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# Biman's obsolete planes



After a long delay, Biman Bangladesh Airlines is gearing up to upgrade its wide-bodied aircraft fleet with brand-new Boeing and Airbus aircrafts. According to various media reports, the Board of Directors has approved a plan to purchase four Airbus 330-200 and four Boeing 777-200ERs to replace its ageing fleet of DC-10 and A310 aircraft. Unfortunately, this decision is over a decade overdue and as a result when these brand new aircrafts enter service with Biman, they will be obsolete.

Recently, Biman launched a massive public relations campaign to inform everyone how "old" and "unsafe" Biman's aircrafts are. Some of the Biman's aircrafts might be outdated and unreliable, but not all of them are "old". Biman had purchased three brand new aircrafts directly from the manufacturer since its formation in January 1972. The first purchase was a DC-10-30 in 1989 which was followed by two Airbus 310-300s in 1996. Biman's DC-10 was the last passenger DC-10 off the production line at California and only three more 310s were produced by Airbus SAS before Biman took delivery of the aircrafts.

A commercial jet has a useful life-cycle of roughly thirty years. However, after utilizing them for only one third of their useful commercial life, Biman is now forced to replace them due to their inefficiency and unreliability compared to new generation aircrafts. Regrettably, Biman's management is repeating history again. As airlines

around the world are gearing up to replace their current fleet of 330-200's and 777-200ER with new generations of aircrafts like the 787 and 350, Biman is placing fresh orders for them.

Biman's management is arguing that it needs new aircraft as soon as possible and they do not have time to wait for new aircrafts like the Airbus 350. The reality is manufacturers can deliver new generation aircrafts like the 787/350 around 2009 compared to the 2007 delivery date for 330/777. It might be difficult for Biman to wait two extra years for newer aircrafts but it will save Biman hundreds of millions of dollars over the next thirty years.

Purchasing a fleet of long-range aircrafts is a very expensive and complex process with significant long term implications. The current fleet renewal proposal will cost Biman about a billion dollar to implement. It is vital for a small airline like Biman to make the right decisions in order to survive in today's world. Any wrong decision will influence Biman's balance sheet for the next three decades. The government needs to stop interfering with Biman's management in order for them to make the right decisions. In addition, the management has to stop depending on government assistance and start relying on company balance sheets if they want Biman to survive in the competitive aviation business.

**Erfan Chowdhury, Ottawa, Canada**

countries. There was lot of melodrama during the accession of Kashmir to the Union of India soon after partition. The Maharaja, Hari Singh, wanted to remain independent. He was coerced and later on convinced into joining the Union. Sardar Ballabh Patel reportedly offered to trade Kashmir in lieu of Hyderabad with MA Jinnah in those days. But Jinnah showed more interest about Junagarh and missed the opportunity. All these are history now.

The ground reality is Kashmir remains divided, people keep on suffering, death toll of soldiers rise by the passage of every day, and most importantly both India and Pakistan keep on bleeding economically - unrelentingly.

Practically the war will be never ending unless the leadership of Pakistan acknowledges the realities. If more important states like Bengal and Punjab could be divided during partition, why not the tiny and less important Kashmir, which practically remains divided since 1948.

## Kashmir issue

Kashmir is again in the headlines, albeit for a different reason. A tragic earthquake struck the valley and the death toll may rise to one hundred thousand.

Incidentally a few days back the former President of Pakistan O. Kashmir Sardar Abdul Qayum Khan suggested, "Let there be Maharaja's rule in Kashmir. It is a lesser evil." He is probably tired of the events in both parts of Kashmir and speaking in the light of his experiences. Let us examine Kashmir briefly. Kashmir is part of the trio - Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. With a population of less than ten million it is poor in natural resources. It does not have oil, gas, coal, iron etc. It can boast of the saffron and beauties it produces, and natural beauties. Tourism remains the main attraction and industry of the valley which has been nearly destroyed by militant activities. Economically it is not an important part of the world. So, the appeal for help after the earthquake elicits lukewarm response from other

Both the countries should accept the realities of the futile state of war and legalise the present line of control as border with some special considerations for the 'Kashmiris' on both sides and end the confrontation. This will allow the majority Kashmiri people to rest and live in peace and work without fear and interruption.

**SN Mamoon**  
Dhaka

## Load-shedding & luminosity

In the holy month of Ramadan, when people are experiencing an unbearable ordeal due to erratic power supply, there are many shopping malls in the luminous cities dazzling with overflow of lights which is highly regrettable.

