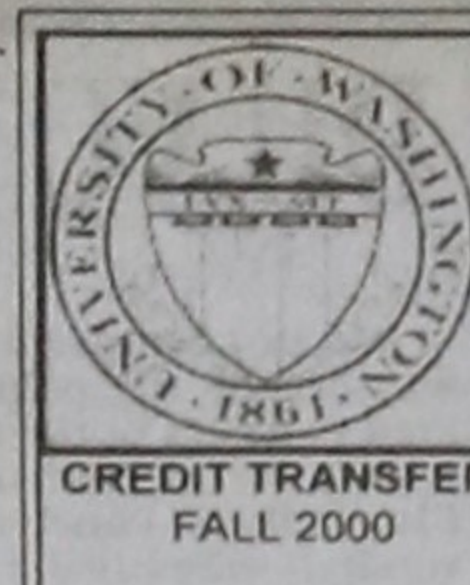


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Biman's move to replace DC-10s sparks debate

Star Report

Aviation experts at a Daily Star roundtable yesterday questioned Biman's rationale behind the recent move to procure two aircraft and sell its DC-10s.

They said when the national flag carrier, running short on funds, is looking for a strategic partner through restructuring, it does not make economic sense to invest in new aircraft.

They said the decision to buy and sell aircraft would involve at least additional 540 million US dollars and would add just 26 to 76 seats, which would see Biman plunge into more financial trouble.

Rejecting a Biman explanation that the DC-10s are too old to be in service, Khurshed Ahmed, President of Flight Engineers' and Navigators' Association (FENA), said: "A properly maintained aircraft can serve for a long time."

"A DC-10 can still earn an operating profit of 78,000 dollars on a typical Dhaka-Dubai return flight. Our DC-10s can continue to fly without compromising safety and profitability for 11 to 19 years while as per Biman consultants, the estimated life remaining of these aircraft ranges from nine to 14 years."

Experts also said seven of the top 20 airlines of the world are the major DC-10 operators and even older versions like DC-3 and Boeing 707 are still flying.

However, civil aviation Secretary CM Mohsin differed on the point, saying that it is difficult to get spares for DC-10s and their maintenance is also costly. He also said that most DC-10s now are used to ferry cargo.

He said since procurement is a lengthy process, this should be initiated along with the restructuring plan so that Biman can expand its fleet on its own in case no strategic partner is available.

However, when a number of participants asked for data in support of claims that the op-

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The Daily Star roundtable on Biman Speakers agree on strategic partnership, differ on corporatisation & PLC

Star Report

Biman officials, employees' representatives and academicians yesterday came to a consensus that the national flag carrier needs urgent restructuring to make it more profitable. But they said transparency of the restructuring process and proper evaluation of Biman assets for taking in a strategic partner are required to gain maximum benefits.

Taking part at a Roundtable organised by The Daily Star at a city hotel yesterday, speakers however differed on the modality of restructuring.

Some said turning Biman into a public limited company

is the best way of attracting strategic partner for revamping the organisation, plagued by government interventions. Others said it can remain a corporation and yet attract foreign partner by amending the Bangladesh Biman Ordinance, 1977.

Moreover, Biman should manage itself by professionals and be independent of the government so that it can compete as an international airline.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Syed Ashrafur Islam said that two reasons led the government to think of privatising Biman -- it needs hard

cash and efficient management to add new aircraft to its fleet.

Although there is an eight-secretary strong board for Biman's policy making, it does not have any expertise to run commercial airlines, he pointed out.

The state minister also said Biman is not only a passenger or cargo carrier, it has also a national security purpose. This has to be taken into consideration while restructuring Biman, he added.

Former bureaucrat Abdul Muveed Chowdhury, who also served as managing director of the national airlines, said as

long as the government owns Biman, there will be interference from it and this will hamper normal functioning of the airlines.

"Biman is handicapped as it often runs on dictation from the government and these dictates are not necessarily commercial," he said.

He opined that as long as Biman remains a government organisation, no one would agree to become strategic partner of Biman and suggested transforming Biman into a public limited company (PLC).

As the employees expressed

See page 11 col 4



Participants in the day-long roundtable on Restructuring & Commercialisation of Biman organised by The Daily Star at a city hotel yesterday. — Star photo

Who runs Biman, who takes major decisions?

