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Biman's risky NY venture

Plans to resume flight despite fear of losses

SOHEL PARVEZ

Biman is likely to resume its New York flight apparently to meet the government pledge despite fears of losses again due to tough competition on the transatlantic routes, insiders say.

Though the airliner carried a relatively good number of passengers last time, it counted between Tk 35-40 lakh loss on each flight mainly because of using fuel-guzzling ageing DC-10 aircraft.

Biman in August 2006 shut its flights to New York along with Brussels, Paris, Frankfurt, Mumbai, Narita and Yangon in the wake of aircraft shortage and a record loss of Tk 454 crore in 2005-06 fiscal year.

The state-owned carrier now says it wants to use a hired Boeing 777-200ER aircraft to carry passengers on Dhaka-Manchester-New York route twice a week.

Officials say the Boeing 777-200 ER aircraft has relatively high-fuel efficiency and may help reduce fuel costs.

But chances of losses are still there, they add.

"We foresee a tough competition and intense fare war as almost all the globally known airlines operate on transatlantic routes. So there is a chance of losses, though we'll use fuel efficient aircraft," Jamal Uddin Ahmed, chairman of the Biman Board of Directors, told The Daily Star over the phone.

The only hope for Biman is the movement of non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs).

The state-owned airliner fears losses by flying to New York at a time when it tries to remain in the black by shaking off the past marked by losses. After posting losses in three consecutive years, the airline recorded a profit of Tk 5.91 crore in 2007-08 FY.

Its net profit shot up to Tk 15.58 crore in 2008-09, according to Bangladesh Economic Review.

Insiders say the airliner plans to reopen flights on loss-incurring Dhaka-New York route in line with the promise of the current government to NRBs, who had been demanding air link between the two cities.

Early this week, Prime Minister Sheikh



Garbage, weeds and water hyacinth in Gulshan Lake behind the Brac building testify that the authorities concerned do not clean the lake at regular interval. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Local govt bodies limp

Constitutional obligation to promote the system ignored; people's participation in all administrative tiers remains a far cry

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Despite constitutional backing, local government bodies have made little progress in around four decades since independence.

While political governments ignored the constitutional obligation to promote local governance, military rulers abused the system to gain power base at the grassroots level.

And all these years, the bureaucracy has been controlling almost everything regarding management of local affairs.

The present state of local government

LOCAL GOVT SYSTEM IN DISARRAY

institutions shows how the country has failed to be a democratic state as espoused in the original constitution, which took effect on December 16, 1972.

One of the fundamental principles of state policy in 1972's constitution said Bangladesh shall be a democracy with people participating in administration at all levels through elected representatives.

How to implement that principle was

outlined in articles 59 and 60.

But in 1975, the fourth amendment to the constitution introduced one-party rule under Baksal (Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League) and deleted the provisions on local government.

It also had the traditional local government system supplanted by party machinery.

As per the amended charter, the government led by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman formed district administrative councils with representatives from Baksal and front organisations.

Ctg EPZ 4th in global ranking

BSS, Dhaka

The UK-based Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) magazine ranks Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) fourth in best economic potential category and third in the best cost-competitiveness category.

The FDI magazine carried out a survey among the world's 700 economic zones this year and ranked CEPZ as one of the best EPZs.

"FDI magazine has recognised our efforts in only one-and-a-half years of the present

BNP softens stance on anti-govt protests

Launches two-month campaign

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

In an apparent retreat from its earlier plans to launch a tough anti-government movement, BNP will campaign to mobilise public opinion against the Hasina administration this month and in November.

The two-month campaign will be followed by a long march, the date of which has yet to be set.

BNP central leaders will visit districts and upazilas this month to drum up support for the party's stance on different issues. Besides, party chairperson Khaleda Zia will address rallies in at least 21 districts next month.

While addressing the rallies, Khaleda will focus on anti-Indian issues including agree-

ments signed with that country, said BNP insiders.

The leader of the opposition had earlier said she would announce a tough anti-government movement after Eid-ul-Fitr.

Talking to The Daily Star recently, some BNP leaders said the high command has decided to observe public reactions to the government performances before going for an all-out movement.

Contacted, BNP standing committee member Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman said they want to strengthen the organisation before launching a movement.

"The chairperson will visit many districts to address public meetings. She will also sit with



An elderly tailor of Moghbazar is trying to do his job in the light of a lantern as power cuts continue to hit small businesses hard despite government measures to boost power generation. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Fire at city high-rise

Scores trapped for over an hour

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A fire at a multi-storey commercial building in Sadarghat in Dhaka trapped around 200 people in that building and its neighbouring structure for over an hour last night.

None was hurt.

The fire originated from a faulty electric switchboard on the sixth floor of the 11-storey East Bengal Institution Supermarket and Commercial Building around 7:30pm, fire-brigade sources suspected. Smoke engulfed neighbouring 13-storey Sultana New Market as well.

Eight fire engines rushed to douse the flames and succeeded after an hour. Fire fighters rescued the people

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



মরহম হাজী মোঃ দুদ মিয়া

আমরা শোকাহত

India calm after Ayodhya verdict

AP, Lucknow

Schools, shops and businesses reopened yesterday as fears of violence ebbed in northern India following a court order to divide a disputed holy site between the Hindu and Muslim communities.

Thousands of government forces remained in the streets and on high alert, but the decision Thursday offered at least a reprieve in a battle over the site that has sparked deadly rioting in the past.

With both Muslim and Hindu lawyers vowing to appeal to the Supreme Court, public reaction to the verdict was restrained.

"The law and situation throughout the country has been extremely peaceful," India's Home Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram said. "There have been no incidents reported to us."

As the day broke, hundreds of devotees prayed at a makeshift Hindu temple at the disputed site in the town of Ayodhya.

OLD DHAKA CHEMICAL STORAGE Taskforce starts drive tomorrow

RAKIB AHAMMED

A government taskforce is set to launch drive tomorrow against illegal storage of combustible chemicals at Old Dhaka warehouses as the deadline for shifting those expired on Thursday.

"We will begin the drive from the next working day (Sunday)," said Industries Minister Dilip Barua.

On the first day after expiry of time limit, shops and warehouses of flammable chemicals remained closed due to weekly holiday yesterday.

Talking to this correspondent, locals said they have not seen

ফারইষ্ট ইসলামী লাইফ ইন্স্যুরেন্স কোম্পানী লিমিটেডের পলিসি এন্ড ক্রেইমস্ সাব-কমিটির চেয়ারম্যান বিশিষ্ট শিল্পপতি আলহাজ্ব মোঃ হেলাল মিয়া'র পিতা হাজী মোঃ দুদ মিয়া'র মৃত্যুতে কোম্পানী'র পরিচালকমন্ডলী ও কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীবৃন্দসহ ফারইষ্ট পরিবারের সকলে গভীর শোক প্রকাশ ও সমবেদনা জ্ঞাপন এবং তার রুহের মাগফেরাত কামনা করছি।

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Did you know...
342 children under five die from diarrhoeal diseases in Bangladesh everyday ?

Source: WaterAid America