

Biman faces cash crunch

Seeks Tk 1,500cr loan from state-run bank to overcome Covid-19 fallout

RASHIDUL HASAN

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has sought a Tk 1,500 crore loan from the state-owned Sonali Bank as the national flag carrier has been reeling from a severe cash crunch amid global travel restrictions owing to the coronavirus pandemic.

The airline incurred a loss of around Tk 450 crore in the last two months as it has been running with "no income" following the Covid-19 outbreak, said M Mokabbir Hossain, CEO of Biman.

"Biman was forced to suspend its routes one after another since January and it incurred a liability of Tk 1,300 crore in the last three months," he said.

Talking to The Daily Star on Thursday, the Biman boss said they applied for the loan on April 13 and were expecting to get it within this month.

Most of the amount would be used to meet Biman's operation costs, including the salaries of its several thousand employees, Mokabbir said, adding that Tk 200 crore would be needed to meet the "permanent operational costs" of Biman.

Biman suspended flights to all its 17 destinations from March 30, but the maintenance of its 18 aircraft would require Tk 266 crore in April, the CEO said, adding that Tk 98 crore would be needed to pay for the six aircraft that were procured on lease.

Moreover, the airline will also have to refund ticket prices worth several hundred crores of taka due to the

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The ongoing Covid-19 shutdown is taking a toll on those living in poverty. Many of them are so poor that they have to go out to work to feed themselves and their families. This photo taken in the capital's High Court area yesterday shows two rickshaw-pullers along with their rickshaws completely drenched in rain on an empty street.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Three more die with Covid-19 symptoms

STAR REPORT

Three persons, including a pregnant woman and a sex worker, have died with Covid-19 symptoms in Jashore and Rajbari districts since Thursday afternoon.

Of the three, two died at the isolation ward of Jashore General Hospital yesterday while another died at Goalanda Upzaila Health Complex on Thursday afternoon.

Arif Ahmed, resident medical officer (RMO) at Jashore General Hospital, said a pregnant woman who was undergoing treatment at the isolation ward of the hospital for last couple of days breathed her last around 12:30am yesterday.

She was 35 years old, the doctor added.

Meanwhile, a 55-year-old man also died around 4:00am yesterday right after being admitted to the hospital with fever, cold and respiratory disease, Arif said.

Samples have been collected from their bodies for coronavirus tests, he added.

In Rajbari, a 55-year-old sex worker of Daulatdia brothel in Goalanda upzaila died around 3:00pm on Thursday.

She was suffering from cold, cough, and respiratory issues.

Asif Mahmud, Goalanda upzaila health and family planning officer, said, "The woman was suffering from cold, cough and respiratory disease for the last few days. She was taken to the upzaila health complex on Thursday noon as her physical condition kept deteriorating. Later, she died around 3:00pm."

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Charged with murder again

Ex-Jubo League leader in Faridpur becomes prime murder suspect 5 yrs after president pardoned him

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Five years after he was pardoned by the president from death row, former Jubo League leader Aslam Fakir was accused of another murder in Faridpur's Bhanga upzaila on Wednesday.

In 2015, Aslam, a convicted murderer, was granted presidential clemency. He walked out of jail two years later.

This time, a case was filed accusing him and 53 others of killing Shahid Matubbar, 36, of Laxmipur village in Manikdaha union, police said, adding that Aslam is the prime suspect.

On Tuesday, Shajahan Matubbar's supporters clashed with Aslam's supporters at Laxmipur over establishing supremacy in the area.

Shahid was killed and 20 others were injured in the clash, Bhanga police said, adding that they are looking for Aslam.

Shajahan Matubbar is a close ally of Mujibur Rahman Chowdhury, lawmaker from Faridpur-4, and Aslam Fakir is a supporter of Kazi Zafarullah, presidium member of Awami League, locals said.

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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Lease system goes



A 4-member goodwill mission from Afghanistan, led by Dr A Majeed, calls on Bangabandhu on April 25, 1972.

