

TO
People's Right to Know

Biman bogged down by engine troubles

Struggles to maintain int'l flight schedule

REAZ AHMAD

Mechanical disorders of its ageing fleet continue to plague Biman with the national airlines failing to provide timely flights to passengers in various international routes.

The Biman authorities are now walking on a tight rope in maintaining flight schedules and passenger safety as the engines of DC-10s develop troubles too frequently and its Airbus fleet has no spare engines to meet emergency requirement.

Biman sources said one of the four Airbuses still remains stuck up in Dubai due to engine collapse over two weeks ago. Biman engineers went to Dubai on Thursday and removed the troubled engine on Friday as the authorities finally managed to lease an engine through Hewlett Packard in Singapore.

"We do not have any spare engine for Airbuses. Now that we have leased one, we are expecting

to bring back the stranded Airbus by early Monday," a top Biman official said when contacted yesterday.

Engine problems delayed two international flights of Biman on Friday. A DC-10 on Dubai-Chittagong-Dhaka route was stranded for two hours and an Airbus operating on Abu Dhabi-Chittagong-Dhaka route for one hour in Chittagong.

Of the five DC-10s in Biman's 13-strong fleet, four are now operational with frequent engine troubles and one is undergoing a D-check at the hanger complex at Zia International Airport (ZIA).

But it is quite uncertain if the DC-10 would be operational even after completion of D-check soon as its engine along with a spare engine is to be overhauled.

"Both the engines are being overhauled in Amsterdam now and we expect at least one to be ready for use at the end of this month and the spare one by the

end of next month."

Three of the five DC-10s and one Airbus got grounded in quick succession last month, forcing the national airlines to reduce the frequency of its flights on Dhaka-Dubai-Brussels-New York route and also on Dhaka-London and Dhaka-Jeddah routes.

Amidst chaos over flight schedules and lack of government decision on procuring more aircraft, Biman late last month floated international tender for leasing at least two wide-bodied aircraft. The bids close on April 6. It might take at least 2-3 months more to get the aircraft, sources said.

Biman operates flights to as many as six domestic and 26 international destinations with a fleet of five 30-year-old DC-10s, four Airbuses and four F-28s.

A Biman proposal to procure six Boeing and four more Airbuses at a cost of \$1.2 billion is lying with the Cabinet Committee on Purchase for over a year now.

Govt's successes hyped at parade

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The display of achievements and works of different ministries was the centrepiece of this year's Independence Day parade yesterday.

Trucks decorated with colourful and large posters depicting 'successes' of the BNP-led coalition government, now in the last year of its term, drove slowly past hundreds of invited guests at the National Parade Square.

Rapid Action Battalion's (Rab) operations against militant chief Abdur Rahman and his second-in-command Bangla Bhai were dramatised on stages set up on the trucks.

Organised by Nine Infantry Division, the parade was broadcast live by state-run Bangladesh Television.

The recorded voice of late president Ziaur Rahman proclaiming independence was played but only partly. "On behalf of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman", the words that were in the original proclamation, were cut out.

A special publication titled 'Great Independence and National Day Parade 2006' was brought out on the occasion. The photographs of Ziaur Rahman, freedom fighters, national monument and Shaheed Minar were printed on its cover.

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With national flag in hand, thousands of people throng the National Memorial in Savar on Independence Day yesterday to pay homage to the martyrs of the Liberation War.

Tremors jolt Chittagong

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

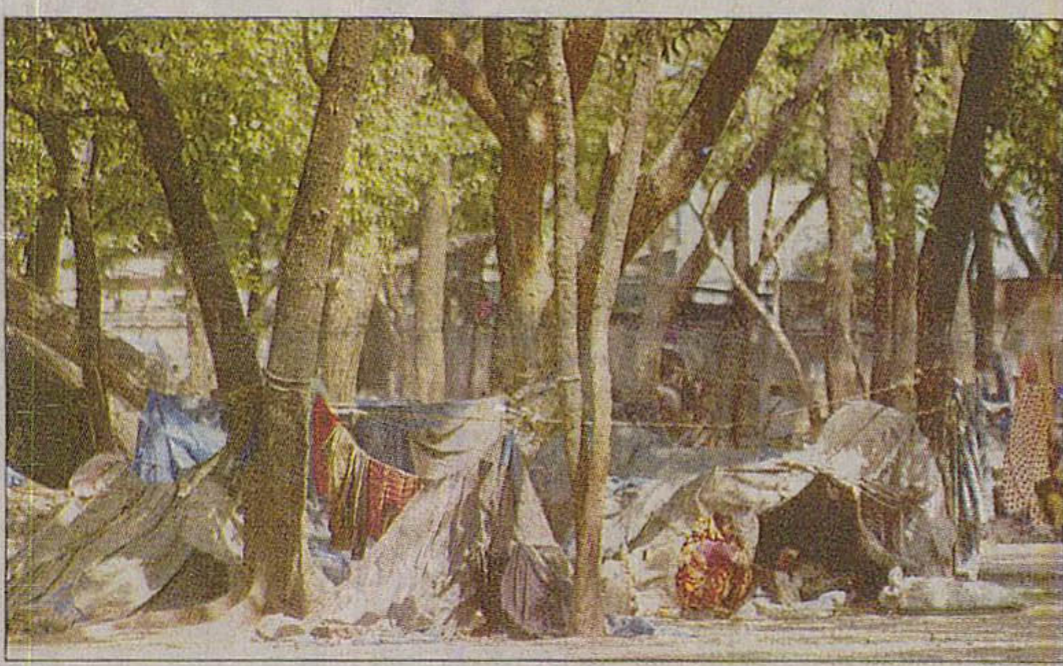
Two tremors jolted the port city and its adjoining areas on Saturday night and early yesterday in a span of four hours.

