

Opening Address by CAPSCA-AP Chairperson (AVM M Mafidur Rahman, Chairman CAAB)

“Recovery from COVID-19” - Video Conference on 21 May 2020

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim. In the name of Allah, Most Gracious and the most Merciful. Arun Mishra, the Regional Director ICAO APAC Office. D.M Parakrama Dissanayake, CAPSCA regional coordinator; Dr Ansa Jordaan, Chief of Aviation Medicine, ICAO HQ, Dato Sri Azharuddin Abdul Rahman, the former Chairperson of CAPSCA-AP region, DGCAs, representatives from the member-states of the AP region, representatives from WHO, IATA, ACI, CANSO and all participant of today's meeting Assalamu Alaikum and very Good Morning.

It's a great honor for me to address this session as Chairperson of CAPSCA-AP region. I like to express my sincere gratitude, ICAO Secretariat, regional office and all member-states of AP region posing a trust on me and honoring me with such dignified appointment and responsibilities. It is more significant when we all are struggling dealing with the greatest public health issue worldwide.

Today we have gathered online to share our experiences in preventing the spread of deadliest communicable disease of this century, that is COVID-19 in the Civil aviation sector and to learn views on how the member States are preparing for the recovery phase of COVID Pandemic, which has till now affected 5 million and killed 324 K, recovered 1.68 M throughout the world.

Before proceeding further, let us all pray for the salvation of those Killed by COVID-19 and my deepest condolences to our colleagues/friends who lost their near and dear ones in this pandemic. Now we'll observe one minute of silence for the departed souls!

Thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen.

At the onset. Let me convey my appreciations to the honorable CAPSCA former Chairperson, Dato Sri Azharuddin Abdul Rahman, DG, Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia for his outstanding contribution for the progress of CAPSCA to its present standard.

I welcome ICAO, WHO and CAPSCA partner organizations representatives of ACI, IATA and CANSO who are going to share their experiences and knowledge, on public health issues related to aviation industry and make the CAPSCA member States move forward overcoming the prevailing crisis of COVID-19 pandemic.

We all know that the first corona virus outbreak- Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) was originated at Hong Kong in 2003 affecting 37 countries within weeks, affecting more than 8 thousand people with 775 deaths.

Following this SARS outbreak, ICAO established “Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation- CAPSCA” in 2006 to assist States with major challenges of Multisectoral Cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen attending this video conference,

We, the world population is now passing the most crucial time in the history due to the impacts of COVID-19.

In context of COVID-19 we must remember the remarks of DG, WHO, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus in his first briefing said-

“A virus can have more powerful consequences than any terrorist action. If the world does not wake up and consider this Enemy virus a public health Enemy Number 1. I don't think, we will learn from these lessons”

If we see the impact of COVID-19 has already surpassed the outbreak of SARS. Although many AP states have made remarkable success in preventing spread of COVID-19 by enforcing strict regulations, but it has badly impacted global economy, specially it has devastated aviation industry throughout. The SARS resulted reduction of annual revenue for Asia Pacific airlines by 8% and 6 million USD, which, airlines could recover within 6 months. But the increase impact of COVID-19 is very uncertain as the aviation industry bears the weight of the consequences heavier than any other industry, as it deals with the transport of people, goods all across the globe for travelers, tourists, business and trade.

Impact on traffic volume due to COVID-19,

- 1) As of latest update, 96% of all world destinations have travel restrictions.
- 2) Many Airlines will go Bankruptcy
- 2) Airlines would lose revenue about 236-419 Billion USD. Of which 60% is from AP region.
- 3) Global trade will fall 13-22% in 2020
- 4) IMF: Global economy is projected to contract sharply by □3% in 2020

Recovery from COVID-19,

I convey my sincere thanks to ICAO Secretariat for the timely issuance of State letters and special thanks to Dr. Ansa Jordaan, Chief of Aviation Medicine of ICAO and CAPSCA global programme Manager for her initiative and updating the States on COVID-19 world situation and its economic impacts on aviation industry.

To share my experiences in Bangladesh, I would like start with thanking to regional office, Mr Arun Mishra and his team, for connecting all the states over video conferencing and for All the research works/guidelines published by ICAO partners i.e. WHO, ACI, IATA, EASA, FAA which were communicated to us from Asia Pacific region were disseminated to airport authorities, airlines, public health authorities and all other concerned agencies for their compliance and safe movement of the passengers. Thanks to all contributors, partners of ICAO

CAAB prepared and circulated comprehensive guidance materials to airport authorities and airline operators respectively for the prevention of spread of COVID-19 and are kept under constant surveillance for compliance.

