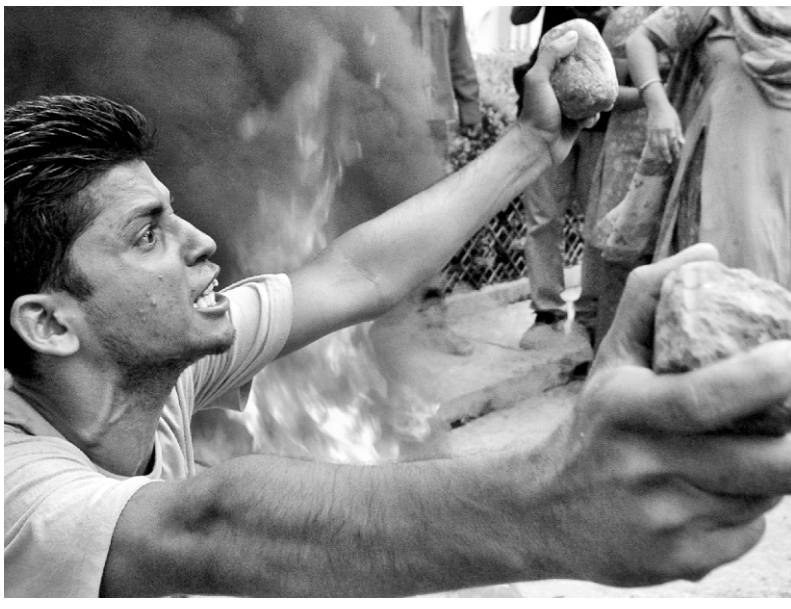


letters@thedailystar.net

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



Biman - on deathbed

It's no secret that Biman, the national airlines, is inching towards death.

It is seriously sick and has been diagnosed as suffering from a disease known as corruption.

It's in the news all over the world, especially in Internet editions of many international news publications. It has been reported that Biman has lost Tk. 836 crore in the last 10 months. The total loss for the fiscal year is anybody's guess. It owes Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation more than Tk. 1,200 crore. It owes money all around the world. Hotels, Suppliers, Maintenance Vendors, Ground handling agencies, governments (for over flying charges), you name it. It's just a matter of time before Biman pulls the curtain down!

Why has Biman ended up in this mess? Here are some facts and interesting figures:

1. Biman has more than 500 employees per aircraft as against industry average of 150.
2. More than 100 Biman employees (from different sections) are engaged in UNION duties as office bearers (some of them claim overtime as well)! That is more than 10 persons per aircraft!
3. Outstations (On-line / Off-line) - Every On line (where Biman Operates) station has employees posted from many sections like Sales, Finance, Operations, Traffic & Field Service. Bulk of the services can be outsourced!
4. Unions / Associations - They are all engaged in protecting employees' rights! None of them ever heard of corruption! No movement against corruption!
5. Routes - they are all designed to serve politicians / administrators & crew. Business was never an option. Having ONE flight a week to Tokyo is a proof of that! There are plenty of it! New York flight beats them all. More than ONE CRORE is lost per cycle. It's needed because near and dear ones of people with power are frequent flyers on this route. The trick - They all fly free! The people of the country paying for this! So why not! All of a sudden Biman pilots have opened their eyes! They now think the New York flight is not required!
6. Qualifications - The Pilot's Association (BAPA) complained to the civil aviation minister that CAAB (Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh) examiners are charging hefty amounts of money (Bribe!) to issue professional licences. And they are paying too! It's the same for Aircraft Maintenance Engineers.
7. Management -- The less said about it, the better.
8. Corruption - Where do we start! It's infected top to bottom! It's everywhere! Probably the bulk is milked through Engineering Maintenance. The bill is millions of dollars every month! Aircraft has to fly, so spares have to be bought! Buy it urgent and bill it five times!

It's not only common, it is the norm. There are instances where 10 times more was paid and it was discovered that wrong spare had been bought!

Bogus parts trading are widely reported. Engineering Stores has been taken away from Engineering years back to play these games. Cuts are shared from every deal! Aircraft leasing, Engine Leasing, Maintenance Contracts & Spares supplies! All at inflated rates! Almost all deals are scooped up by people very close to the seat of power.

Corruption in Marketing & Sales Division has reached an art form. Managers of this section sucked Biman dry in collusion with GSAs and travel agents.