The government made an appeal to the shop owners prior to the month not to use power indiscriminately, unfortunately the irony is that the meeting was being held at a overly lighted building of the home ministry! (Daily Star Oct. 14).

We've a huge gap between preaching & practice.  
**Rafiqul Islam Rime**  
Agrabad, Chittagong

## Human trafficking in the US

The Hurricane Katrina left in its wake many human tragedies. However, the most distressing are the hundreds of women and children victims left without any assistance or housing.

These young women who are the 'forgotten' victims, are often left without family or friends from whom to seek shelter.

Americans normally do not anticipate that trafficking might occur in their country, but desperation and lack of options have reportedly left many young women in vulnerable positions.

The US-based NGO, FAIR Fund, has uncovered stories of young women being solicited by sexual predators and even assaulted right in the very shelters that were created to support them.

According to the organisation, this is happening in the country starting from Washington, D.C. to Houston.

On 24 and 25th October, Lifetime TV premiered its new mini-series, "Human Trafficking," the first major TV network programme to expose the effects of human trafficking in the United States, according to a release of the FAIR Fund.

There are currently an estimated 200,000 girls in the United States at risk of sexual exploitation. Under Federal law, any child under the age of 18 who is sold into prostitution is a victim of human trafficking.

Yet, many are not treated like victims who deserve help, but instead are arrested or abused by local police. This year FAIR Fund and the local young women of Boston are taking matters into their own hands and demanding the local agencies and law enforcers to help prevent sex trafficking of minors.

**Dr. Uddita Bikash**  
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

## Power struggle!

A lot is being said over the last few days about the power and energy sector. The State Minister of Power has reportedly said, as published in

The authorities concerned should look into the matter.  
**M.H. Bari**  
West Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## BNP's performance

We have already seen the four years of the BNP led coalition govt. There are some successes and some failures, which is common for all governments. Let me go through the successes of this govt:

-Increase in foreign investments, Increase in foreign exchange reserve, new roads and bridges connecting different parts of the country, introduction of CNG driven three wheelers, Introduction of Rab in combating crime.

The past AL government was not very successful in terms of the foreign reserve and it came down to an alarmingly low level before the BNP govt. took office.

One has to appreciate the steps Rab took in combating criminal activities.

Now, let us look at three major failures of this government - corruption, law and order situation and price hike.

Improving the situation on the above counts was the pledge of the BNP before the last general elections. But unfortunately they could not fulfil these pledges. Our country won the title of the most corrupt nation for the fifth consecutive time. Corruption is affecting our economy very much. Today, without bribing it is practically impossible to get a job done.

Foreign diplomats accuse ministers of corruption, in press conferences. Ruling party MPs bring allegations against ministers in the parliament. A parliamentary standing committee showed a minister for his involvement in huge corruption.

Prices of all the essentials have increased tremendously over the past few months and now the common people are really feeling this pressure.

The market is going up all the time without any limit and our honourable commerce minister says price is under control.

I think our leaders should stop the blame game and do something constructive. I also expect the opposition to come forward and help out

We all were waiting in the lounge of a cardiac hospital at Gulshan. In our discussion my little known friend (residing in US) said, "I believe in Allah and nothing else". Another smart looking gentleman joined us and said 'I have been researching for some time, I think the holy book is not complete yet'. I tried to answer their question quoting from the holy book itself.

When we fill the mosques on Fridays and in Ramadan, raise our blood pressure on dropping of bombs in Middle East; we miss a lot of common but simple practices.

If we were properly enlightened through education and true wisdom we would have done many things better and would have lived in harmony and peace in our society.

Smiling at a fellow Muslim is a charity (sadaqah), removing a nail from street another big Hasanah, all these do not cost money or effort. It is the enlightenment that makes the focus and gets reflected in our actions.

During the Ramadan or Eid or in any festivities due to increased demand discount is offered in many places in the world to encourage more sales, so

prices go down. In Bangladesh it is opposite. With the congestion in the mosque, cheating, profiteering and taking bribe go on at a higher rate than before to make up the lavish breakfast table (iftar) or buying luxury clothing to show off at Eid. Eighty thousand taka Lehenga, 120 thousand-taka sari all in a race to grab. The same people fast, offer charity, perform Umrah etc.

Ramadan is restraint, not only from food but to

Each year more than hundred universities of Europe, Asia, and Australia hold the highest ranking as the centre of academic excellence, beating some of these NA institutions.

Practice of such an unjust preference is seen in our private universities, to give a notion to general public that they are fully American and providing American education!

I think that the authorities concerned do not have the right to ignore and undermine the degrees of other age-old reputed institutions outside NA.

