

Biman's VRS awardees seek reinstatement

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Voluntary retirement awardees of Biman Bangladesh Airlines yesterday urged the government to reinstate them claiming that they were showed the exit-door against their will.

"Many of our colleagues pass miserable lives due to this Voluntary Retirement Scheme. What had been done in the name of VRS is really inhuman," said KM Shah Alam, convener of a committee for reinstatement of the Biman staff victimised by VRS.

Alam, also president of Biman Sramik League, a labour front of ruling Awami League, made the statement at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity, in presence of Biman's former employees, axed at the time of the national carrier's being a public limited company to infuse dynamism into the loss-making airline.

Seven members of the reinstatement committee were present on the occasion.

Before the carrier turned into a PLC in July, the former corporation Biman moved to trim its staff to about 3400 from 4706 aiming to cut costs and make the carrier a healthy and profitable organisation.

It slashed 1862 employees through VRS. Following this retrenchment, the total number of employees stood at 2844.

"The scheme was implemented by forcing many of us to sign on printed forms. Many submitted their applications for VRS amid fear," said Alam, also a victim to the scheme.

"On the other hand, more than 1700 people were employed on contract and casual basis following the VRS," he said, describing the attempt as 'short-sighted, arbitrary and opaque.'

"If it is, what is the justification of VRS?" he questioned, figuring out the VRS awardees at 1862.

According to Alam, nearly 600 staff who were awarded VRS got contractual appointments later, while the rest were employed on casual basis to run activities of the 12-fleet carrier.

Alam also blamed the Biman's then management for disseminating misleading information. The labour leader claimed that the carrier's expenditure for salaries and allowances increased after the execution of VRS.

"Biman's expenses reached Tk 5.31 crore during the month before the implementation of VRS. But it almost doubled in February 2009. In April, Biman spent about Tk 17 crore," said Alam.

"We want to get our jobs back. It's painful to lose jobs and the way VRS was carried out is a crime against humanity," said SM Ikramullah, a former cabin crew of Biman.

VRS receiver employees also demanded punishment to those involved in the execution of the move. They also sought that the government implement the post-probe recommendations of the national coordination committee (task force) on serious crime, formed during the tenure of immediate past caretaker government.

Ziaul Haque takes over as SEC chief

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Ziaul Haque Khondker, immediate past managing director of Investment Corporation of Bangladesh (ICB), took over as chairman of Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) yesterday.

The government appointed him Sunday the capital market regulator's chief.

The SEC top post fell vacant when the contract of Faruq Ahmad Siddiqi, the immediate past chairman, expired on March 14.

A post-graduate in Economics from Dhaka University, he joined the ICB in 1977 as a research officer.

He joined the Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha as general manager in 1996.

He returned to the ICB in 1998. He has been appointed managing director of the ICB in 2000. In between 1998 and 2000, he worked for five months in the SEC on a special assignment.



Commerce Minister Faruk Khan attends a meeting with pulse traders to discuss the recent price situation and smooth supply of the commodity at the ministry in Dhaka yesterday.

Wall Street jumps

AFP, New York

Wall Street raced higher early Monday after strong gains in Asian markets as sentiment got a lift from an upbeat report on Chinese manufacturing that raised hopes for a global economic recovery.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average rallied 179.28 points (2.18 percent) to 8,391.69 at 1525 GMT, adding to gains of 1.68 percent last week and seven weekly increases in the past eight.

The tech-heavy Nasdaq added 28.12 points (1.64

percent) to 1,747.32 while the Standard & Poor's 500 index climbed 18.98 points (2.16 percent) to 896.50.

Analysts at Charles Schwab & Co. said the market action came after "a positive manufacturing report in China, which fueled a strong rally in Asia, is helping improve sentiment on the Street and further the argument that the worst of the global recession may be in the rearview mirror."

The CLSA China Purchasing Managers Index, or PMI, a closely watched

indicator in the world's third-largest economy, rose sharply to 50.1 in April from 44.8 the previous month. It was the first expansion in nine months.

Investors remained concerned about the so-called stress tests of US banks expected later in the week that could reveal which banks may need further shoring up of their capital base.

But Todd Salamone at Schaeffer's Investment Research said he sees a recovery period after a horrific bear market.

Telecom fair in June

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A five-day telecommunication fair is set to begin in Dhaka on June 8 to create awareness among users about the latest technology.

Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) and Bangladesh Mobile Phone Businessmen Association (BMBA) will jointly organise the third version of the Dhaka International Telecom Fair- 2009 at Bangladesh China Friendship Conference Centre.

Operators, including mobile and landline, importers of mobile set and accessories, mobile phone service providers and online banks will take part in the fair.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to inaugurate the fair, according to organisers.

"We aim to bring all telecom related services and stakeholders under a single roof, so that customers can get a clear idea of the latest technology," said Md Nizam Uddin Jitu, BMBA president, at a press conference yesterday at the Dhaka Reporters Unity.

There will be 52 stalls, 15 pavilions and 6 mega pavilions at the fair. Channel F2 Events, an event management company, will look after the overall management of the fair.

Golam Dastagir Gazi, a member of parliament, Syed Margub Morshed, former chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, and Abul Kashem Ahmed, first vice president of FBCCI, were present at the press conference.

Spain April car sales drop

AFP, Madrid

New car registrations in Spain fell 45.6 percent in April from the same time last year, the 12th straight monthly decline and, the sharpest drop ever recorded for that month, industry data showed Monday.

A total of 67,215 vehicles were registered during the month, down from 123,561 during the year earlier, Spanish car manufacturers' association ANEAC said.

During the first four months of the year new car registrations in Spain were down by 43.7 percent to 471,299 units when compared to the same period in 2008.

Spain is the only one of Europe's five main auto markets that has not offered state incentives to encourage car sales, the association said.

Dollar up

AFP, Singapore

The dollar rose against the yen in Asia but was down against most other currencies Monday as markets awaited the results of US bank "stress tests" and this week's European Central Bank meeting.

With Japanese markets closed from Monday to Wednesday due to a public holiday, the greenback climbed to 99.45 yen in afternoon trade from 99.08 late Friday in New York.

The yen has been slipping against the greenback as the latest gloomy consumer and unemployment data from Japan underlined the woes of the world's second largest economy.

The euro meanwhile climbed to 1.3314 dollars from 1.3265 and to 132.44 yen from 131.34.

Analysts said however the dollar and yen could gain some support, with the ECB widely expected to announce further interest rate cuts at the conclusion of its meeting on Thursday.

"Markets are expecting a lot from the ECB in the form of another 25 basis point rate cut to 1.0 percent and also non-standard measures to ease credit," DBS Bank said in a research note.

Govt plans to reopen Khulna Newsprint Mills

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government is assessing the feasibility of reopening Khulna Newsprint Mills and if we get an optimistic result, the study proves positive, said the industries minister yesterday.

"We have started a feasibility study to revive Khulna Newsprint Mills and if we get an optimistic result, the government would promptly undertake necessary measures to do so," said Dilip Barua.

"If we are able to run it profitably, it would tremendously help the country's publishing industry," he added.

The minister was addressing a meeting with the Bangladesh Publishers and Booksellers Association

at his ministry in Dhaka.

The decision to conduct the study came after the prime minister asked the industries minister in April to take immediate steps to reopen the Khulna Newsprint Mill.

"If the mill can be reopened, it would help meet local demand for newsprint and save huge foreign currencies that we spend on imports every year," said Barua.

He stressed timely publication of school textbooks, so that books reach out to students by January.

The minister also suggested the association organise more book fairs at all district and upazilas to increase the royalty for writers, strengthening the sector further.

Mohammad Abu Taher,

president of the Bangladesh Publishers and Booksellers Association, urged the government to withdraw duties on newsprint in the budget for fiscal year 2009-10 and sought initiatives to recognise book publication as an industry.

"We have to struggle a lot due to inadequate production of newsprint in the country. So if the government withdraws import duty on newsprint, it will help the sector," he said.

Taher also called for reduction in tariffs on white and offset paper imports to make books available at cheaper rates for students and general readers.

Kamrul Hasan Shayok, vice president of the association, and AFM Shah Alam, secretary general, were present at the meeting.

CNG conversion industry faces setback

UNB, Dhaka

Diesel-run vehicle owners seemed to be losing interest in converting engines into CNG (Compressed Natural Gas), which poses a major setback for some 138 conversion workshops in the country.

The Tk 2,000 crore industry is now running under-utilised with eventual threat of becoming sick. The petrol-run vehicle owners, however, still find converting engines to CNG cost effective.

