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Biman travellers left in the lurch

Five flights delayed, over 46 pilots claimed to be sick; striking pilots given 48 hours to join work or face consequences

RASHIDUL HASAN and SOHEL PARVEZ

The Biman pilots' strike has left hundreds of passengers home and abroad in the lurch as flight delays have been ranging between 10 and 27 hours.

There is still no light at the end of the tunnel as the pilots and the management of Biman Bangladesh Airlines stand their ground. The management even decided to go tough on pilots and gave a 48-hour ultimatum to its pilots to rejoin work.

Five flights were delayed between 10 and 27 hours yesterday after over 46 pilots of the national flag carrier have claimed to be sick since Tuesday. They are protesting against the withdrawal of four Biman cockpit crew from flight duty.

Haji flights, however, remained out of the purview of the strike.

More than 500 passengers, including Bangladeshi migrant workers, had to face the delays in Dhaka yesterday. Some migrant workers even resorted to demonstrations at Shahjalal International Airport fearing they would lose their overseas jobs due to the delays.

"I am scared, I may lose my job if I fail to reach Kuwait in time," said a migrant worker declining to publish his name.

Biman passengers who were supposed to be on their way to Kuala Lumpur and Muscat yesterday would have to wait till 10:00pm today for the Kuala Lumpur flight and 1:00pm for the Muscat flight.

Biman passengers heading to London and Kolkata also had to wait at the airport for hours yesterday.

The stand off between the pilots and Biman management has been continuing

for the last six days with the passengers having to bear the brunt.

The pilots and the management are in a feud over benefits for pilots aged between 57 and 62 years. The pilots say Biman extended their working age but took away a lot of benefits.

The matter is pending with a court. Biman said it is not interested in going for a settlement with its crew.

On the other hand, cockpit crew said they would continue the strike and would not sit at the negotiation table unless the management cancels its recent duty-suspension orders against four pilots and show-cause notices issued to some others.

With the government staying quiet about the issue, Biman board of directors sat for an emergency meeting yesterday

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Brokers blamed

STAR REPORT

Awami League lawmaker from Rupganj Gazi Golam Dastagir and former army chief Maj Gen (ret'd) KM Shafiqullah yesterday put the blame of Rupganj violence on brokers, who were selling land to the army.

Shafiqullah said the brokers wanted to make the sale quickly so that they could get more benefit, but it made the people scared.

"When I heard the brokers are taking huge sum of money, I initiated to solve the problem. When the issue was settled after holding meetings the brokers and housing companies took the opportunity because they did not want that the dispute to be resolved," said Shafiqullah, also a former lawmaker.

Lawmaker Golam Dastagir said there is no problem if army wants to buy land, but it's the brokers who created the problem.

Normally is gradually being restored in Rupganj

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

ARMY HOUSING SCHEME Green light from PM

Top officials advised to reduce Rupganj project size significantly; more projects mulled in other locations

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK and SHAKHAWAT LITON

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has asked army officials to go ahead with their self-financed housing project in Rupganj after ensuring that the locals do not feel aggrieved, said military sources.

She had a talk about the issue with the army chief after Saturday's clashes between villagers and law enforcers over "forced purchase of land" for the housing scheme in Rupganj of Narayanganj.

Then on Tuesday, the prime minister, who also holds the defence portfolio, directed senior officials to continue the project but on a lesser scale.

She also asked them to be careful not to violate any laws while implementing the project.

The proposed development in Rupganj is part of a long-term mega project titled "Self-Financed Housing Scheme for the Army".

It is the first in a series of residential neighbourhoods the army plans to develop across the country for its officers and other staff.

Similar schemes might be implemented in

Barisal, Keraniganj and Savar, and they might take around 20 years to be completed, sources in the army said.

Around 1,400 bighas of land was already purchased for the project in Rupganj before Saturday's violence.

In the wake of the clashes, army officials have temporarily stopped purchasing land there. Their original target was to buy around 12,000 bighas.

The Rupganj incident sent the army authorities trying to figure out what went wrong. After much deliberation, they identified mismanagement as one of the reasons for the mess-up. They also concluded they should have tried the civilian way to buy civilian lands.

The high-ups also reviewed the ambitious housing project, and are now weighing up new strategies to implement it.

"The project might be split into several parts. Besides Rupganj, some other sites on the outskirts of the capital might be included in it. A decision in this regard is likely to come soon," said an officer.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



This newly built three-storey building in a jheel at Norda, Dakhinkhan collapsed on a tin-roof house Tuesday night.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

BUILDING ON JHEEL Close shave for tenants

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mizanur Rahman has just finished constructing his three-storey building in a jheel (a long pool of water) at Norda in the capital's Dakhinkhan area. He had also rented it out to tenants who were supposed to move in from Monday next.

