

US dissatisfied over Dhaka airport security

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 19 September, 2022



Dhaka: A visiting US delegation gave a negative report on the security of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital which could further delay the resumption of direct flights between Dhaka and New York.

It may be mentioned here, since 2006, there has been no direct flight on the route.

"They [the delegation] have given a negative report as those who came from New York to inspect the security arrangements at the airport were barely checked [by the security staff of the airport]," said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen at a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on foreign affairs on August 8.

The meeting's minutes were placed before the committee for approval on September 13, said reports.

According to the minutes, the foreign minister said the security staff at the airport barely carry out any checks on foreigners, added reports.

He, however, did not mention when the US delegation visited Dhaka.

Reports further mentioned, Biman said the negative report by the delegation on the lack of security at the Dhaka airport may delay their ongoing efforts to resume the direct flights between Dhaka and New York. The government has been trying to resume flights on this route for years.

Biman had operated the New York flight between 1993 and 2006 before suspending it due to losses.

The US Federal Aviation Authority placed the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh in Category 2 after finding irregularities in its operational activities in an investigation in 2006.

Such categorisation placed additional restrictions on Bangladesh's airlines flying to the US, including resumption of the sole direct route between the nations.

The FAA placed CAAB in Category 2 as the Bangladeshi regulator could not meet the International Civil Aviation Organisation's (ICAO's) minimum safety standards.

According to the FAA findings, Bangladesh's aviation regulator runs short of technically qualified personnel.

A Category 1 rating means the civil aviation authority of a state complies with ICAO standards.

In 2012, CAAB was again assessed as belonging to Category 2 by the FAA under the International Aviation Safety Assessment (IASA) programme.

The purpose of the IASA programme is to ensure that all foreign air carriers operating to and from the US are properly licensed and with an appropriate safety oversight provided by a competent civil aviation authority of the state pursuant to ICAO safety standards.

In February 2018, the FAA conducted a technical review of the safety oversight provided by the CAAB.

The FAA report said, "Bangladesh has taken significant steps towards developing and implementing an effective safety oversight system that meets ICAO requirements."

"CAAB is to be commended for its continued commitment to the necessary corrective actions toward providing and sustaining an effective safety oversight system."

In February 2022, a five-member delegation of the Transportation Security Administration of the US visited HSIA and held a meeting with CAAB Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman and the then HSIA Executive Director Group Captain AHM Touhid-ul Ahsan, among others.

Bangladesh will be evaluated through two more technical reviews by FAA teams before the final assessment for attaining a Category 1 status is made.

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