



The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



COMMITTED TO
People's Right to Know

REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XIV NO. 343

DHAKA THURSDAY JANUARY 6, 2005

www.thedailystar.net

POUSH 23, 1411 BS

JILKAD 24, 1425 HJRI

16 PAGES PLUS RISING STARS PRICE: Tk 10.00

Biman plan for 2 more planes shot down

Cabinet body asks it to come up with restructuring plan first

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government yesterday rejected a proposal to purchase two planes and avail a host of facilities for Biman Bangladesh Airlines, saying it will freeze all investments until Biman comes up with a restructuring plan, meeting sources said.

At a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, policymakers took a swipe at Biman authorities for its poor performance.

They observed that Biman should be made efficient and commercially viable by reducing its excess manpower, stopping flights on loss-making routes and increasing profits on some routes teaming up with other leading airlines.

Chaired by Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, the meeting noted the 5,232-strong Biman has 14 aircraft, meaning there are 373 people for every aircraft, which is needless, meeting sources said.

Biman counts Tk 50 lakh in losses on average for operating each flight on Dhaka-New York route. In the last three years, Biman's loss on this route totalled Tk 144 crore.

Biman's service is poor; when people go to ticket counters, they are told that there are no tickets. Yet flights take off with half the seats empty, which is why Biman badly needs restructuring, the meeting observed.

It purchased two old aircraft in recent months despite media reports discouraging such procure-

ment. Both planes failed to perform in the first week of their operations. Biman has proposed a fresh to the economic affairs committee to buy an Airbus and a Boeing 777.

The proposal also sought that the government make it mandatory for public servants to travel only by Biman.

The government should give Biman a rebate of Tk 130 crore against its arrears for purchase of jet fuel, reduce the price of jet fuel, compensate Tk 21 crore loss incurred during hajj flights because of low ticket fare fixed by the government and reduce the arrears payment and installments with the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation down to Tk 5 crore from Tk 15 crore.

Biman claimed that it has made an operating profit of Tk 17.57 crore during 2003-04 fiscal year. But Saifur said, "Biman lacks efficiency. If it does not operate commercially, it will be very hard to keep it afloat. This is business, so if they cannot run it like a business should be run, they should close it down."

State Minister for Civil Aviation Mir Nasir Uddin explained Biman's ticket fiasco. "We took steps against non-sale of Biman tickets with lots of tickets remaining unsold. There were some improvements, but those steps could not be fully implemented."

"We will come up with a restructuring plan. But unless we have new aircraft, we will not have passenger growth," he maintained.

MISSING BUILDING PLANS Rajuk to take ACC help to probe corrupt staff

PINAKI ROY

The Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) is going to write to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to inquire and recommend action against three of its 'corrupt' authorised officers who either stole or did not maintain more than 200 files on building plans.

"It is under process. In a day or two we are going to send their files to the ACC requesting them to take necessary steps," said Md Azizul Haque, member (Administration and Land) of Rajuk. He added that the authorities are looking for 'redeem Rajuk's image'.

Sources at Rajuk, the city planners, said the authorities terminated the three officers -- ASM Asaduzzaman, ATM Quamruzzaman and Md Ziaul Haq -- around six months ago allegedly

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

ACC busy mending ties with govt

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is going to take a string of measures to thrash out differences and bickering with the government and correct some controversial decisions and steps that it took since coming into being about one and a half months back.

Sources said the commission members believe it is important to find out the officials of the now-defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac) who had influenced some decisions and steps the commission has taken ignoring the ACC Act.

A draft rule on screening officials and employees of Bac, that was sent for the president's approval may be sent again to him after necessary changes, sources said.

As part of the latest move to remove misunderstandings and disputes between the commission and the government, the ACC chairman and members had a meeting with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman at his residence last night.

Cabinet Secretary Saadat Hussain will meet with the ACC chairman and the members today to discuss the issues.

ACC Chairman Justice Sultan Hossain Khan yesterday told reporters, "There is a lack of co-ordination on the part of both sides. There will be co-ordination and the gap will eventually be closed down."

The meeting will discuss the discords that surfaced between the ACC and the government over appointment of ex-Bac director general (DG) Abdul Matin as the DG and secretary of the commission and assigning commission duties to all officials and employees of Bac considering them as ACC staff.

