

INTERNATIONAL ROUTES

Biman operated with 23pc vacant seats in 6 months

RASHIDUL HASAN

Biman Bangladesh Airlines operated with 23 percent vacant seats on various international routes in the last six months.

A total of 3.41 lakh Biman seats remained empty during the time, accounting for 23 percent of total seats.

According to aviation experts, the amount of empty seats is a reason for concern.

Previously, the parliamentary standing committee on civil aviation and tourism ministry sought tickets for Biman's lack of ticket sales on international routes during this period, as well as information on ticket sales.

Based on this, the airline submitted the report at the parliamentary committee meeting at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban on Tuesday.

The report was produced using vacancy data from the past six months for 68 destinations.

According to the report, 14,77,456 tickets were available for various overseas destinations in the six months, from June to November. Among them, 11,35,974 were booked; 3,41,482 seats were empty, accounting for 23 percent of vacancy.

The picture of large number of empty seats on all routes, however, is not accurate. On several routes, there were just a few seats available. On other routes, more than half the seats were vacant.

In the last six months, Biman flights from Dhaka to China's Guangzhou had 2,675 total seats. A total of 1,037 passengers got on the flights. The remaining 1,638 seats were empty, indicating 61 percent vacancy.

Biman did not mention any specific reason for this.

There were a total of 17,665 seats on Muscat-Dhaka route. Of these, 9,285 seats or 53 percent remained vacant. Forty-five percent of the total seats on the Abu Dhabi-Dhaka route were empty.

On the other hand, flights from Dhaka to Muscat, Chattogram to Muscat, Dhaka to Riyadh, Chattogram to Jeddah were quite full. In these flights, 80 to 90 percent seats were occupied.

Biman kept its ticket-sale services through its website suspended from August 9 last year to February 26 this year due to changes in its passenger service system.

According to Shafiul Azim, the newly-

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



MAKING SPIRITS BRIGHT... A young woman purchasing Christmas decor from a vendor yesterday. She still had two days in hand to prepare for the occasion, till the sleighing song comes to tune. The photo was taken in the capital's Farmgate area.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

How AL's council will be held today

BSS, Dhaka

The 22nd national council of Awami League will be held today with a pledge to build "Smart Bangladesh" by 2041.

The main theme of this year's council is "Unnoyon Abhijatrai Deshratna Sheikh Hasinar Netritte Bangabandhur Swapner Unnoth, Samridho O Smart Bangladesh Gorar Prototype".

Awami League President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the council by releasing pigeons at 10:30am at the historic Suhrawardy Udyan.

After hoisting of the national and party flags, central leaders will take seats at the stage. Then a 30-minute cultural event will be held.

The party's office secretary Barrister Biplob Barua will present the death references.

Obaidul Quader will present the report of general secretary.

AL presidium member and reception committee convener Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim will deliver the welcome address.

The first session of the council will end with the speech of Hasina. Around 7,000 councillors and over one lakh leaders and workers from across the country will join the national council.

There will be a break for lunch and prayers after the end of the inaugural session.

Then the council session will be held in the auditorium of Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB). The party's president and general secretary will be elected in the session.

A three-member election commission has already been formed to elect the leadership.

A total of 11 sub-committees are working for the council. As per tradition, party president Hasina is chairperson of the council preparatory committee and general secretary Quader is its member secretary.

After visiting the council venue at Suhrawardy Udyan on Thursday, Quader said the council will be held in a

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



AL 22ND NATIONAL COUNCIL

AL President Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the council at 10:30am at Suhrawardy Udyan

Around 7,000 councillors, over one lakh leaders and activists will join council

Session will be held in the auditorium of Institution of Engineers

Party's president and general secretary will be elected in session

Ready for a grand gathering

Festive scene at Suhrawardy Udyan ahead of AL's 22nd national council

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Though the ruling Awami League said it will hold its 22nd national council in a simple manner, yesterday's scenario at Suhrawardy Udyan hinted at a huge gathering. The scene was set for a festive and secure programme today.

At least one-fifth of the 68-acre park, one of the most historical places for Awami League rallies, was covered by pandals. Thousands of chairs and open spaces with giant screens were being arranged for the leaders and activists who will join the council from every corner of the country.

According to party members, AL is spending Tk 10 lakh less than the previous council as an austerity measure and did not invite any foreign guests.

However, the ruling party has invited all registered political party leaders, including its major rival BNP. Yesterday, a delegation headed by AL's deputy office secretary Abu Sayem went to BNP's central office and invited three standing committee members -- Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Abdul Moyeen Khan and Nazrul Islam Khan.

However, BNP sources said the leaders may not join AL's council when hundreds of BNP leaders and activists, including Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, are in jail.

Centring the council, police put the area under CCTV surveillance and set control rooms and archways in all entry points. A dog squad has also been arranged with the presence of Rab and Swat forces in the area.

