfront payment structure.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism M. Rashiduzzaman Millat urged the Japanese side to quickly submit a revised proposal addressing Bangladesh's concerns. Both sides also discussed holding another round of negotiations toward the end of March.

The high-level meeting took place at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and marked the first formal negotiation under the newly formed BNP-led government, reflecting a renewed push to resolve contractual and operational issues that have kept the nearly completed terminal idle.

The Bangladesh delegation included Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman, Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Afroza Khanom Rita, Prime Minister's Foreign Affairs Adviser Humayun Kabir, State Minister M. Rashiduzzaman Millat, and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed Islam.

The Japanese delegation was led by Chargé d'Affaires at the Embassy of Japan in Dhaka Takahashi Naoki and Assistant Vice Minister of Japan's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Rieko Nakayama, along with other senior officials.

Speaking to journalists, Humayun Kabir and State Minister Millat described the discussions as positive and expressed optimism about reaching a mutually acceptable solution.

Millat said Bangladesh is seeking an arrangement that safeguards national interests while correcting shortcomings in earlier agreements to ensure a "win-win" outcome in operating the terminal.

He noted that civil aviation agreements generally involve three categories of charges, and differences had emerged between the two sides over certain financial and operational aspects.

"Both sides discussed the matter in detail. Bangladesh presented its proposals, and the Japanese side also shared their position," he said, adding that the Japanese consortium had agreed to consider Bangladesh's proposals and submit a revised offer soon.

Humayun Kabir said the government is reviewing the issue with Bangladesh's national interest as the top priority. "The discussions between the two sides are progressing positively, and we hope to see meaningful progress soon," he added.

The latest meeting followed the Prime Minister's directive to reopen negotiations with the Japanese consortium to operationalize the terminal, which is more than 99 percent complete but has yet to begin full commercial operations.

Officials of the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh said delays largely resulted from unresolved issues during the previous interim government, when negotiations over terminal management, operational control, and revenue-sharing arrangements failed to reach consensus.

The Japanese consortium involved in the project includes Japan Airport Terminal Company, Sumitomo Corporation, Sojitz Corporation, and Narita International Airport Corporation, while the project has been largely financed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

Approved in 2017 and launched in 2019 at a cost of around Tk 21,398 crore, the terminal spans approximately 542,000 square meters and is designed to handle an additional 12-16 million passengers annually, along with nearly 900,000 tonnes of cargo.

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