By Staff Correspondent

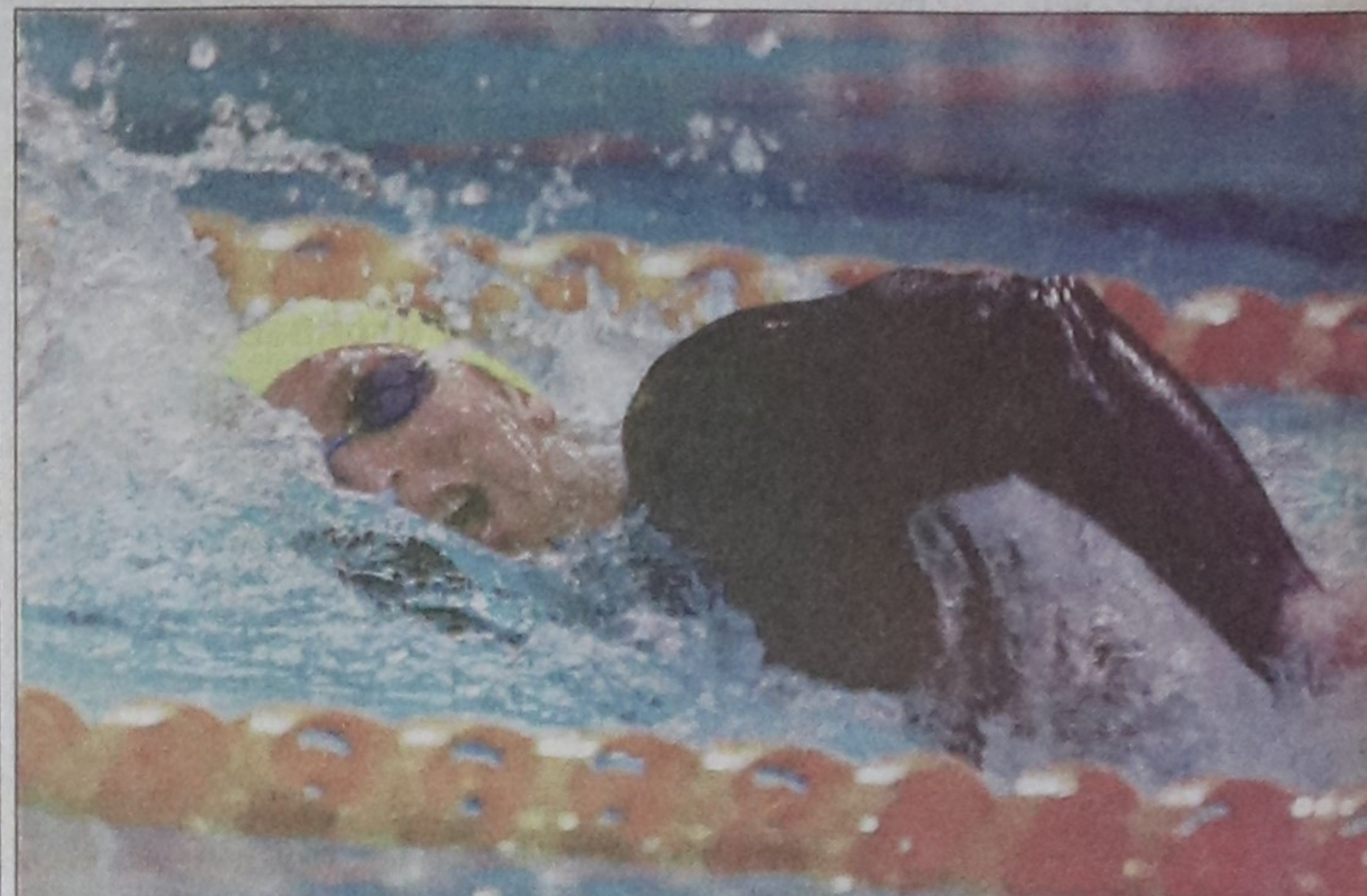
The Daily Star roundtable yesterday witnessed heated debates on issues such as who runs Biman, who takes the major decisions and the grounding of ATPs.

The debate over the management began when the Biman management and employees blamed each other for the losses incurred by the national airlines.

Society of Aircraft Engineers of Bangladesh President Fakhrul Alam Bhuiyan said the losses were mainly due to raw deals imposed on Biman by different governments.

Civil Aviation Secretary CM Mohsin said every purchase follows recommendations by the fleet planning committee to Biman management. "Then the management refers it to the board which takes the decision."

See page 12 col 8



Ian Thorpe of Australia powers his way to the gold medal in the 400m freestyle men's swimming final yesterday, the first day of competition at the Sydney Summer Games. Thorpe set a world record time of 3min 40.59sec. — AFP photo

Australia 'Thorpedoes' US

First gold goes to Nancy Johnson



SYDNEY, Sept 16: A shy teenager propelled hosts Australia to record-beating swims on the first day of Olympic competition today breaking 36 years of United States dominance in the men's freestyle sprint relay, reports Reuters.

China, depleted by drug scandals, had a miserable debut in the Homebush Bay pool where 17-year-old Ian Thorpe electrified the 17,500 home crowd with individual and team golds.

A total of five world records fell in quick succession in the pool with women from the US and Ukraine also winning golds.

Thorpe was not the only hero in a country still on a patriotic high after a spectacular opening ceremony on Friday night.

Turkey's Halil Mutlu broke three world records to clinch gold in the men's 56 kg weightlifting competition, a performance that marked him as the natural successor to Turkish "Pocket Hercules" Naim Sulaymanoglu.

The very first gold medal of the Games went to Nancy Johnson of the United States who won the women's 10 metre air rifle competition with her

See page 11 col 7

Sabrina shot, Karar drowns

SYDNEY, Sept 16: Sabrina Sultana and Karar Samedul Islam made early exits from the Sydney Olympics on the first day of competition today, reports UNB.

