

International Business News

Singapore Airlines posts Q1 net profit

AFP, Singapore

Singapore Airlines (SIA) on Monday reported a first-quarter net profit of 253 million Singapore dollars (185.65 million US) as the travel industry continued to recover from the global economic slump.

The financial results for the April-June quarter marked a sharp turnaround for SIA from a year ago when it incurred a net loss of 307 million dollars as travel demand slumped because of the global downturn.

First quarter group revenues grew an annual 20.7 percent to 3.47 billion dollars, boosted by the recovery in passenger numbers and improved yields, SIA said in a statement.

Passengers carried by SIA during the first quarter increased 5.5 percent on-year to 4.0 million and the carrier, regarded as a bellwether for the industry, is optimistic the upward trend will continue.

"Advance bookings indicate that the year-on-year recovery in passenger carriage and yields evident in the quarter to June will hold up for the rest of 2010," SIA said in the statement.

SIA had been hit by a fall in travel and cargo demand resulting from a financial crisis and the global economic slump that started in 2008 and lasted well into 2009.



Japanese musician Ryuichi Sakamoto (left) and Audi Japan President Dominique Boesch pose during a talk show in Tokyo yesterday. Audi Japan announced their ecological carbon offset project "-50 tons of CO2" in conjunction with Sakamoto's Japanese public performances from November this year.

Iran investing \$46b in refineries

AFP, Tehran

Iran is investing \$46b in building new oil refineries and upgrading its existing facilities, Deputy Oil Minister Alireza Zeighami said in a report posted on the ministry's website.

The official said more than half of this investment, around \$26 billion, is solely for building new refineries by the end of the current development plan to 2014, the website shana.ir reported on Sunday.

Of the \$26 billion, about \$8.5 billion has already been disbursed, the report said.

Iran, the second largest oil exporter in OPEC, relies heavily on imports for petroleum products, especially gasoline due to inadequate refining capacity. It imports nearly 40 percent of its annual gasoline needs.

The United States and European Union are specifically targeting the oil sector in sanctions they are imposing on Iran, on top of measures imposed by the UN Security Council over its controversial nuclear programme.

On Monday, EU foreign ministers were meeting in Brussels to slap the tough sanctions on Iran's oil sector in a bid to coax Tehran back to nuclear negotiations.

Pearson says net profits triple in first half

AFP, London

British media group Pearson, publisher of the Financial Times newspaper and Penguin books, said on Monday that first-half net profits more than tripled on soaring education sales, and lifted its guidance.

Earnings after tax rocketed to 92 million pounds (110 million euros, 142 million dollars) in the six months to the end of June, compared with 28 million pounds in the same period of last year, the group said in a results statement.

Sales jumped nine percent to 2.342 billion pounds, added Pearson, which generates about 60 percent of revenues and earnings from its education division.

"The 2010 finish line isn't yet in sight, but this is as good a start to our year as I've seen," said Chief Executive Marjorie Scardino in the earnings release.

"That boosts our confidence in the full year, enabling us to brighten our outlook and raise our guidance.

"We've invested consistently in global and digital education and information and that's helping every part of Pearson grow strongly, even in uncertain markets."

Sony likely bounced to black in first quarter

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's Sony is likely to have swung back to the black in the first quarter with operating profit reaching 30 billion yen (342 million dollars) due to aggressive cost-cutting, a report said Monday.

That would compare with a 25.7-billion-yen loss in the same April-June period last year and represent the first profit in two quarters, the Nikkei business daily reported ahead of official results on Thursday.

Under chief executive and president Howard Stringer, the Japanese company has been streamlining operations and cutting costs to trim back the sprawling group, which was battered by the global downturn.

Plant consolidation and lay-offs saved the company more than 300 billion yen the previous fiscal year, making the company more resilient to blows such as the yen's recent rise against the euro, the Nikkei said.

Rebounding demand from China and other emerging companies helped lift sales of digital cameras, personal computers and video cameras, the report said.

COLUMN

When time stood still

SARWAR AHMED

The soft voice singing a soul-stirring Bangla song brought time to a standstill. It was past midnight as we sat around on the stairs leading down to the expansive water pool at Brac CDM, Savar. Dr Imran Rahman, province chancellor of ULAB and a singer, strummed on his guitar as Dr Ferhat Anwar's daughter Silma Tamanina, sang melodiously in the stillness of the night. A soft breeze occasionally caressed us in the moonlit night, which gave the picturesque surroundings a silver mantle in the darkness. The Bengali love for music kept us enthralled as we lived the moments, having suspended the reality of mundane living, time stood still. As she sang, her mother, Nazia Zabean, and Dr Haseena Khan of Dhaka University joined in. Their voices were blending in, adding a sweetness that made us wish the night would never end.

