

Ineffectiveness in aviation sector, undue favour to Biman impediments to becoming regional hub

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Dhaka: Undue favour to the flag carrier Biman Bangladesh Airlines by the government and ineffectiveness in the aviation sector are working as impediments to make the country's dream of becoming a regional hub a reality.

Private airline chiefs and aviation experts said this at a seminar titled "Prospect of Bangladesh as a regional aviation hub" organised by premier travel trade publication The Bangladesh Monitor on the sidelines of the biggest tourism extravaganza Triplover Dhaka Travel Mart 2022 at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel in the capital on June 4.

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman presented the keynote paper in the seminar while Md Abdullah Al Mamun, Managing Director of US-Bangla Airlines, Mofizur Rahman, Managing Director of NOVOAIR, Zahid Hossain, Director of Sales and Marketing of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, ATM Nazrul Islam, Managing

Director of United Airways Bangladesh, among others, participated in the discussion.

The participants discussed the existing hurdles and opportunities in the development of Bangladesh aviation sector, and how to harness the potentials in establishing Bangladesh as a regional aviation hub.

The CAAB Chairman in his keynote speech said the number of passengers are increasing in the country every year following the Covid-19 pandemic. This shows Bangladesh's prospect in the aviation sector is very high.

However, NOVOAIR Managing Director and Secretary General of Aviation Operators Association of Bangladesh Mofizur Rahman said, the ever-increasing jet fuel price, and excessive duty or tax on aircraft spare parts are among the main issues that are making it difficult for the country's private airlines to sustain.

He further mentioned how the private airlines solely contributed to the growth rate of passenger numbers over the years. Before the present government came to power in 2009, the number of passengers in the domestic sector was only three lac while the number of passengers rose to 30 lac in 2019, thanks to the private operators, he claimed.

Yet, the unfavourable policies and situations in the aviation sector are forcing airlines to shut down one after another, said Mofizur, referring to Regent Airways, GMG and United.

However, the flag carrier Biman Bangladesh Airlines get to enjoy undue favour, claimed another airline chief Md Abdullah Al Mamun, Managing Director of the biggest private airline of the country US-Bangla.

“We are always in pressure by the Civil Aviation Authority to pay our charges on time while Biman has over BDT 3000 crore dues and no one bats an eye,” said the chief of US-Bangla Airlines.

This uneven competition between Biman and the private airlines and the undue favour the government provides the national carrier with is another reason due to which the private aviation sector is facing a crisis.

Abdullah Al Mamun further urged CAAB to place dedicated immigration police and an independent authority at airports to eradicate the current abnormalities, ineffectiveness taking place and ensure better services to the passengers.

Otherwise, it will not be possible to make Bangladesh a regional aviation hub

as the government dreams, he sighed.

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