Police and Rab officials said there is no specific threat in terms of security during the council. However, security has been deployed keeping several earlier attacks on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, including the grenade attack on August 21, 2004, in mind. "We are trying to create a festive atmosphere for the AL council," said Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner Khandker Golam Faruq.

Earlier, DMP advised city dwellers to not use roads near the

venue on the day of the council.

Yesterday, the udyan was opened only for AL leaders and activists who were involved in different sub-committees to prepare for the council.

"Awami Swachchhasebak League leaders will be in charge of maintaining the discipline tomorrow [today]," said Jahangir Kabir Nanak, joint secretary of Awami League.

He also mentioned that drinking water, three medical camps and three ambulances have been

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

ABOUT THE COUNCIL

- » CCTV surveillance in place for monitoring
- » Placards, pandals all across the venue
- » Pictures of Father of the Nation, PM, party founders adorn location
- » Displays show govt's development activities

By holding the national council, the party wants to give a message to the country's people that AL is standing by them and will continue to do so in the future.

OBABDUL QUADER
AL General Secretary

The 22nd national council will be held with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina as its longest-serving president. The party has had eight chiefs and nine secretaries since its founding on June 23, 1949. Hasina has served the party for the highest time -- nine consecutive terms for the last four decades since her election to the position on February 16, 1981.



Sitting down on the ground with brushes, crayons and pencils, young artists use their imaginations to draw anything of their choosing as part of an art competition held at Jatiya Press Club auditorium yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



Emdad Hoque passes away

STAR REPORT

Prominent fashion designer and vice president of Fashion Design Council of Bangladesh Emdad Hoque passed away at a hospital yesterday.

He was 57. Emdad breathed his last around 2:00pm. He was hospitalised after complaints of breathing difficulties and had been on life support for the last 50 days of his life.

His namaz-e-janaza took place after Isha prayers,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Brace for foggy weather: Met office

STAR REPORT

A light to thick blanket of fog is likely to envelope large parts of Bangladesh for up to 12 hours from midnight.

Moderate to thick fog may occur over the river basins and northern part of the country and light to moderate fog elsewhere over the country from midnight to morning, the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) said yesterday.

The weather may remain dry with temporary partly cloudy skies over the country, it added. "Night and day temperatures may fall slightly over the country."

The lowest temperature in the country was recorded at 8.4 degree Celsius in Badalgachhi of Rajshahi division in the last 24 hours till 6am yesterday.

The highest temperature was recorded at 29.6 degree Celsius in Teknaf of Chattogram division.

Save Rohingyas adrift at sea

UNHCR urges countries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The situation of the Rohingya refugees who have been stranded in the Indian Ocean for the past month is becoming more and more desperate, the UN agency for refugees said yesterday while reiterating its appeal to countries in the area to assist in saving them.

In a statement, the UN agency reminded states in the region that pleas to rescue and disembark around 190 people, who are adrift somewhere between the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal, are being continuously ignored.

Reports indicate those onboard have now been at sea for a month in dire conditions with insufficient food and water, without any efforts by states in the region to help save human lives, reads the statement.

It is believed that many people on the boat are dead, and those who are still alive are on the verge of starvation, the statement added.

"This shocking ordeal and tragedy must not continue. These are human beings -- men, women

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

INVESTIGATIVE STORIES

Star report in GIJN's top 8 from Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An investigative report of The Daily Star made the list of Global Investigative Journalism Network's top eight "Best Investigative Stories in 2022" from Bangladesh.

Published on August 26, the report by Shaheen Mollah and Muntakim Saad titled "A family forced into never-ending distress" digs into the tale of one family that the paper reports suffered at the hands of Rapid Action Battalion.

GIJN also mentions another DS story titled "Bike accident turned into an extortion case" -- published on July 25 -- that describes how a 15-year-old and a 17-year-old from the same family were falsely implicated in an extortion case by the same Rab unit.

Apart from The Daily Star report, the other reports listed by GIJN are The Business Standard's "Cyber slaves in Cambodia", Independent Television's "Factory of fake doctors", the daily Prothom Alo's "Sand, land, and power" and "83,000 prisoners, 4 doctors," the daily Samakal's "Tough questions on an energy deal," Jamuna Television's "Tea garden in a protected forest", and Channel 24's "The brain game".

Star's Refayet ERF president, TBS's Kashem gen secy



Refayet

Kashem

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mohammad Refayet Ullah Mirdha, senior reporter of The Daily Star, was elected as the president of the Economic Reporters' Forum (ERF) yesterday for a two-year term.

He got 91 votes out of a total of 200 cast by the members of the country's largest platform for financial journalists.

Abul Kashem, special correspondent of The Business Standard, was

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4