

## **ATAB urges time extension for IATA payments over political instability**

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Dhaka: The Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (ATAB) has urged the International Air Transport Association (IATA) to allow the country's travel agencies with a time extension to make their due payments under the global trade body's Billing and Settlement Plan (BSP).

Abdus Salam Aref, President of ATAB, informed this while talking to The Bangladesh Monitor on July 28.

The request for time extension comes amid countrywide political instability.

Following protests, curfew and internet blackout since July 18, Bangladesh entered a phase of nationwide shutdown for almost a week.

Only a few days ago, on July 24, the curfew was relaxed and offices

resumed while internet communication was restored partially.

During the national crisis, the travel agencies were, of course, unable to continue operations since the entire country was immobilised.

As a result, it would be difficult for the agencies to make their IATA payments on time (on August 1).

“Therefore, we have requested IATA to allow us with a time extension of seven working days since August 1,” said Aref, talking to The Bangladesh Monitor.

The Bangladesh office of the global trade body has forwarded the request to the headquarters in Geneva. Soon, the global office will notify its Bangladesh representatives with a response, they said, on a positive note.

“We are hoping IATA will grant our time extension request,” expressed Aref.

### **Industry suffered over shutdown**

According to the President of ATAB, the country’s industry currently witnesses over BDT 100 crore air ticket sales in total a day. During the countrywide shutdown of almost a week, the number fell down to zero, he claimed.

Even though restrictions have been relaxed and communications have been partially restored, public’s faith in travel will take some time to return, as political instability and curfew still remain, explained Aref.

Domestic travel has decreased by 70-80 per cent at the moment, while international travel is only taking place in emergency cases, he mentioned.

Therefore, it is essential to bring back political stability countrywide and ensure travellers safety as well as security to pave way for the return of travel, concluded ATAB President.