The building toppled on a tin-shed house at the edge of the jheel Tuesday night. However, no one has been reported injured or missing.

The residents of the tin-shed house, Jyotsna Begum and her two daughters, were miraculously saved as they were all in a room, which did not crumble under the collapsed building.

The mother and daughters moved to a new house, as their former one was severely damaged and no longer suitable for living.

During a spot visit, it was seen that the building lacked proper foundation and the site is three feet under water. Mizanur had erected the structure on 18 six-foot-long pillars each of which stood on a four square feet of concrete plates.

Locals said they warned Mizanur not to construct a building on such pillars.

Some more one-storey houses have been built there filling up a portion of the jheel while many other plots are there demarcated with concrete poles.

When contacted over the phone and asked about the Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha permission for the structure, Mizanur switched off his cellphone.

Fire fighters, police and people from Dhaka Electric Supply Authority rushed to the spot around 9:00 that night. They, however, did not move the rubble, as there were no casualty or missing people.

Power supply in the area had to be cut off for the night since the building collapsed snapping electric cables.

On June 1 this year, 25 people were killed and many others injured as a five-storey tin-made structure collapsed on nearby tin-shed houses in the capital's Begunbari area.

PROSPERITY SCORE Bangladesh slips to 96th position

MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh has slipped nine places to 96th on a list of the world's most successful countries, mainly due to lower performances in education, personal freedom, health, and safety and security.

The country stood 87th in the 2009 ranking of Prosperity Index, a survey

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Star news on Nokia

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Daily Star yesterday launched a mobile news application -- The Daily Star Widget -- in partnership with handset maker Nokia, the first of its kind in the Southeast and Asia Pacific region.

Thanks to the locally developed application, Nokia users now can access any news update from The Daily Star.

MORE IN STAR BUSINESS

Tougher law soon Vows PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government would enact tougher law to prevent stalking, a malady that causes unpleasant incidents in the society.

"None will be spared, we will enact tougher law to stop this menace," she told the Bangladesh Freedom Fighters Central Command Council District and Upazila Command at the Army Stadium in the city.

Referring to the tragic

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Bike-riding stalker kills a mother



The mother (middle) of these four daughters paid dearly with her life for protesting stalking.

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A motorbike-riding stalker ran over and killed a mother for protesting his harassing her two daughters in Madhukhali upazila here on Tuesday.

Deceased Chanpa Rani Bhowmik, 45, an employee of Faridpur Sugar Mill and wife of Swapan Biswas, was run over by Rony Saha, son of Ratan Saha of the upazila, police and relatives of the victim said.

Chanpa's killing came just three days after the sad demise

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

PRESS COUNCIL VERDICT Test recommended for aspiring journos

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Press Council has recommended arranging an entrance examination for those willing to take up journalism as a profession.

The council made the observation in the verdict of a case against a weekly newspaper, said a handout of the Press Information Department yesterday.

It is time to prevent anyone from taking up journalism as a profession without obtaining a certificate similar to that issued by the Bar Council or Medical and Dental councils, the

Press Council observed.

The code of conduct set by the Press Council for journalists is not enough, it said.

Md Motiur Rahman, joint commissioner of the Customs Department, filed a case against Sheersha Kagoj, a Dhaka-based weekly, for publishing a series of reports labelling him as "corrupt".

He also alleged that the newspaper did not publish his rejoinders correctly.

The newspaper however claimed before the Press Council that the news reports were based on facts.

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গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার কর্তৃক অনুমোদিত

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'মার্চেন্ট মেরিন' এ যোগ দিন

সমুদ্রে আন্তর্জাতিক পেশা ১ম ব্যাচ ক্যাডেট ভর্তি বিজ্ঞপ্তি-২০১০ * মেরিন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং * নটিক্যাল সাইন্স

৭ দিনই বেলা!

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ভর্তির জন্য প্রার্থীদের নিখারিত যোগাযোগসমূহ: (ক) বয়স: ১০ সপ্তেম্বর ২০১০ তারিখে সর্বোচ্চ ২৫ বছর। (খ) শিক্ষাপত্র: যোগ্যতা: গণিত ও পদার্থবিজ্ঞানসহ মাধ্যমিক/সমমান এবং গণিত ও পদার্থবিজ্ঞানসহ উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক/সমমান উভয় পরীক্ষার ন্যূনতম ভাগি ২.৫০। (গ) শারীরিক যোগ্যতা: উন্নত শারীরিক পদম ও সুস্থতা। (ঘ) নটিক্যাল: ৬/৬ এবং ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং: ৬/১২, বাতনিক ক্লাসের ভিলন।

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