It was a welcome weekend break as we took time off from the hectic workdays of our corporate lives to participate as judges in Novartis' 2010 Biocamp. We had kicked off the event in the evening and were taking time off, calming our frayed nerves. That is inevitable living in the concrete jungle of Dhaka. As soon as we finished dinner, Imran set the stage singing nostalgic songs of yesteryears. Thereafter, as the participants of the Biocamp began their task of writing a business case, we sauntered to these stairs where the second round of songs began. The building's reflection on the dark water flickered a pastel sketch as tiny fish fingerlings make incessant ripples.

July 1990. Twenty years ago time had stood still for Dr Ferhat Anwar, a professor of Institute of Business Administration, Dhaka University, popularly known as Rahi Sir. Driving from Uttara to work at IBA in that early fateful morning, he had his father Lt Col Dr Bazlur Rahim, to drop off at the CMH, and his wife and toddler daughter who were to visit his mother in the city. It was drizzling and he was careful not to drive fast, especially as in those days. Road dividers did not exist. As he took the turn at what is today's Radisson Hotel, the last thing he saw was a couple of racing buses, neck to neck, rushing madly towards him from the Banani end. When he regained consciousness, he found himself in the CMH, bandaged, sedated and in pain, a world made eternally dark as he had lost both his eyesight.

Bleeding profusely, slumped uncon-



Ferhat Anwar says he is indeed a blessed man to be alive, to see the world again, and to have caring friends and a loving and affectionate family.

scious on the steering wheel, Rahi's face and forehead had smashed into the windshield with glass splinters imprinted on his face and eyes. (Good reason why you should always wear your safety belt, he quips now.) His injured father struggled out of the crushed car, waving for passing cars to stop. None did, until an army jeep pulled over. Managing to say, "CMH", his father collapsed. The jaws broke through the door to pull Rahi out and took the injured family to CMH. Giving a 10 percent chance of survival, an eight-hour emergency surgery managed to stem the blood flow, as the doctors extracted glass fragments and reconstructed Rahi's smashed face. As an afterthought, the doctors let his eyes remain for cosmetic reasons, knowing fully well that the eyes were beyond repair.

Three months later, his uncle got him admitted to a hospital in Glasgow, UK. The doctors extracted more glass pieces from

his eyes in another long hours of surgery. As he regained consciousness and lay frustrated and irritated, he heard a male voice goading him to get up and wash. Rahi's roommate was a local who had lost his eyes to cancer and was patiently awaiting his inevitable and pronounced death. Rahi remembers this as a turning point in his life as the voice kept telling him, you have got to live on your own, no one can help you. Self-pity will consume and cripple you, this man reminded him. This triggered Rahi's vision to fully live again, never to look back at these crippling life events. As the eye dressing was removed, he could just see a blurred colour. Over time, he could 'see' blurred objects.

Returning back to Dhaka, he rejoined IBA to find out that there was talk of promotion to be an assistant professor. What was the unkindest cut of all was overhearing a colleague who was arguing with the board why

Rahi should be considered at all for promotion, as he was blind, and a blind man was useless anyway. This further strengthened his determination to prove his mettle and that being blind was not a demerit in the pursuit of a career. Rahi had done his master's in biochemistry in 1981. Thereafter, he had joined Brac and was posted in Savar when he decided to complete his evening MBA from IBA. Six years in Brac and having successfully completed his MBA, he joined IBA in 1987.

Defying all odds, he continued to teach at IBA with tenacity. A friend called him up from Japan in 1993 asking Rahi to send in his papers, which were reviewed by an eye surgeon. Friends arranged his family's tickets as they took off for Japan wondering if this visit to the east will bring good news. His persevering wife and daughter took care of him as he recovered from another eight-hour surgery. As the bandage unfolded, his right eye could see 30 percent to 40 percent, the left still dark. With this vision, Rahi decided in 1994 to enrol on a PhD program, a year of which he had to stay in Canada, alone. He completed his year with a GPA of 4 of 4 and a gruelling 18 hours per day work-study load and eventually passed out with his doctorate degree.

2005. A colleague collected his medical file and sent it over to Singapore. Back came the reply, we can try. Another surgery. This time around, the first sight he got was of his mother who had accompanied him. With 90 percent vision of his left eye restored, he cried to see the beauty of his beloved mother with such clarity after all these years. His right eye has recovered 30 percent vision.