The Commonwealth gold medalist Sultana was placed 46th among 49 competitors in the women's 10-metre air rifle event.

She, however, improved upon her pre-Olympic qualifying mark.

Sabrina, who won gold in the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur in 1997, scored 383 points out of 400 compared to her previous best score of 381, made in Sydney this year.

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Inside Today

Article

Unilateral Declaration of Palestinian State Postponed

Column: Spotlight on Middle East
By Muslehuddin Ahmad

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Sept 17		6-00 pm
Sept 18	5-46 am	

Prayer Timings

September 17		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-08	6-13
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

Musharraf's statement 'totally untenable'

Dhaka rejects charges of interference

By Diplomatic Correspondent

Bangladesh has rejected outright any suggestion that it has interfered in the internal affairs of Pakistan.

Dhaka was giving its reaction on the reported statement by Pakistan's military ruler General Pervez Musharraf that he had refused to meet Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the UN because she had "meddled" in his country's internal affairs.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Foreign Secretary Shafi Sami said the Pakistani ruler's statement was "totally untenable."

He said, "The Prime Minister's statement at the United Nations was a statement of policy. The statement was based on the belief, ideals and convictions of the people of Bangladesh stand for."

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2 teenage boys chopped to death in city

Bodies recovered from manhole: 4 held

By Staff Correspondent

Mutilated bodies of two teenage boys were recovered from a manhole at Loharpool under Sutrapur thana in the city yesterday morning.

Each body was cut into six pieces and thrown inside the manhole, police said recovering those at about 8:00 am.

The deceased were identified as Mohsin, 18, son of M Amin Miah, and Saem, 19, son of Mahabuddin of SK Das Lane under Sutrapur thana, police said.

The double murder took place barely two weeks after the sensational triple murder in the city. Partially decomposed bodies of three youths with marks of bullet injury were recovered from a house at Khilgaon.

Police arrested Navid, an FIR-listed accused, on charge of the double murder and picked up another three as suspects.

Motive behind the killing could not be ascertained immediately.

Mohsin's father in his FIR lodged with the Sutrapur Police station, said that the victim was called out of his Akshay Das Lane residence by a group of people that included Sumon, Mokhtar, Tutul, Nahid, Bidyut, Nadim, Raimond, Sumon and Kashu.

The group known to his son took him to a nearby Rifle Club. They also sent a message to the victim's father asking him to send Tk 50,000, the FIR said adding, the boy did not return home Friday night and his body was recovered the next morning.

Mohsin's father alleged that the police did not rescue his son though he informed them about the miscreants who demanded ransom for his son's release.

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ট্রেড লাইসেন্স সংক্রান্ত জরুরি বিজ্ঞপ্তি

১) ঢাকা সিটি করপোরেশন এলাকায় বিদ্যমান দোকান/হোটেল/রেস্তোরা/শিল্প/কলকারখানা/কমিশন এজেন্ট/পেশাদার/বীমা/ব্যাংকসহ সকল ব্যবসা প্রতিষ্ঠানের মালিকগণের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাইতেছে যে, ২০০০-২০০১ ইং সনের ট্রেড লাইসেন্সের নবায়নের বিল বহি ইতিমধ্যে জারি করা হইয়াছে। আগামী ৩০শে সেপ্টেম্বরের মধ্যে সোনালী ব্যাংকের নির্ধারিত শাখায় ফি জমা দিয়া স্ব-স্ব প্রতিষ্ঠানের ট্রেড লাইসেন্স নবায়ন করিয়া নেওয়ার জন্য সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলকে অনুরোধ করা যাইতেছে। দোকান/ব্যবসা প্রতিষ্ঠান বন্ধ থাকার কারণে যদি কেহ বিল বহি না পাইয়া থাকেন, তবে তাহাকে সংশ্লিষ্ট কর অঞ্চলের কর কর্মকর্তার দপ্তর হইতে বিল বহি সংগ্রহ করিয়া নির্ধারিত তারিখের মধ্যে ট্রেড লাইসেন্স নবায়ন করিয়া নেওয়ার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হইল।

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ঢাকা সিটি করপোরেশন, ঢাকা

Traders, employees of 2 Sylhet markets clash for second day: 30 hurt

From Staff Correspondent
SYLHET, Sept 16: At least 30 more people were injured as employees and traders of two markets in the town clashed for the second day today.

The employees and traders of Brahmanayee Bazar and Hawkers Market clashed and chased each other and pelted bricks and stones for about half an hour. Over 200 shops remained shut during the clash.

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APSU calls hartal in Ctg today

From Our Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Sept 16: The All Party Student Unity (APSU) called a dawn-to-dusk hartal in Chittagong tomorrow protesting police action on its Friday's rally and demanding release of APSU activists and Mufi Ezzhar.

APSU Chittagong unit called the hartal yesterday after its rally near Andarkilla Janine Masjid was attacked by police. The rally was organised demanding release of Islami Oikya Jote leader Mufi Ezzharul Islam Chowdhury.

Meanwhile, police foiled an APSU rally at Kazir Dewry area this. Police and APSU activists chased each other. Police snatched mikes and charged baton. Three persons were arrested during the incident.

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