"This is mainly due to the price cut of diesel in the domestic market, making CNG conversion unattractive mainly to owners of buses and trucks," said an industry insider.

Bangladesh CNG Filling Station and Conversion Workshop Association Executive Director MA Rois Siddique said their workshops did not convert even a single diesel-run vehicle in April.

He said the rate of conversion to CNG started declining gradually since the latest diesel price adjustment at Tk 44 per litre on January 12 from a range of monthly conversion rate between 900 and 1,000 diesel-run engines just before the price adjustment.

"Vehicle owners calculated that the cost recovery period extended after the reduction of diesel price," Rois Siddique said. Conversion costs range between Tk 300,000 and Tk 500,000 per vehicle depending on the capacity of vehicles and the number of cylinders owners like to install.

The vehicle owners found it cost effective to convert the vehicle engines -- be it diesel-run or petrol-run -- into CNG when the prices of the fuel oil skyrocketed keeping pace with the international price.

They also found the alternative fuel cost-effective even after doubling the CNG price to Tk 16.75 per cubic meter as the price of diesel

rose to Tk 55 per litre. But the vehicle owners no longer find it cost effective after two downward adjustments left the diesel price at Tk 44 per litre, Rois Siddique said.

He added that the CNG conversion would have been still attractive if the price of CNG adjusted downward in keeping with the diesel price.

"The price of CNG should be one-fourth of diesel price to keep the conversion cost-effective."

Recently, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources formed a committee to review the CNG price amid demand from the association to adjust the CNG price proportionately with the diesel price. The Committee started working on it, said a senior official.

Officials in the Titas Gas and Rupantarito Praktik Gas Company Limited, however, made it clear that there is no scope to reduce the price of CNG.

Join hands with govt to solve housing problem

Minister urges private entrepreneurs

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Private entrepreneurs should join hands with the government to solve the housing problem in the densely populated capital city, the information minister said on Sunday.

"The city is overcrowded with lots of people migrating here everyday in search of jobs. It creates a huge pressure on limited lands. So, the housing problem is increasingly becoming a burning issue, especially for the middle class," Abul Kalam Azad told the concluding function of the three-day Rupayan Housing Fair at a city hotel.

"Now, like elsewhere in the world, private entrepreneurs should join hands with the government to settle the issue," the minister said.

Sadat Hossain Salim, managing director of Rupayan Housing Estate Limited, said during the ceremony.

Town, the largest satellite town project at Bhuighar off Dhaka-Narayanganj link road, has 784 ready flats and targeted mainly the middle class people.

Criticising the unplanned urbanisation and industrialisation, Salim said, "The government should take up a long-term planning for solving Dhaka's housing problem."

"A special housing zone should be set up to manage the situation," he added.

Shafique Alam Mehedi, chairman of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, laid emphasis on addressing environmental concerns while going for any construction works.

Deen Mohammad, chief adviser of Rupayan Housing Estate Ltd, and Khaled Mohammad Jewel, general secretary of the Real Estate Housing Association of Bangladesh, were also present at the ceremony.



BAT official promoted

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Zakir Ibne Hai has been promoted to the position of head of Corporate and Regulatory Affairs of British American Tobacco (BAT) Bangladesh Company Ltd, said a statement.

Prior to this assignment, he was the regulatory affairs manager of the company.

Hai, an MBA from the Institute of Business Administration at Dhaka University, joined BAT Bangladesh in 2007. He also worked for subsidiaries of Reckitt Benckiser, Bayer and Telecom Malaysia in Bangladesh and India.

He has experiences in areas of communication, regulatory affairs, marketing, media and public relations.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

পরিবেশ অধিদপ্তর

পরিবেশ ভবন

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নং-পরিবেশ/সমস্যা(রচনা প্রতিঃ)-১৩ (৫ম)/২০০৯/১৩৬

তারিখঃ ১৬-০১-১৪১৬সন
২৯-০৪-২০০৯খ্রিঃ

রচনা প্রতিযোগিতা

বিশ্ব পরিবেশ দিবস ৫ জুন ২০০৯ উদযাপন উপলক্ষে শিক্ষার্থীদের মধ্যে পরিবেশ বিষয়ে সচেতনতা বৃদ্ধির উদ্দেশ্যে পরিবেশ অধিদপ্তর কর্তৃক বিভাগীয় পর্যায়ে রচনা প্রতিযোগিতার আয়োজন করা হয়েছে। প্রতিযোগিতায় অংশগ্রহণ সংক্রান্ত তথ্য নিম্নে সন্নিবেশিত হলো:

গ্রুপ	রচনার বিষয়	শব্দ সংখ্যা (অনধিক)
ক গ্রুপঃ ১ম থেকে ৫ম শ্রেণী	জলবায়ু পরিবর্তন মোকাবেলায়	৫০০
খ গ্রুপঃ ৬ষ্ঠ থেকে দশম শ্রেণী	তোমার পৃথিবী, তোমাকেই চায় (Your planet needs YOU!)	১০০০
গ গ্রুপঃ একাদশ থেকে স্নাতকোত্তর	Unite to combat climate change)	১৫০০

অগ্রহী ছাত্রছাত্রীদেরকে বাংলা/ইংরেজি ভাষায় উল্লিখিত বিষয়ে রচনা টাইপ করে অথবা স্বহস্তে লিখে ডাকযোগে অথবা সরাসরি নিজ নিজ বিভাগীয় কার্যালয়ে আগামী ২০ মে ২০০৯ তারিখের মধ্যে অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে প্রেরণ করতে হবে। নিম্নে বিভাগ ভিত্তিক রচনা প্রেরণের ঠিকানা প্রদত্ত হলো:

ক্রমিক নং	বিভাগের নাম	রচনা প্রেরণের ঠিকানা
১	ঢাকা বিভাগ	মোঃ ফেরদৌস আনোয়ার, সহকারী পরিচালক (কারিগরি) ও সদস্য সচিব, রচনা প্রতিযোগিতা বিষয়ক উপ-কমিটি, পরিবেশ অধিদপ্তর, পরিবেশ ভবন, কক্ষ নং-৫১৭(৫ম তলা), ই/১৬, আগারগাঁও, ঢাকা-১২০৭। (ই-মেইল fardoush@doe-bd.org)
২	চট্টগ্রাম বিভাগ	পরিচালক, পরিবেশ অধিদপ্তর, জাতির হোসাইন সড়ক, ফয়স লেক এলাকা, বুলশী, চট্টগ্রাম ৪২০২। ফোন ৬৫৯৩৭৯।
৩	খুলনা বিভাগ	পরিচালক, পরিবেশ অধিদপ্তর, বয়রা, খুলনা (কমিশনার বিল্ডিং এর সামনে)। ফোন ৮৬১৫০৭।
৪	রাজশাহী বিভাগ	পরিচালক, পরিবেশ অধিদপ্তর, নিশিন্দারা, বগুড়া। ফোন ৬০৮১০।
৫	বরিশাল বিভাগ	উপ-পরিচালক, পরিবেশ অধিদপ্তর, নাসরিন ভিলা, পুট-৩০৩, হোস্টিং-৯৯, ফকিরবাড়ি রোড, বরিশাল। ফোন ৬২৪৮২।
৬	সিলেট বিভাগ	উপ-পরিচালক, পরিবেশ অধিদপ্তর, বাড়ি নং-১৮, রোড নং-৩৭, ব্লক-সি, শাহজালাল উপ-শহর, সিলেট। ফোন ২৮৩০২৭৮।

প্রতিযোগিতার নাম, শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম ও ঠিকানা, শ্রেণী, পিতা/অভিভাবকের নাম ও যোগাযোগের ঠিকানা (টেলিফোন/মোবাইল/ই-মেইল, যদি থাকে) ইংরেজি ও বাংলায় আলাদা কাগজে লিপিবদ্ধ করে সঠিক পাঠাতে হবে। নামের উপর প্রতিযোগিতার গ্রুপ উল্লেখ করতে হবে। প্রতিটি গ্রুপের জন্য প্রথম, দ্বিতীয় ও তৃতীয় স্থান অর্জনকারীকে পুরস্কার ও সনদপত্র প্রদান করা হবে।

মোঃ ফেরদৌস আনোয়ার
সহকারী পরিচালক (কারিগরি)

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সদস্য সচিব
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মোবাইল: ০১৯১৬৩২৮০৯০

জিডি-২২২২



Md Abdur Rahman Sarker, managing director of National Bank Ltd, gives away certificates to the participants of General Banking, a training course for junior officers organised at the bank's training institute in Dhaka recently.