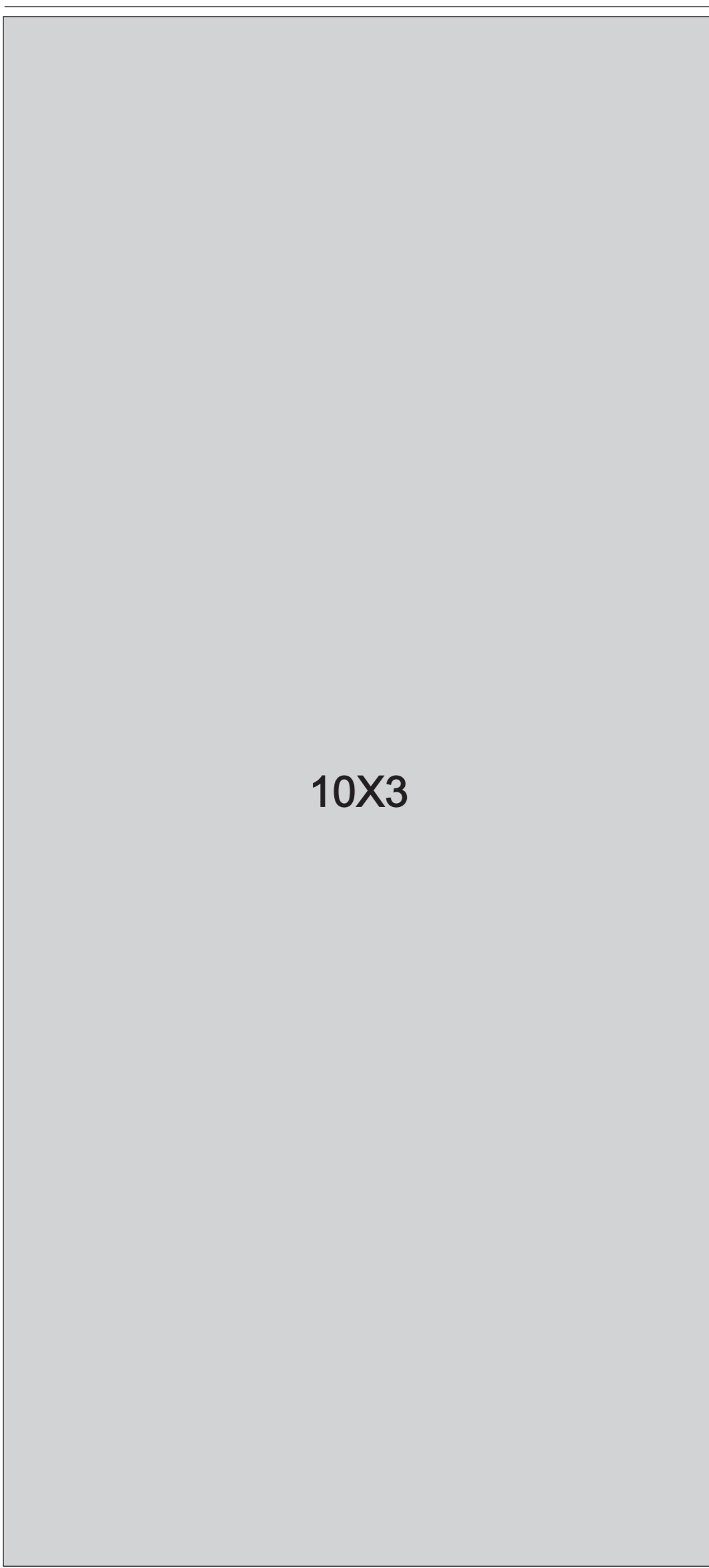
Biman is no symbol of pride anymore. Biman is bleeding our hard earned resources. It is holding our financial institutions hostage single-handed. Sonali Bank & BPC are on the verge of collapse because of non-payment of huge debts of Biman. It's simply not on...

Imran Ahmed Sarkar
Singapore

Please act sensibly

Bangladesh is going through a very menacing political crisis. This was quite expected and our country's top politicians are only to be blamed for it. Both the government and the opposition could have avoided the crisis, if they at all possessed any patriotic feelings towards this country. Different views on electoral reform (from the government and the opposition) are the fundamental reason behind this political unrest. The opposition brought some proposals for changes in the caretaker govt system and also the Election Commission. They have made it clear that they would not participate in the next election without these reforms. They even came back to the parliament for realisation of their

demands. The people applauded this step and we started to witness a much more vibrant parliament, a scene which could not be witnessed in the past. The government in a positive way accepted the opposition's proposal for a dialogue regarding the matter, and we also appreciated this step. But soon our politicians showed their lack of sensibility-- the BNP starting the process with the inclusion of two names of Jamaat leaders in their delegation to meet the opposition. The Awami League since then did not accept their offer for dialogue and the crisis has deepened. The BNP very well knows Awami League's view on the Jamaat and the IOJ, and the government is to be blamed for this problem. Now with three months left before the caretaker administration takes over, the Awami League has started creating disturbance like hartals to make the govt. accept their proposal. The opposition has started tough agitation programmes which to the common people are nothing but nightmares. Clashes between the police and opposition activists are getting bloodier. One person from each side died during their last clash on July 2. Senior leaders from both camps are blaming each other for this crisis. The general people of the country are getting more and more upset with our politicians. We are paying the ultimate price for their fight. But our selfish politicians never think that way. With



