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QUADER VS JS COMMITTEE

Biman row reveals two thorns

Minister tries to clip Biman's wings for safety, but is not safe from mud slinging

SAYEDA AKTER and SOHEL PARVEZ

Civil Aviation Minister GM Quader denied that his relatives were involved in manipulating tenders for Biman's hajj flights, calling the accusation by a parliamentary panel member "totally false and baseless" in an interview with *The Daily Star* on Saturday. The feud has become increasingly hostile in recent weeks.

On August 12, a member of the parliamentary standing committee on civil aviation and tourism ministry alleged that the minister's daughter and son-in-law were behind a manipulation of the tendering for Biman. Mayeen Uddin Khan Badal cited details but had no evidence.

Notably, however, the committee member was backed by the committee head. The alleged details are that Australia-based aircraft-leasing firm Ausban Aeronautical originally bid \$10,600 for the service; but the tender box was opened and the bid was changed to \$9,600, to make it the lowest bid. Orient Thai Airlines offered \$9,800, according to his accusers, who suspect the minister of bid rigging.

The minister said Badal was slinging mud because Quader would not cave on two recent issues. One, he has refused to extend a waiver from safety rules limiting the age of passenger jets. And two, he has launched a legal battle to reverse the transfer of nearly 140 acres of airport land to the private company IPCO. Here are his answers in detail.



GM QUADER

There are some interested quarters who want to hand over 140 acres of airport's land to a pvt company

The allegation does not even show an understanding of the controls in place, Quader said. "Various committees of Biman take decisions on leasing aircraft where I, as a minister, have no scope to influence them. And there is no scope for my relatives to get an opportunity to

influence them either."

In most cases, Quader said, Biman's board does not accept the opinion of the ministry. "I have nothing to do with to whom the lease will be given and to whom it will not."

Last year, Biman leased the ageing aircraft from Nigeria-based Kabo Air at a cost of \$5,300 (Tk 3.68 lakh) per hour of use as part of its plan to operate hajj flights.

The airline chartered the plane for six months, with an option to extend lease for another two months, on condition that Biman uses it for a minimum of 200 hours a month.

