

# GMG flies beyond boundary July 1

M ABDUR RAHIM

GMG Airlines becomes Bangladesh's first private airline to fly overseas on July 1 when it launches flights on Chittagong-Kolkata route after the government agreed to allocate it four more routes.

"We expect to operate our first flight on Chittagong-Kolkata route from July 1 and we will start operation on all other allocated routes by October 1," Managing Director of GMG Airlines Shahab Sattar told The Daily Star.

GMG will not require to procure new plane for Chittagong-Kolkata flight as it can use its existing 37-seater Dash 8-100 and 50-seater Dash 8-300 aircraft in the 35-minute flight, he said. But it needs to procure new jet planes to serve other destinations, he added.

Like national flag carrier Biman Bangladesh Airlines, the GMG will

also operate two weekly flights on Chittagong-Kolkata route. The country's lone operational private airline however is yet to set the fare but its officials said the fare on the route will be competitive with Biman's Tk6,646 (oneway).

When the GMG received air transport operating licence (Atol) on January 13 with permission to operate on Dhaka-Colombo via Chennai, Dhaka-Male via Colombo and Chittagong-Chiang Mai routes, it was sceptic of its international future due to allocation of these 'less attractive routes'.

After long negotiation, the government recently decided to add Chittagong-Kolkata and Dhaka-Kathmandu routes to GMG's existing ones.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism also recently asked the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (Caab) to immediately start negotiations with its Indian

counterpart to increase flight frequency in the air services agreement to facilitate the GMG operate on Dhaka-Kolkata and Dhaka-Delhi routes.

The air services agreement between Bangladesh and India allows one or more Bangladeshi airline to operate 30 weekly flights to Indian destinations and Biman occupies 27 of them. The GMG has been permitted to fly on Dhaka-Chennai route, but the agreement does not permit a Bangladeshi airline to fly to Chennai. This prompted the ministry to ask Caab to include Chennai in the revised agreement.

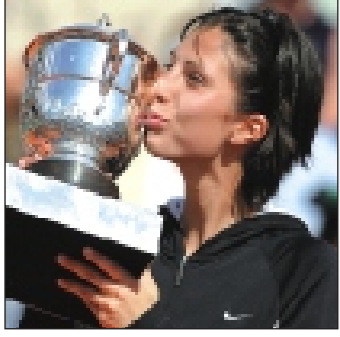
The GMG began its maiden flights on April 6, 1998 and now connects Dhaka to Chittagong, Sylhet, Jessore, Barisal and Cox's Bazar with 28 flights a day on average. Its fleet comprises a 37-seater Dash 8-100 and a 50-seater Dash 8-300.



PHOTO: STAR

## Innocent sacrifices to violence

Relatives break down at the sight of the charred body of 3-year-old girl Meem, left, while her 7-year-old brother Ronny, right, undergoes treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Both fell victim to Friday's arson attack on a double-decker BRTC bus at Sheraton Hotel crossing. Their mother was also critically burnt in the inferno and is being treated at the hospital.



## Myskina wins French Open

AFP, Paris

Anastasia Myskina became the first Russian woman to win a Grand Slam title when she defeated compatriot Elena Dementieva 6-1, 6-2 in the final of the French Open here Saturday.

It was a comfortable 59-minute win for Myskina, by three months the older of the two 22-year-olds from Moscow, quickly putting a nervy start behind her to dominate proceedings from the baseline.

Dementieva, like Myskina in her first Grand Slam final, appeared to be terrified at the prospect and her

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# Eleven die in road crashes in two dists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eleven people were killed and six others injured in road accidents in Mymensingh and Sylhet yesterday.

In Mymensingh, six passengers of a tempo were killed and three others injured when the three-wheeler collided with a speeding truck at Maizbari on the Mymensingh-Tangail Highway in the afternoon, according to the UNB.

Three died on the spot while the rest after admission to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital. One of the dead was identified as Selim, 18. Identity of five others could not be known.

The tempo was bound for

Mukttagacha and the fatal accident took place at around 3:30pm.

The injured are undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Our Staff Correspondent from Sylhet reported that five people, four of a family, were killed when a tempo fell into a canal after collision with a minibus on Sylhet-Jakiganj road yesterday.

Of the dead, one, identified as Sonabhan Bibi, 75, was found floating after two hours while others remained untraced.

The victims were going to Charkhal of Beambarbar by the tempo. Search for the bodies of the four--Mina Begum, 35, her son Shahin, 4, and daughters Marzia, 8, and Shafia, 6--was going on till the filing of this report at 7:30pm.

## NURUL RETIREMENT Admin caught up in high tension

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tensions have gripped the civil administration as many officials fear the axe in the wake of forced retirement of Prime Minister's Acting Secretary AHM Nurul Islam.

High officials said numbers of civil servants, including top officials who have good relations with Islam, are fearing losing job to a hate campaign by the anti-Islam camp.

The camp, which brings together largely junior officials at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and the secretariat, are trying to get their rivals sacked painting them as sympathisers of the main opposition Awami League.

Islam was forced into retirement on June 3 for allegedly leaking official documents and unilaterally initiating a probe into the allegations of corruption against Tarique Rahman, elder son of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, on the basis of an unnamed letter.

A speculation of forcing half a dozen acting secretaries and some

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# Back to IPGMR days

## Teaching staff fear fall in edn quality, research, service to patients

NAIMUL HAQ

The government decision to revert Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) to Institute of Post Graduate Medicine and Research (IPGMR) will seriously affect the quality of higher medical education, research and service to patients.