10X3

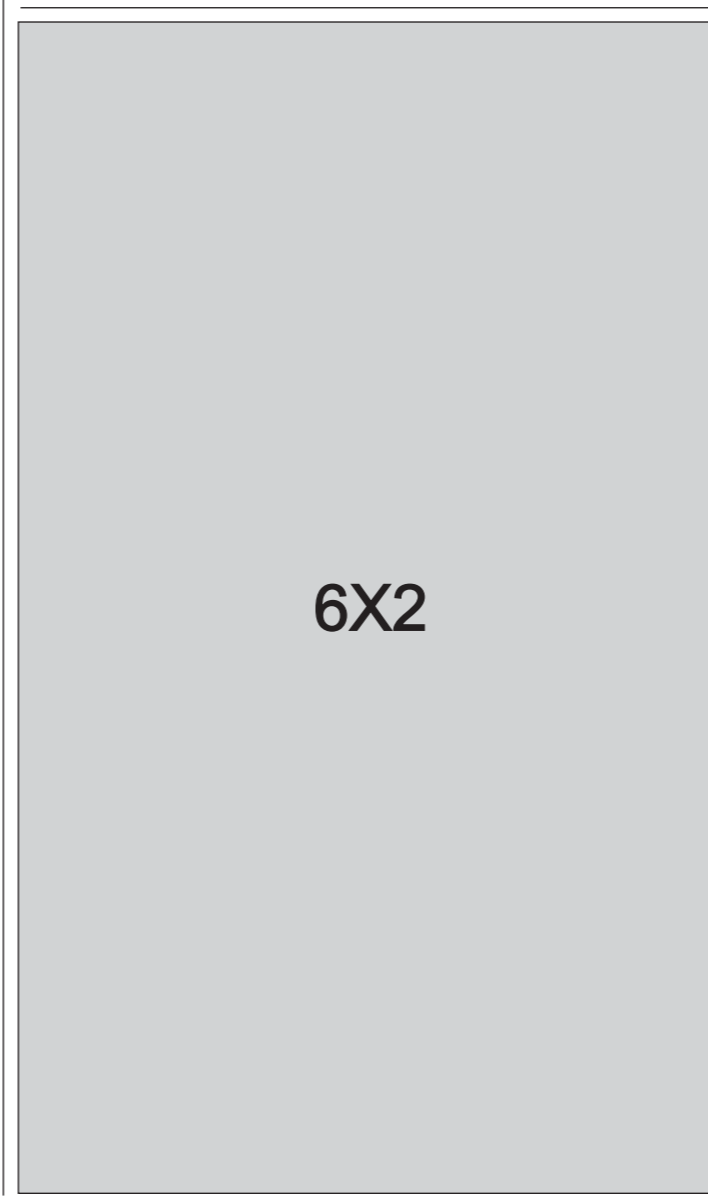
My teacher Ms Milly

Suddenly, there is so much discussion about Bir Sreshtha Matiur Rahman. And rightly so. He has finally been laid to rest in his homeland. At last, his soul would be able to breathe in the musty smell of Bangla's soil. For this he paid with his life. For this he waited for thirty-five years.

Now, after such a long time I also remember Ms Milly, the way we used to call her in Holy Cross School. Ms Milly Rahman, the widow of Matiur Rahman, was our class teacher in class 7. She always used to tell us about 1971. And I still vividly remember how she told us one rainy afternoon, when we pressed her to tell us a story instead of doing boring class work, about her own life in Pakistan. I remember how she told us about the stories of Birangana women and the trauma they endured. I remember how she told us about her own personal struggle after the war. We were children then. But I clearly remember the tears in her eyes, her sadness, her memories of fear for her children, that moved all of us.

I don't know if children in schools in Bangladesh are now lucky enough to listen to such personal and moving accounts by their teachers of Bangladesh's glorious history. But we were deeply touched by her narratives. We were proud of our national heroes.

I believe, many of my friends from Holy Cross School, who are spread all over the world thought of Ms Milly on this special occasion. When we surfed the net and read the newspapers in Bangladesh we



6X2



9X3