Reflecting on life, Rahi says he is indeed a blessed man to be alive, to see the world again, and to have caring friends and a loving and affectionate family. With a smile on his face, he says the event had actually benefitted him. He has been pushed to the limit of endurance and has come out much stronger as his quality of thinking has taken a great leap forward, adding on to academic excellence. It is our willingness to shape and live our lives as we pass through time, either to have lived with bliss or in despair. The choice is yours.

The writer is the managing director of Syngenta Bangladesh Ltd.

ANALYSIS



Robert Dudley



Tony Hayward

Can new boss save BP?

REUTERS, London

Robert Dudley, who is expected to be named BP's next CEO in the coming 24 hours, must move quickly to restore the oil giant's battered image in its most important market, improve safety and make BP a leaner company.

BP's board was expected to discuss at a Monday meeting a plan for Tony Hayward to step down as Chief Executive following criticism of his handling of the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, and be replaced by Dudley, who is heading the spill response effort.

Investors hope Dudley will help repair BP's image in the US, which has been damaged by a clumsy public relations strategy and a series of gaffes by Hayward. "As an American he (Dudley) may well be more acceptable to the US political machine than the other alternatives for the role, which could serve to better protect value in the US for BP long term," said Jason Kenney, oil analyst at ING in Edinburgh.

The US is home to 40 percent of

BP's assets and much of its growth but the public and political anger over the oil spill has led to fears BP may no longer be able to operate effectively in the US.

Dudley benefits from experience of navigating fractious disputes, having led BP's Russian joint venture, TNK-BP, through a dispute between BP and its oligarchs partners over control of the company.

He will also need to improve BP's safety record to recover the respect of US lawmakers.

This could require a change to BP's buccaneering approach, where division managers have had greater freedom than their peers in other big oil companies and top management has been willing to take greater commercial risks.

"A total change in the culture of this company is necessary," Democratic Representative Ed Markey, chairman of the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, said on CBS's "The Early Show."

In the past five years, BP has endured three of the industry's most expensive and reputationally damaging safety and environmental lapses.

An explosion of a Texas refinery in 2005 killed 15 workers and cost the company billions, while an oil spill in Alaska in 2006 led to millions of dollars of fines and helped cement BP's reputation in the US as a reckless operator.

Regulators blamed both incidents on cost-cutting under Hayward's predecessor John Browne.

Investors, once charmed by BP cost cutting, may now be more focused on a safer approach too from the group that pumped more oil and gas than any other non-state controlled oil concern last year.

"The company's strategy will need to be fundamentally changed in order to rebuild future confidence in the company. Clearly, safety will need to become the centrepiece," said Dougie Youngson, oil analyst at Arbutnot.

Investors and analysts also predict strategic changes.

Management tips

Ways to manage clashing leadership. *If everyone had the same management style as you, life at work would be easier, wouldn't it? Not necessarily. While managing the tension can be challenging, working with someone who has a different approach than you can often yield innovation and creativity. Here are three ways to make the most of differing styles:*

1. Unpeel the onion. On the surface, you may seem to have little in common with your coworker. But if you look deeper, you are likely to see shared values or a mutual goal. Focus on what you have in common, not on what you don't.
2. Manage your expectations. Recognize that you and your coworker are going to have different expectations about how things should be done. Communicate about these disparities and be open to doing something another way.
3. Push for innovation. The true value of diversity is a richer end product. Use your relationship to find innovation and benefit in the work you do together.

Tips for short-term career goals. *Development efforts often focus on how you can achieve your career goals over the long term. Short-term successes, however, are critical to making your next move and preparing for those long-term aspirations. Here are three immediate ways to build your career options:*

1. Play to your strengths. Do more of what you do best. Early in a career, it makes sense to try a bit of everything and push to improve in areas of weakness, but at a certain point, it is better to focus on your strengths.
2. Reinforce your "brand". Choose activities outside work that develop the image you want to convey. For example, volunteer for the school building committee if you're good at managing projects. Gain broader experience and conversational ways to reinforce your capabilities at work.
3. Create the context for success. Surround yourself with people you need to do your work well. People have to recognise common values and goals before they're likely to share what they know, so invest in these relationships.

How to craft the job you want. *If your current job isn't keeping you engaged and motivated, it may be in your power to change it.*

1. Begin by identifying your motives, strengths, and passions to help you better understand which aspects of your job will keep you engaged and inspire higher performance. Then, create a diagram of your current job including your job tasks, noting which you do most often. Next, create a diagram of your preferred job indicating which things you want to do more or less of and which tasks you want to add.
2. This chart can help you articulate what you want to do differently. Be sure to engage your supervisor in this process and assure her that you won't let your current tasks slide, and also that any new tasks you propose are central to the company.

Star Business has pieced together details from Reuters