

## Tk 6,597cr budget for civil aviation, tourism

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 03 June, 2023



A total of Taka 6,597 crore has been allocated for Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry in the proposed budget for 2023-24 fiscal year (FY) aiming at upgrading the air transport system as well as expanding tourism industry to meet the global standards.

The allocation in the proposed budget is Taka 969 crore more than the revised budget of 2022-23 fiscal that was Taka 5,628. The proposed budget of the fiscal 2022-23 for Civil Aviation and Tourism ministry was Taka 7,004 crore.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal made the announcement while placing the budget for FY2023-24 in the Jatiya Sangsad .

The minister proposed to exempt Advance Tax on import of Aircraft Engine, Turbo Jet and Aircraft Parts, imported by registered airlines, in order to facilitate trade and reduce aviation operational costs.

However, Kamal proposed multi-modal increase in travel tax rates to reduce unnecessary foreign travel among the public, inculcate austerity habits and create new revenue streams in economy.

"This policy will give us more revenue on the one hand and save dollars on the other hand by reducing unnecessary foreign travel," he said.

The minister also proposed to withdraw the existing notification for importing hotel materials at concessionary rate which is in place for a decade.

"As many large-scale and high-quality hotels have already been built under this facility, it seems unnecessary to continue the duty tax exemption, and therefore, for the sake of revenue protection, I propose to withdraw the existing notification," he said.

At his speech, the finance minister said that the government has made significant strides in expanding air fleet and undertaking airport development projects.

Currently, he said, construction of the third terminal building of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport is underway, an area of 2,30,000 square metres, which is expected to be opened in October 2023.

Additionally, he said, construction of the export-import cargo complex encompassing a total area of 63,000 square metres is scheduled to be completed by April 2024.

Besides, the minister said, an Export Cargo Complex with a total area of 44,944 square feet has been constructed at Sylhet Osmani International Airport to facilitate the storage and handling of export goods.

The upgrading work of Cox's Bazar Airport to an international airport is also underway, he added.

"In addition to expanding and developing airports, we are also focusing on increasing the number of international flights and new destinations," said the minister.

Regarding tourism industry, the finance minister said, the 'Tourism Master Plan' spanning 25 years is being formulated for the promotion and expansion of the tourism industry.

It is worth mentioning that tourism has been identified as a significant industry in the National Industrial Policy, 2022, Kamal added.

"Consistent with the country's economic and social progress and increasing demand of domestic and foreign tourists, we are working towards making the tourism industry more eco-friendly, safe, and sustainable," he said.

The minister said steps have been taken to prevent unplanned construction of hotels and motels in tourist centres such as Cox's Bazar and Saint Martin, limit the number of tourists within the capacities of the tourist centres and preserve biodiversity by engaging local communities, businessmen and other stakeholders.

"we are building three tourist parks namely, Sabrang tourism Park, Naf Tourism Park, and Sonadia Eco-Tourism Park to international standard in terms of accommodation and entertainment facility in the district of Cox's Bazar," he said.

The minister also mentioned that the "National Tourism Human Capital Development Strategy for Bangladesh: 2021-2030" has been prepared as a strategy document to create employment opportunities and to supply tourism workers in the tourism industry in the country.

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