**A. Lyse**  
Patnatula, Sylhet

## Justification of war

Few days back the US and Britain



# Ramadan's enlightenment

have control over all instincts. To act correctly we need enlightening education and true knowledge of religion. Today's Internet and Computer age has made it easier.

As Muslims, during this holy month of Ramadan we share our knowledge and urge each other to act justly towards our family, our society and to all creations of the Supreme Lord.

**MM Haque, Jeddah, K.S.A**

facilities but not a parking lot? You want examples? Look at AISD. Yes, they have a swimming pool, a gymnasium and an auditorium. They barely have a parking lot but they can at least manage to control the traffic. Forget Dhaka. Even schools outside Dhaka city have better ways of controlling their traffic, schools which can only dream of having a swimming pool.

**Rea Kormokar**  
One-mail

## Adulterated food

The ongoing campaign in Bangladesh by the mobile courts to check adulterated food and hygienic conditions is indeed applauded. I think the government and its magistrates should be credited for the good work

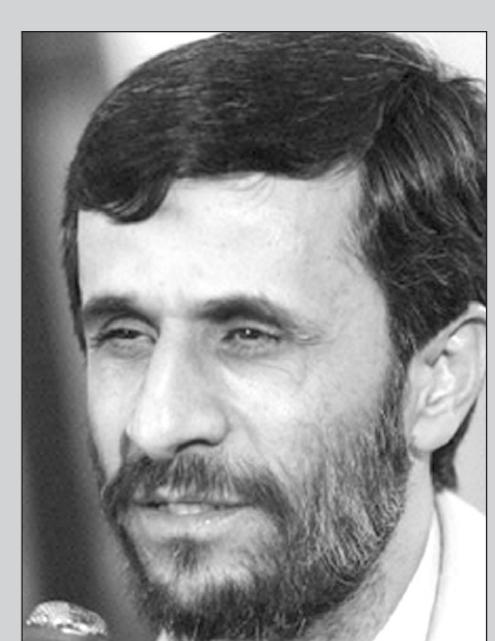


# Tony Blair's comments

It has indeed shocked the world; yes, I am talking about the comments made by the Iranian President Mr. Ahmadinejad. But what he did was an appreciable thing to do. Because after Mr. Mahatir Mohammed, Mr. Ahmadinejad is the only one who spoke out against the Jews so clearly and if we don't speak out against those Jews, we can't give the Palestinians an independent state.

But my point is not that, after Mr. Ahmadinejad made the comments Mr. Blair in a press conference said that he should not have commented on a country with which Iran doesn't have any bad relation. But doesn't Mr. Blair know that not only Iran's Muslims but also the whole Muslim Ummah have bad relations with Israel?

**Tawfiq Zunayed**  
Gulshan-2, Dhaka



newspapers, that he is helpless as he is bypassed in policy and decision-making matters. The State Minister of Energy had to resign, and the Advisor for Energy is saying that he is trying to correct the wrongs done by the earlier State Minister. These published news items fairly and squarely point to the gross mismanagement in the power and energy ministry.

What is the Hon. Prime Minister's position on the issue, as she is responsible for both the ministries?

**An energy enthusiast**  
One-mail

## North American degrees

Passing of the Private University Act

triggered the boom of universities

everywhere in the country, especially

in Dhaka perhaps because of its

enormous business potential.

There is no doubt some of these institutions enhanced the larger scope for education and provided wider options for the large student community intending to pursue

higher studies without going

abroad. Unfortunately, a very few

private universities are providing

quality education, with full time

faculty members having strong

academic records, research expo-

sure and reputed publications.

These universities nowadays are

going to set up a new standard of

qualification (?) for their prospec-

tive faculty which we can see in their

faculty search advertisements,

imposing a quite unjustified condi-

tion of giving preference to North

American degree holders while the

achievement of an individual candi-

date largely depends on his/her

personal merit, academic excel-

lence, publications in notable jour-

nals and finally the institution

where he/she attended. It is admit-

ted that NA degrees have strong

reputation and recognised all over

the world due to highest quality, but

it is definitely quite unjust to pay no

heed to the graduates coming out of

universities outside North America.

Unfortunately, we have nurtured a

breed of politicians and their stooges

in other sectors and some intellectu-

als who are too close-minded to

accept criticism. Usually, any criti-

cism directed at any aspect of our

institutions or society is met with one

of three responses. Firstly, we blame

it on the legacy of colonialism. Sec-

ondly, we find some sinister Jew-

ish/Hindu conspiracy to malign our

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