

Travel ordn proposal threatens millions of jobs

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Dhaka: Travel, Hajj and recruiters' representatives have urged the government to withdraw the proposed 'Bangladesh Travel Agency (Registration and Regulation) (Amendment) Ordinance-2025', warning that its implementation would force thousands of agencies to shut and render millions of skilled workers unemployed.

Speaking at a press conference in the capital on Saturday (Nov 15), former ATAB president SN Monzur Morshed Mahbub said nearly 6,000 travel agencies, 1,400 Hajj agencies, and 2,700 recruiting agencies would face immediate operational risks as the draft ordinance mandates all travel agencies to be connected to the IATA ticket-selling platform.

Currently, only about 1,000 agencies are IATA-linked, forcing the remaining agencies to cease operations overnight and leaving their dependent workers jobless.

He said the ordinance introduces several provisions that impose disproportionate burdens on small and medium entrepreneurs, including mandatory submission of family information, CIB clearance for loans, bank guarantees of Tk 1 million for offline operations and Tk 10 million for online operations, annual financial statements for license renewal, and strict technological compliance requirements. Implementing these measures, he warned, would severely destabilize the tourism industry.

Mahbub added that the ordinance effectively bans the globally practiced agent-to-agent model, preventing travel agencies from purchasing and selling tickets among themselves.

As a result, all agencies would be forced to obtain IATA accreditation costing around Tk 3 million, in addition to a Tk 2.2 million security deposit for Biman Bangladesh Airlines tickets-requirements unaffordable for 90 per cent of agencies.

He highlighted that despite several online travel agencies (OTAs) embezzling hundreds of crores of taka in recent years and their owners fleeing abroad, the ministry failed to take effective action.

"Instead of addressing OTA fraud, the ministry is now shifting blame onto general travel agencies to cover its own failures," he said, alleging that the new ordinance seeks to benefit certain individuals or groups by altering a law already passed by parliament.

The speakers urged the interim government's Chief Adviser and the Adviser to the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism to ensure that the new law does not become "a tool to shut down legitimate businesses, but rather supports the development of a fair, sustainable, and well-regulated travel industry."

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