

8 STATE-RUN BANKS

Recruitment tests cancelled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the wake of protests from the candidates of eight state-run banks, Bankers' Selection Committee (BSC) yesterday cancelled Friday's recruitment test held amid mismanagement and irregularities.

During an emergency meeting yesterday morning, BSC formed a five-member committee headed by Bangladesh Bank (BB) Executive Director Ahmed Jamal to investigate the mismanagement during the tests, according to the central bank.

Schedule for new exam will be fixed later, GM Abul Kalam Azad, a general manager of BBB, told journalists after the meeting held at the bank with its Governor Fazle Kabir in the chair. Chief executives of 14 state-run banks and financial institutions were also present.

Abul Kalam said the investigation committee was asked to submit the report within two weeks. Following the report, BB will ask an explanation from Dhaka University (DU) management department, which conducted the tests, he said.

Representatives of the DU management department were also present at the meeting.

The candidates had been demanding cancellation of the "controversial" recruitment tests, alleging various mismanagement and irregularities. They held protest programmes in Dhaka and other parts of the country, demanding holding the exams afresh for all the candidates rather than for a selected few.

After hearing the news yesterday, candidates, who gathered in the Shahbagh area on the third day of their protest, welcomed the decision.

"Our protest was just and today's decision is a victory for us. We hope that the fresh exam will be held very soon," Nasir Uddin Morshed, a candidate, told The Daily Star.

"Through the cancellation of the exams, the allegation of mismanagement has been proved," he added.

He urged the authorities concerned to carry out the recruitment exam in different regions so that the candidates do not have to face the trouble of travelling to the capital.

However, the management department authorities denied the allegations of mismanagement and irregularities during the tests and termed the committee's decision "irrational".

The department tried its best to carry out the exams fairly as a number of electronic devices such as mobile phones were seized from the candidates, Mohammad Mohiuddin, a professor of the department involved with the exam process, told The Daily Star.

"However, minor errors might have occurred in the era of technology. Taking the entire exam again for this is irrational," he said.

"I am ready to accept my faults. But why the 1,16,000 candidates, who took part in

the exam before, will come to Dhaka again to take the test? I cannot accept the decision taken by the Bangladesh Bank today [yesterday]," he added.

MARRIED BY MISMANAGEMENT

The 100-mark MCQ test was held at 61 centres across Dhaka to fill up 1,663 posts of senior officer at the eight banks -- Sonali, Janata, Rupali, Bangladesh Krishi Bank, Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank, Bangladesh Development Bank, Investment Corporation of Bangladesh and Basic Bank.

As many as 2,13,000 candidates took part in the test.

But around 5,600 candidates could not take part in the exam due to a shortage of seats at two centres -- Government Bangla College and Hazrat Shah Ali Mohila College in Mirpur.

A number of examinees at the two centres alleged that most of the centres had no seat plans and there was a shortage of seats.

Examinees of one room had to sit in another one while five candidates had to squeeze in one small bench, they alleged. Also, question papers arrived at the centre 30 minutes later than the stipulated time.

Some of the exam halls were crammed with candidates while many used electronic devices like cell phones to solve the questions, they added.

Shafin Ahmed, one of the candidates, said, "Most of the candidates used internet on mobile phones to solve the questions. The exam was like a group discussion as five to six people sat in a bench and talked to each other."

The candidates protested the incident and staged a demonstration in the centre areas. Following the protest, Bankers' Selection Committee on Friday afternoon announced to retake the recruitment tests for the 5,600 candidates on January 20.

But the candidates started their protest on Sunday under the banner of "General Students", demanding cancellation of the exam and holding it afresh. They held protest rallies and organised human chains in the capital and other districts on Monday.

"How such mismanagement and irregularity can take place in the recruitment exam under the administration of the central bank? Our protest was logical as we wanted a permanent solution," said Shafin, a former student of JNU.

Following the protests, the selection committee called the emergency meeting.

In 2015, the government formed the BSC to maintain fairness in the process after allegations of question leaks and mismanagement in different bank recruitment exams surfaced.

Headed by the BB governor, the committee is comprised of managing directors of all the state-run banks and financial institutions.

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