But there were no reports of casualties or damage.

Official sources said the first earthquake was recorded at about 10:24pm on Saturday. The magnitude of the 16-second tremor was measured 3.9 on the Richter scale.

The second tremor, which was felt at 2:14am yesterday, lasted for 26 seconds. Its magnitude was measured 4.9 on the Richter scale.

The epicentre of the first earthquake was about 141 km away from the seismic observatory at Ambagan in the city and the second one 242 km off the observatory.



The other side... Homeless people have set up shanties at a corner of Osmani Udyan in the city where Dhaka City Corporation has launched a beautification project.

World Social Forum Bangladesh team demands apology from Pakistan for '71 genocide

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The members of the Bangladesh delegation participating in the World Social Forum (WSF) in Karachi demanded an apology from Pakistan for the genocide during 1971.

They made the demand at a discussion in Karachi organised on the eve of the 26th March, the Independence Day of Bangladesh, a press release of Shushashoner Jonno Procharabijhan (Supra) from Karachi said.

The speakers said the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 was not a fight against the Pakistani people; it was a fight

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Nation celebrates 36th Independence Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The nation yesterday celebrated the 36th Independence Day, recalling the supreme sacrifice of millions who laid down their lives to free the motherland from the clutches of Pakistani occupation forces.

A 31-gun salute at dawn marked the beginning of the celebrations for the Independence and National Day.

The national flag was hoisted at the government buildings, offices of corporate bodies, banks, leading business houses and houses of the general public to mark the day.

On this day in 1971, the unarmed valiant Bangalees of the then East Pakistan burst into a flame to resist the Pakistani occupation forces, who unleashed the worst genocide in the world's history to suppress them.

The peace-loving Bangalees took up arms as the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared independence on March 26. The victory was achieved on December 16 after a nine-month War of Liberation.

President Iajuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia laid wreaths at the National Memorial at Savar at sunrise to pay homage to the martyrs of the Liberation War.

A contingent of the armed forces presented a guard of honour during the ceremony.

Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar, leaders of different political parties including Awami League (AL), freedom fighters, ministers, diplomats, chiefs of the three services and senior civil and military officials were present.

Khaleda Zia along with other BNP leaders also laid wreaths at the memorial on behalf of the party.

The prime minister also laid wreaths at the mazar of late president Ziaur Rahman. BNP leaders and workers were present.

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BTTB ISD CALL Low tariff for 15 more countries

MONJUR MAHMUD

The state-run telephone operator is going to expand its economy overseas call service to another 15 countries from April 1 to check its income downside due to a wide use of illegal internet telephony.

Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) subscribers with international subscriber dialling (ISD) and nation wide dialling (NWD) facilities will enjoy the reduced tariff of Tk 7.5 per minute, official sources said.

The 15 countries added to the economy call tariff are China, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand,

Farmers block Jessore roads for power

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

Farmers put up barricades on all four roads to Chowgachha upazila for the second consecutive day yesterday, demanding uninterrupted supply of electricity.

Sources from Chowgachha said thousands of farmers and the general public blockaded the Chowgachha-Jessore road at 7:00am.

The agitation stopped all vehicular movement on the roads, prompting the transport workers to fight back against the demonstrators. They damaged four shops and went on the rampage at the Independence Day celebration platform on Chowgachha Pilot High School ground.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Ashoke Debnath was assaulted as he went to ask the agitators to lift the roadblocks.

INDEPENDENCE DAY BNP men attack AL rallies in dists, 60 hurt

STAR REPORT

Around 60 Awami League (AL) leaders and activists were injured in Tangail, Laxmipur and Munshiganj as cadres of the ruling BNP and its front organisations attacked AL rallies and processions on the 36th Independence Day yesterday.

Ten AL men were injured as BNP activists attacked an Independence Day procession in Gopalpur upazila of Tangail yesterday, reports our correspondent in the district.

Meanwhile, a veteran leader of the local AL died from heat stroke on his way to join a rally in

Gopalpur.

Sources said Shamsul Haq, 55, vice president of Mirzapur Union AL, was going to join the AL rally in Gopalpur in the blistering sun at 11:00am when he became sick. Later, he died at the Gopalpur Health Complex.

Gopalpur AL leaders said the Gopalpur upazila unit AL organised a rally and a demonstration to mark the Independence Day. A large number of AL activists from different unions of the upazila came in processions to join the rally.

The local BNP activists attacked the rally when it was passing the

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THE SCIENCE OF WEATHERPROOFING

CHANDPUR POWER PLANT PM wants, yet meeting not held in 2 months

PDB set to award project to incompetent company

SHARIER KHAN

The Power Development Board (PDB) is set to sign an agreement with an incompetent Chinese company, Harbin, soon for setting up the 150-megawatt Chandpur power plant in a controversial deal that violated the Public Procurement Regulation (PPR) 2003 and a decision of a government review panel, sources said.

The prime minister who had okayed the awarding of the contract to Harbin in early January trusting a Cabinet's Purchase Committee (CPC) decision, mean-

while asked her office twice to arrange a formal meeting with the review panel members who opposed awarding of the deal to Harbin. But the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has not arranged the meeting in the last two months.

The power ministry is now awaiting clearance from the National Board of Revenue (NBR) and the commerce ministry before signing the contract with Harbin, the same company which built the 80mw Tongi power plant that has remained shut for most of the time since it went into operation last year.

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