It will also discuss the contentious issue of the ACC's carrying on activities in line with the attorney general's interpretation of the ACC Act, asking 13 secretaries to provide information on the whereabouts of 1,028 motor vehicles without holding a commission meeting and

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

PROF YUNUS MURDER Hunger strike by university teachers today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than 10 thousand teachers of public universities in the country will go for a token hunger strike and abstention from work today to protest the killing of Rajshahi University (RU) teacher Prof M Yunus.

The Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers Association has taken up the programme demanding immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of the killers of Yunus.

In the capital, leaders of the federation will observe a token hunger strike from 10:00am to 1:00pm at the Central Shaheed Minar.

No classes will be held today at the universities but the examinations will be held as usual in the greater interest of the students, a press release of the federation said.

Prof Yunus, also president of RU Bangabandhu Parishad and senior vice-president of Bangladesh Economic Association, was stabbed to death by unidentified assailants near the campus on December 24.

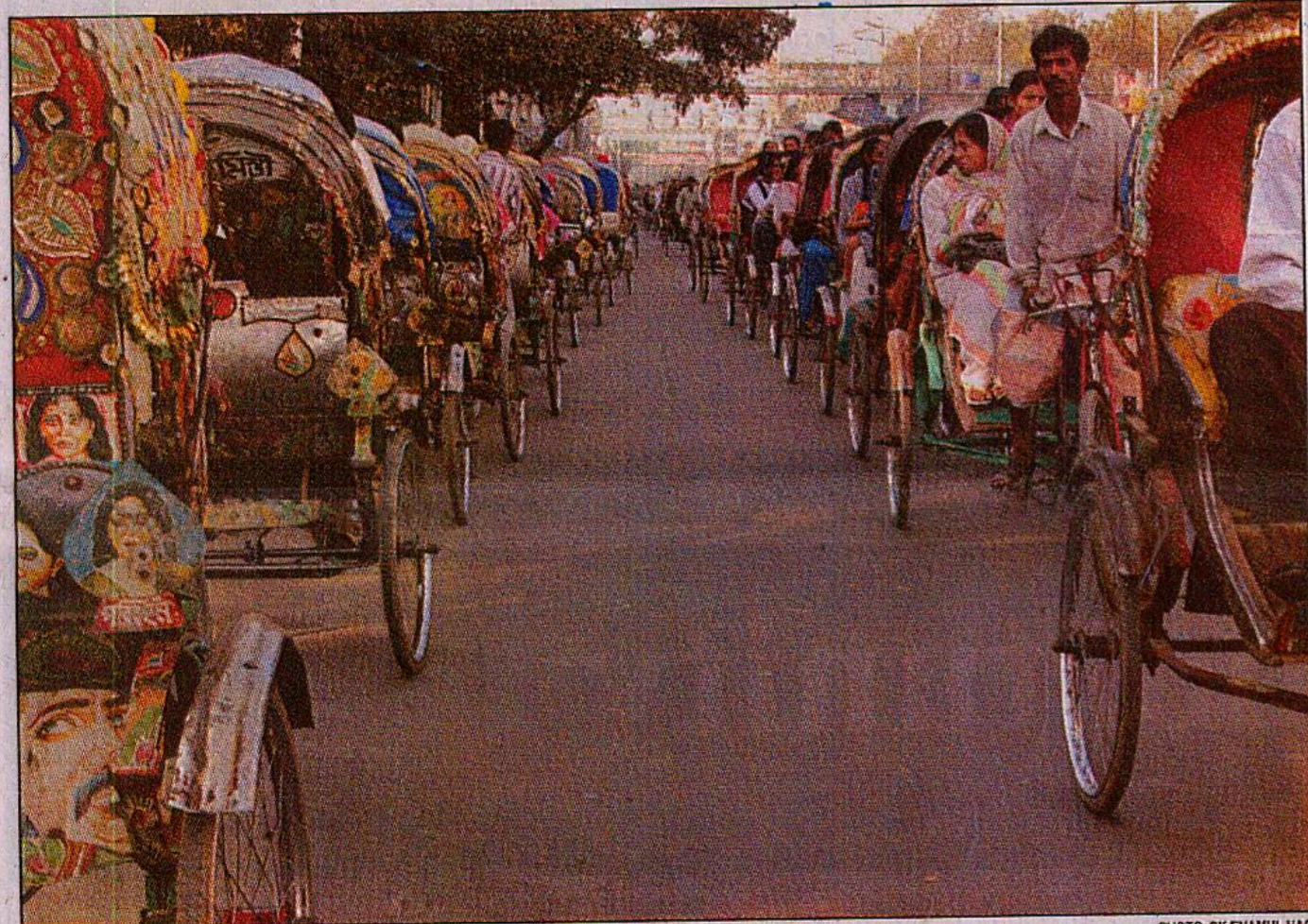


PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Chaos streamlined... Rickshaws ply in line without even overtaking, a rare behaviour for the three-wheelers, on the stretch from New Market to Science Laboratory because of better traffic management by the police department.

Cabinet body to help Petrobangla realise gas bill arrears

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs yesterday decided to look into and ensure payment of the Tk 697 crore gas bill arrears of Petrobangla with 30 government entities, including a number of ministries, and three autonomous institutions.

"It's the government's responsibility to pay up its dues and we'll do it," committee chair Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman told reporters following a committee meeting at the Cabinet Division.

"But utility service providers sometimes submit false, inflated bills to the government to fill up the blanks created by their own mismanagement. This is well known to hold true for electricity and telephone services," Saifur said.

The Power Development Board (PDB) tops the list of Petrobangla's defaulters with a debt of Tk 395 crore, followed by Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) which has Tk 174 crore in dues.

Among the defaulting ministries, SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

28pc Dhaka buildings vulnerable to tremor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"At least 28 percent buildings of Dhaka City would collapse in the event of a 7-magnitude earthquake, which would cause damages of about Tk 16,000 crore," Buet Prof Mehedi Ahmed Ansari said yesterday.

