

Travel Ordinance May Force Closure of 5,000 Agencies: Sector Leaders

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Dhaka: Leaders of Bangladesh's travel agency sector on Sunday (Jan 4) warned that the newly promulgated Travel Agency Registration and Control Ordinance-2026 could cripple the industry, forcing nearly 5,000 travel agencies to shut down unless the law is repealed.

At a press conference held at the National Press Club, industry representatives described the ordinance as "anti-business" and termed it a "black ordinance" that threatens the survival and sustainability of the travel trade.

They urged the government to immediately repeal the law to avert what they said would be a large-scale collapse of the sector.

Former Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (ATAB) President Manzur Morshed Mahbub said the ordinance, gazetted on January 1,

introduces several new sections, subsections and clauses that would effectively paralyse travel agency operations, read a press release.

Referring to clause (kha) of sub-section (umo) of section 4 of Act No. 61 of 2013, Mahbub said the amended affidavit prohibits the buying and selling of airline tickets between travel agencies.

He noted that although there are around 5,800 registered travel agencies in the country, only about 800 are members of the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

“The remaining nearly 5,000 agencies do not have the capacity to issue tickets independently,” he said, adding that preventing them from sourcing tickets from other agencies would stop them from serving passengers and from meeting the mandatory annual sales turnover of Tk 5 million required for licence renewal, ultimately forcing them out of business.

Mohammad Jalal Uddin Tipu, Convener of the ATAB Members’ Welfare Unity Alliance, highlighted another provision requiring offline travel agencies to submit a bank guarantee of Tk 1 million.

He said thousands of agencies have failed to obtain IATA membership due to financial constraints and would be unable to meet the new guarantee requirement.

The speakers also criticised a proposed restriction on operating recruiting agencies and travel agencies from the same address, arguing that it would increase operational costs and raise per-capita expenses for outbound migrant workers, who often depend on combined services from a single location.

Expressing serious concern, the leaders pointed to a new clause under section 9 that allows the government to temporarily suspend a registration certificate without prior hearing. They warned that such powers, if exercised without due process, could lead to harassment and significant financial losses.

They further opposed the proposed amendment to section 11, which increases punishment from six months to one year of imprisonment and raises fines from Tk 300,000 to Tk 1 million.

The speakers said the existing penalty provisions were sufficient and

called on the government to retain the previous structure.

The travel sector leaders reiterated their demand for immediate withdrawal of the ordinance, warning that thousands of agency owners, employees and their families face an uncertain future if the law remains in force.

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