April 25, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR HAATS AND BAZAARS

The Bangladesh government has decided to abolish the lease system of the haats and bazaars. The decision is taken at the Cabinet meeting today held at the Gonobhaban with the Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the chair. The haats and bazaars will now be developed and maintained with people's participation. The Cabinet feels that the policy of leasing out of the haats and bazaars is a remnant of the feudal system which gives rise to a vested interest group. In this system the village haats and bazaars also remain neglected. To give maximum benefit to the people the government will now take in hand the ambitious scheme of improving the condition of the market places.

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POST-BREXIT TALKS UK, EU fail to bridge gaps

REUTERS, Brussels

Britain and the European Union showed little sign of progress towards a deal on their post-Brexit relationship this week, failing to bridge differences over future competition and EU fishing access to British waters.

The EU's chief negotiator Michel Barnier told a news conference yesterday that Britain had set a tight deadline by ruling out an extension to the Brexit transition period beyond the end of 2020.

"The United Kingdom cannot impose this very short calendar for negotiations and at the same time not move, not progress on certain subjects that are important for the European Union," he said.

The transition period could be extended by a year or two, but Britain would have to request this by the end of June. There are only two further weeks

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STAY HOME, STAY WELL

Control your restlessness

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

In the days of coronavirus, people are stuck inside their homes for around a month and it has extended till May 5.

Mekhala Sarkar, associate professor of the psychiatry department at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), said many people have come out from the houses as they became restless.

"The problem is we have coped up with the fear. We have to revise the message for people," she said.

Mekhala said excessive fear is bad for health but in some cases fear is needed as it helps to find out the right path.

"As people became restless, government must come up with some serious message so that people can stay home," she suggested.

The psychiatrist said people need to be motivated that going outside of their houses is not only dangerous for themselves but also for their family members and their community.

"They should be connected with their family and friends over social media or phone so that they do not feel bored or lonely," she added.

Mekhala suggested that people should think that the problem is not only his or her lone problem but a global problem and the whole world is fighting against it.

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ROOPPUR PLANT Engineer dies as machine falls on him

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

An engineer at Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant died on Thursday night after being hit by a concrete mixing machine.

The victim is Abdul Mobin, 35, son of Keramat Ali, of Pabna Sadar upazila.

ABM Ruhul Kuddus, in-charge of the construction site office, said Mobin was severely injured as a part of the concrete mixing machine, also known as "Bomb Placer", accidentally fell on him around 4:00pm.

He was rushed to the medical unit of the power plant and then shifted to Pabna Medical College Hospital. As his condition deteriorated, he was then referred to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries, Ruhul said.

Bahauddin Faruki, officer-in-charge of Ishwardi Police Station, said an unnatural death case was filed in connection

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Chhatra League activists join hands with farmer Abu Mia, left, in harvesting paddy in Harikona haor of Sunamganj's Jagannathpur upazila. Leaders and activists of many political, social and student organisations have lend the farmers a hand to harvest paddy amid an acute shortage of farm labourers in haor areas of Sunamganj and Sylhet in recent weeks due to the Covid-19 shutdown. The photo was taken on Wednesday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

BORO HARVEST IN SYLHET People from all walks of life join farmers

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

People from all walks of life have come forward to help farmers harvest Boro paddy, the main crop in the haor region of Sylhet division.

It happens at a time when farmers are complaining of shortages of labourers due to the travel restrictions amid the nationwide shutdown enforced to fight the Covid-19 outbreak.

Now, Boro harvesting is progressing amid the coronavirus scare and threat of impending flash flood.

Teachers, students, political party activists, Village Defence Party members, transport workers, sandstone workers, shopkeepers, NGO workers, and other professionals joined in the paddy harvesting.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension in Sylhet, around 1.68 lakh people are now involved in harvesting Boro in the division. Of them, over 1 lakh are in Sunamganj alone.

Apart from volunteers, a good number of labourers from different districts are coming to the haor region under special arrangements.

A team of 42 labourers from Lalmonirhat was sent to the haor region on Thursday, and the district administration already prepared a list of 500 labourers and they would be sent there soon, said Abu Jafor, deputy commissioner of the district.

So far, around 6,000 labourers from different districts have gone there under special arrangements, said DAE officials.

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