But 90 percent of the casualties in such a tremor can be avoided if the buildings are constructed in conformity with the Building Code, Ansari said at a lecture session on 'Tsunami Causes, Nature and Strategy for Mitigation and Adaptation'.

The Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) organised the event in its office in the city in collaboration with the

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Environment and Forest in the wake of the recent tsunami havoc in Asia and Africa.

Seismologists and geological experts at the session emphasised immediate pre-cautionary measures to minimise quake devastation in Bangladesh, which abounds in densely constructed urban centres.

Though the possibility of the country being devastated by a major tsunami is negligible, the fault lines in Dauki, Chittagong, Bogra, Sylhet, Dhubri and Tripura of India may generate earthquakes at any time, experts said.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Urgently Required

CONSULTANT (HOSPITAL)

Applications are invited from qualified and experienced candidates to work as full-time consultant for a proposed medium-size modern hospital. Civil construction of the hospital has already been started. The Consultant (Hospital) will be the overall in charge of the project with the responsibility of planning, guiding, and monitoring/supervising all the activities related to successful implementation of the project.

The candidates should have excellent academic background and possess higher degrees in medical science/engineering with proven experience of implementing similar projects. Special training on Project Management at home or abroad will be preferred.

Attractive salary and other facilities will be offered to the right person.

Please apply to the Advertiser, Box No. A - 03, C/O. The Daily Star, 19 Kawranbazar, Dhaka-1215 with complete C. V., two copies of recent passport size photographs, photocopies of all academic/experience certificates, expected salary etc. within January 15, 2005.

Two killed in 'crossfire' in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A leader of Awami Swachhchasebak League and an alleged criminal were killed in 'crossfire' during a shootout between a criminal gang and a joint team of anticrime forces Cobra and Cheetah in Gulshan of the capital early yesterday.

The victims are Shangkhar alias Kishore, 35, sports secretary of Gulshan thana unit of Swachhchasebak League, and Aslam alias Kashai Aslam.

Police said the members of Cobra and Cheetah arrested the two on Tuesday and took the arrestees to an empty plot at Rasulbagh under Gulshan Police Station early yesterday after they admitted that they had hidden firearms there.

"As the joint team reached the spot at about 3:30am, 10 to 12

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

FRESH & Happy New Year - 2005

Natural Mineral Water

FRESH

Let's Drink to Life

PH: 714306, 9565451, 9562780, Mob: 0172012156, 0173013157

On winning the toss you could choose to...

Bat or Bowl

Upper, Royal, DLET, RC

Freedom of choice