Expressing this concern, a number of senior members of the teaching staff of the BSMMU also said due to this decision, medical equipment and apparatus worth crores of taka purchased since establishment of the university in 1998 and maintained with its own earnings might face ruination. The government allocates no funds for their maintenance.

They pointed out the BSMMU was designed to function as a centre of excellence in medical education and research.

Many senior teachers feared if the autonomous institution is turned into IPGMR again, facilities for patient care and research would

collapse since it would no longer have authority to re-invest its income. They however sought anonymity.

The government decision, if executed, will also make uncertain the fate of over 400 newly recruited teaching staff and around 300 other staff, they mentioned.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at a function of pro-BNP Doctors Association of Bangladesh (DAB) on April 24 announced the decision of abolishing the BSMMU and establishing National Medical University (NMU) having a separate campus.

An 11-member committee headed by the vice chancellor of BSMMU has already drafted a proposed bill -- National Medical University Act, 2003 (NMU) -- saying the IPGMR can be an outer campus of the NMU.

Experts at the law ministry are now studying the draft.

Some teachers said the government has now taken a 'political decision' since the BSMMU came

into being during the Awami League rule.

"IPGMR was upgraded into BSMMU to free it from bureaucracy and improve management and functioning of the departments. Each department now has financial autonomy. Previously, it took almost a year to get funds even to install a simple X-ray machine," said a senior faculty member.

Pilferage of expensive medicines and surgical equipment and apparatus, rampant in the past, has now come down sharply, he claimed.

The BSMMU enjoys full autonomy in managing patient care, strengthening diagnostic support, enhancing quality of research and in other relevant fields, which put an end to bureaucratic tangles with their negative impact, sources said.

"Autonomy of the university led to the creation of new departments and facilities like cardiovascular and hepatobiliary surgeries, breast and

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ARSON ATTACK

## Hasina sees hands of terror group

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League (AL) President and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday said setting fire to a passenger bus amid tight security might be an act of certain "terrorist group".

"When the country has turned into a safe haven for religious extremists, it was an unholy attempt to kill two birds with one stone through such a cowardly attack ahead of US defence secretary's visit and a countrywide hartal by Awami League," she said.

At least nine people were killed and 20 wounded in an arson attack on a double-decker state-owned

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## Bhuiyan blames it on AL

UNB, Dhaka

Blaming Awami League for Friday's arson attack on a passenger bus, Local Government, Rural Development (LGRD) and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said the criminals would be brought to book.

"The culprits and their collaborators involved in the brutal incident will be tracked down and brought to book," he said in a statement.

Bhuiyan said it has become a common practice of the opposition Awami League to set fire to buses a day before their meaningless hartal against the government.

He also prayed for salvation of the departed souls and conveyed sympathy to the bereaved families.

# Boy abducted, two others still missing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Criminals on Friday abducted a schoolboy and demanded Tk 7 lakh, while two school students, feared to have been abducted, are missing for the last seven days.

Four abductors called Sajib Uddin, 15, son of Nasir Uddin and student of class nine at MN High School, out of his house in Poura Bazar in Kumarkhali and took him to an unknown place. They later demanded Tk 7 lakh over mobile phone for his release.

Sources said Sajib's family members are trying to buy his freedom instead of going to police, as the captors threatened them with his death.

Rakibur Rahman, 14, son of Ziban Sheikh, and Samsul Islam, 13, son of Yiakub Ali, of Kanchanpur in Kumarkhali, meanwhile, are missing since May 30.

The two schoolboys went to the town, 20 km off their village, but did not return home until yesterday.

Manju, an alleged cadre of an underground political party, on Friday asked Tk 20 lakh for the missing boys' rescue. Villagers later ransacked his house but could not hold him.

At least 24 people have been abducted in the last five months, triggering widespread terror in the district. Of them, three were killed, police rescued four, six are missing, and the rest bought their freedom.



PHOTO: STAR

A convoy of Bangladesh Army contingent assigned to help keep law and order in today's by-polls in Munshiganj-1 arrives at Srinagar. All 89 election centres in the constituency have been labelled as vulnerable.

## Court again turns down Faruque's bail petitions

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday rejected bail petitions of Proshika President Qazi Faruque Ahmed in five graft cases filed against him by the Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac).

The Court of Metropolitan Sessions Judge Sirajul Islam (in charge) upheld a lower court order, which earlier rejected Faruque's bail petitions, after his lawyers filed criminal appeals.

The court also rejected the bail

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# 10 dalits killed in Bihar carnage

PTI, Biharsharif

In a major strike, unidentified gunmen shot dead ten persons -- a brick-kiln owner and nine labourers, mostly dalits -- at Dinar village under Asthawan police station in Bihar's Nalanda district, police said.

Superintendent of Police, Nalanda, Amit Lodha told PTI that around 12 heavily-armed persons stormed Pankaj brick-kiln late Friday night and sprayed a hail of bullets at the labourers working there.

The owner of the brick-kiln Kamata Prasad and eight labourers were killed on the spot. Another succumbed to injury on way to hospital, he said adding six persons who sustained gun-shot injuries, were admitted to Sadar hospital here for treatment.

Besides Kamata Prasad, other deceased were identified a Karu Dhari, Krishna Tanti, Ram Sanjeevan, Suresh Paswan, Raj Kumar Paswan, Bushundhar Paswan, Sitaram Kevat and Vinod

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