Due to the timely steps taken by Bangladesh Government, the situation is still within considerable limit, no of affected is in a rise while death rate remains within 1.5%. However, the general populations failed to respond appropriately despite lots of efforts are being put in by our Government. Specially our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's role is unprecedented. She is addressing and guiding all walks of people's almost every day. People are constantly motivated by the Media, Law enforcing agencies and the enthusiastic young volunteers to follow the lockdown, health directives etc imposed by the government. Biggest challenge is densely populated localities difficult to maintain social distancing.

CAAB provided training to the crew members of the airlines under CAAB about the evaluation and management of suspected COVID-19 cases if found on board aircraft and to discharge their duties with safety measures under different flight conditions. I do acknowledge support of some of our friendly countries, like CA of China in training our crew. And few others also shared best practices, and procedures.

National Public Health Authorities (CDC, IEDCR of DGHS of Bangladesh) provided training to the airport health care providers, airport staffs, immigration, customs, representatives from airlines and other stakeholders on the –

- Proper use of PPE such as masks, gloves, gown, coverall, goggles etc.
- Proper donning and doffing of PPE in the designated area in the arrival health desk.
- How to maintain Social distancing, Flu etiquette and
- Procedures of WHO recommended hand washing for a duration of 20 seconds

On 8th March 2020 the first confirmed case was detected in Bangladesh, since then both Entry and Exit screening of the passengers are done. For departing pax, if any passenger shows more than normal body temperature or any flu like symptoms at the entrance gate, they are referred to airport health department for further check up by the on duty doctor for final disposal. The suspected cases are not allowed to board the aircraft for their further journey.

Airport Public Health Authority developed SOP in collaboration with CAAB, Airlines, airport authorities and other stakeholders for management of suspected case on board aircraft, Management of COVID-19 infected passengers at the PoEs and developed temporary Isolation and Quarantine facilities in the airport. All the suspected cases are sent to Government designated “Kurmitola General Hospital” for secondary screening and treatment if required.

CAAB is going to set up disinfecting channel at all the entry gates of both Domestic and International terminal so that only the sterile passengers and staff will be allowed to enter the terminal building.

Airport and air operators are directed to maintain social distancing, practice proper hand hygiene and use of alcohol based hand sanitizer by the passengers at all the check-in points, during pre boarding, boarding and at the passport control.

In order to minimize psychological stress of CAAB employees and other aviation personnel due to prolonged effects of COVID-19, we are encouraging constant consultations by the senior management officials and supervisors We also advised all concerned to follow advices given by WHO.

(Advices are: by maintaining a healthy lifestyle- healthy diet, adequate sleep, doing exercise at least for 30 minutes, talking over telephone to friends and relatives, avoid smoking, alcohol or drug etc.)

Public Health Corridor Concept: Special emphasis has been given on the public health corridor concept received from ICAO HQs to protect flight crew during the COVID-19 pandemic while passenger aircrafts are transporting cargo in the pax cabin. (Concept is to: clean crew, clean cabin, clean aircraft, clean airports, clean pax by disinfection procedures i.e. COVID-19 free environment).

Air operators are instructed for disinfection of the aircraft after completion of each flight as well as hourly in the long-haul air operation- in the light of “WHO guide to hygiene and sanitation in aviation”.

Dear All CAPSCA members,

All these measures are taken to prevent the spread of COVID and ensure safe air transportation of passengers and cargo. Although we receive and have been following guidelines set by different org, but it's evident that these measures are still not full proof and not yet standardized. Hence dissimilar practices are evident. Whereas in Civil Avn Sector uniformity interims of procedures and practices are vital. Moreover, it is still unsure how long we'll have to live with this NOVEL CORONA virus in the coming days.

We hosted the 11th CAPSCA meeting in Dhaka, Bangladesh during 21 to 24 Oct 2019 which provided strong platform for the WHO and ICAO to work closely together with member States of ICAO to discuss the issues pertaining to the various aspects of public health. This includes planning of activities as well as cooperation in areas of common interest.

I feel COVID-19 has made us to feel more united than before. It has taught us to think more rational and to be more humane. Therefore we all are struggling to save lives than of focusing our attention towards commercial objectives. In Asia Pacific we have more challenges starting from climate, population, socio cultural diversity, refugees and many public health related issues. But, COVID -19 pandemic brought us closer. This is the opportunity that we extract from this natural crisis and hopefully with each other support we shall able to recover from the sufferings and revive our socioeconomic status again. As CAPSCA member we must work together in coming days so that we save our lives and simultaneously devise strategy to rescue our aviation industry, which will able to contribute and vital role in accelerating again wheels of economic development of individual state, for the region and ultimately for the global economy.

At the end I once again thank regional office for initiating this timely event. Thanks to all participants for your patience hearing,

Until CORONA is disappeared, let us habituate ourselves to coexist safely by maintaining social distance and following all thoughtful health directives. And also let us work together to rescue our aviation industries.

May Almighty Bless us all. Thank you, ladies and Gentlemen.

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