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Biman grounded

Pilots swing into strike after 4 'suspended'; hajj flights to continue

RASHIDUL HASAN and SOHEL PARVEZ

Biman Bangladesh Airlines last night "suspended" four pilots, prompting a pilots' strike from 9:00pm that might see most of its aircraft grounded for an indefinite period.

Hajj flights will, however, remain out of the purview of the strike, Bangladesh Airline Pilots' Association (Bapa) sources said.

Of the 115 Biman pilots, 102 decided not to operate any flights from 9:00pm yesterday, Bapa member Captain Maqsood, who is among those suspended, told this correspondent at 12:30am today.

He and the other three received suspension letters around 8:00pm, added Maqsood.

Earlier on October 21, Bapa threatened that the pilots will stop flying extra hours unless the Biman authorities withdrew their decision raising the retirement age but curtailing some benefits.

The pilots' strike is likely to disrupt up to 15 international flights. These include Dhaka-Jeddah, Dhaka-Riyadh, Dhaka-Dubai-London,

Sylhet-Kathmandu-Bahrain, Dhaka-Kuwait, Chittagong-Musket and Dhaka-Singapore flights.

The domestic flights that might be affected are Dhaka-Sylhet and Dhaka-Kolkata-Kathmandu, Biman sources said.

Several thousand local and foreign passengers--both incoming and outgoing--will face sufferings if the national flag carrier does not make alternative arrangements for them.

On October 21, Bapa General Secretary Captain MA Basit Mahtab said they won't fly extra hours from October 22 unless their demands are met.

Biman Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Air Commodore (retd) Muhammad Zakiul Islam could not be contacted over the phone till 12:45am today despite repeated attempts.

Queried about suspension of pilots, Naseer Uddin Ahmed, director of flight operations, said four pilots have been asked not to operate Biman flights temporarily on grounds of passengers' safety.

Reactions mixed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition BNP yesterday observed that level of corruption in the country reached its peak due to the government's poor policy and politicisation in all sectors.

"Ruling party's corruption, partisan appointment and tender manipulation are the main reasons for surge in corruption," senior joint secretary general of BNP Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir told The Daily Star in his reaction on Transparency International's (TI) Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of 2010.

Alamgir, also a former state minister, alleged the government is enacting laws to create scope for corruption in power sector.

Opposing BNP's view, Commerce Minister Lt Col (retd) Faruk Khan said the

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Graft level stays same

Bangladesh ranked 12th from bottom in TI's corruption index as other South Asian countries tackle it well

Year	Rank (from bottom)
2005	1
2006	3
2007	7
2008	10
2009	13
2010	12

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh remains static in terms of curbing corruption, according to Transparency International's annual corruption perceptions index (CPI) released yesterday.

On a scale of 1 to 10, the country has scored 2.4, the same as it did last year.

It, however, has moved up one place to 12th in the rankings from bottom. It finished 13th last year.

This year's TI index ranks Bangladesh 134th out of 178 nations, while last year's placed it at 139th among 180.

Denmark, New Zealand and Singapore have scored the highest 9.3 to jointly top the 2010 list of least corrupt.

Somalia has scored 1.1 to be at the bottom of the roll, which reflects the perceived perceptions of how corrupt a country is.

Myanmar and Afghanistan have been judged second-worst and Iraq third.

WHAT TO DO

- Fulfilling AL's election pledges
- Strengthening parliament and ACC
- Enforcing Right to Information Act
- Having high-ups disclose their assets
- Implementing UNCAC commitments
- Ensuring transparency in public procurement

Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International, Bangladesh (TIB), said, "Ranking is not much important in that it may change in relation to performance of the other countries. What is important is the score."

"We thought we would score higher as the ruling Awami League had some strong electoral pledges with regard to fight against corruption," he added.

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PROTHOM ALO CASE Press Council serves notices on 2 dailies

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Press Council has asked the editors and publishers of the Kaler Kantha and Bangladesh Protidin to appear before its Judicial Committee on November 14 at 11:00 am in connection with two cases filed against them.

Editor and publisher of the Prothom Alo Matiu Rahman filed the cases on October 21 for publishing false and defamatory news linking him with the August 21 grenade attacks in 2004.

The council served notices on the editors and publishers of the two dailies on October 24 also asking them not to publish any such report till disposal of the cases.

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RUPGANJ FAMILIES YET TO FIND MISSING MEN

Wait in tears prolongs

NAJMUL ALAM NOBIN

Kohinoor Begum didn't speak a word for the last four days. She has also refused to take any food since her husband went missing in Rupganj violence on Saturday.

No one could say for sure what

happened to her husband Abdul Aleem Masud, a resident of Baraisoni village and owner of a tea-stall at Ichhapur Bazar.

Visiting Masud's residence yesterday, this correspondent found Kohinoor unconscious and her sister and brother trying to bring her back

to consciousness repeatedly saying, "Your husband will come back."

She was given several packs of intravenous saline. Mrittika, Masud's nine-year-old daughter, was weeping in the yard. "Please give me my father back."

Three out of four missing persons,

about whom The Daily Star has reported, are still out of trace.

Zumman Ali, one of the four, was later tracked down. He is now under treatment at Combined Military Hospital in the capital.

Zumman was picked up by the

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Nine-year-old Mrittika, whose father Abdul Aleem Masud went missing in Saturday's Rupganj violence, weeps almost unceasingly while her mother Kohinoor, right, faints frequently at their Baraisoni village home yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Dhaka upbeat about deals with Delhi

Faruk hopes for no delay in implementation; Manmohan may come in January

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commerce Minister Lt Col (retd) Faruk Khan yesterday said he is upbeat about the deals signed with India and hoped that the neighbour country would implement the agreements without delay.

He was briefing the media at commerce ministry on the outcome of his three-day visit to India that concluded Sunday.

The minister said Bangladesh and India came up with some major developments such as establishment of border haats [commodity markets], agreement on movement of trucks between the countries, import of 3 lakh metric tonnes of par-boiled rice and 2 lakh metric tonnes of wheat from India and ensuring cotton-import quota for Bangladesh.

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Tsunami strikes Indonesia again

113 killed, hundreds missing

AP, Indonesia

Rescuers battled rough seas yesterday to reach remote Indonesian islands pounded by a 10-foot (three-metre) tsunami that swept away homes, killing at least 113 people.

Scores more were missing and information was only beginning to trickle in from the sparsely populated surfing destination, so casualties were expected to rise.

With few able to get to the islands to help with searches, fishermen were left to find the dead and look for the living.

Corpses were strewn about since there were not enough people to dig graves, according to the Mentawai district chief,

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