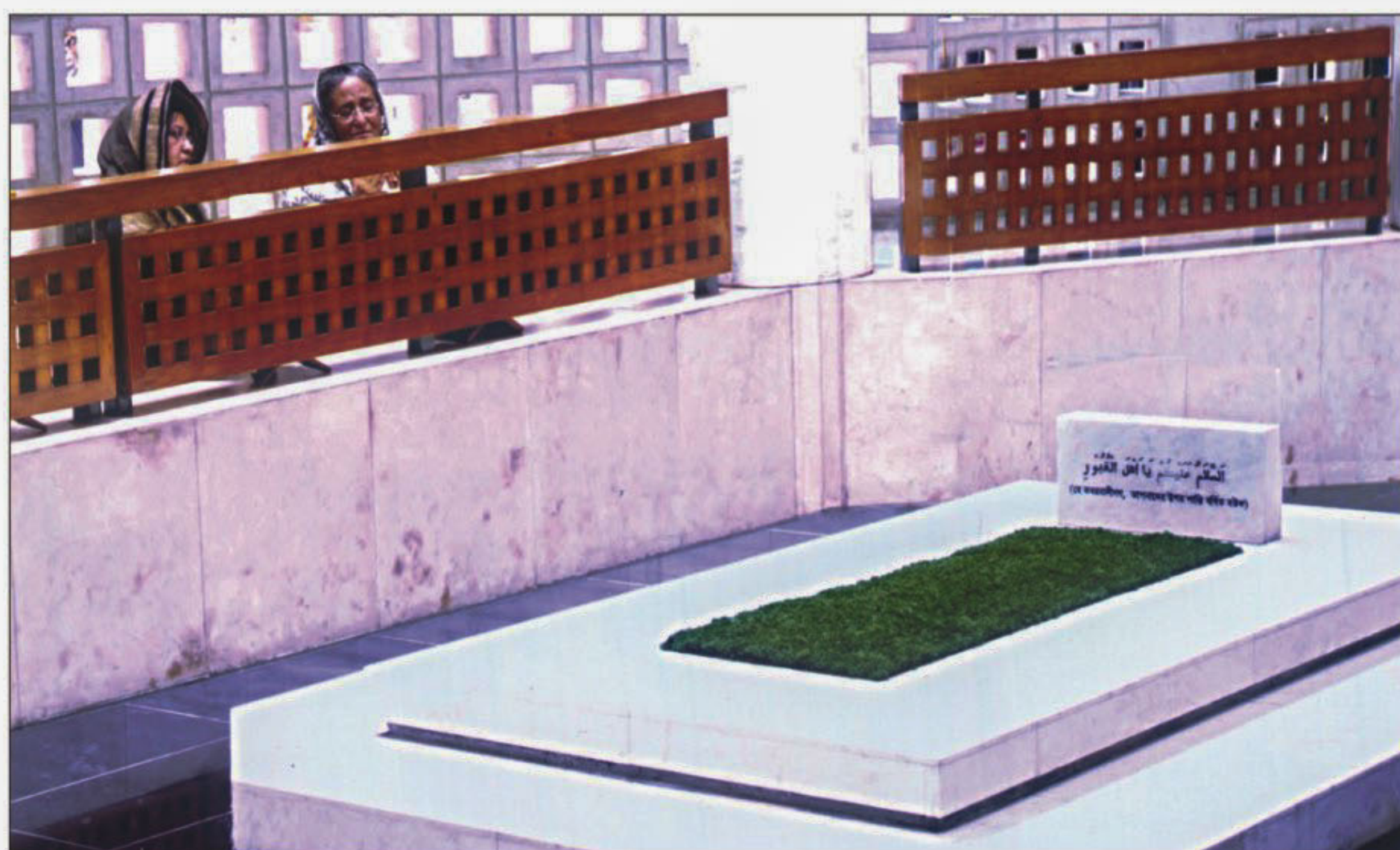
Insiders say the plane was flown for about 2,200 hours, with the Biman board crediting it for the Dhaka-Jeddah and Dhaka-Dammam-Riyadh routes being profitable.

But Quader, citing "anonymous sources" said Biman's own planes often went unused in favour of aircraft leased from Kabo Air. Officials inside the carrier also voiced concerns about the safety of the ageing plane, he said.

The ministry last year gave a waiver to the aged plane of Kabo Air for a period of six months only. But Biman used the plane for more than a month after the permission's expiry, which irked the ministry.

And the minister has a little mud to sling back at Biman. Old aircraft that sit idle are still costly to maintain. "To win a contract, they (owners) remain ready to

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her sister Rehana -- two survivors of 1975 bloodbath -- offer fateha at the grave of their father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Tungipara, Gopalganj yesterday, the 35th death anniversary of the leader. PHOTO: PID

Nation mourns for Bangabandhu

EMRAN HOSSAIN

Twins Himel Mahmud Arnab and Tamal Mahmud Apurba contemplate the photographs as their father explains those with historical references and depicts the role of a person still alive in the images.

"We have seen it on photographs that some Pakistanis killed Bangabandhu on the stairs of his own residence," says Apurba as he explains which of the images has stricken him most.

The twins and their father were view-

ing the photographs put on display on Road 32 in Dhanmondi outside the residence of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the nation paid homage to the Father of the Nation.

Marking the National Mourning Day on the 35th death anniversary of Bangabandhu and most of his family members, the photographs were put on display portraying a brief history of the sub-continent between 1947 and 1975.

"They are still under the impression that Bangabandhu was killed by Pakistanis. In fact, those who killed were

Pakistanis in heart," father of the twins Alamgir Hossain Kajal explains the idea his child has just given.

It is no wonder that the twins aged around seven are still confused about how the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated and what happened afterwards.

It is beyond their belief that Bangabandhu was assassinated in independent Bangladesh by some devil Bangalee army officers, who tried to

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Hasina for poverty-free Bangladesh

Vows to fulfil Bangabandhu's dreams

UNB, Tungipara

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the people to build a poverty-free Bangladesh as dreamt by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. "Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman always dreamt of a poverty-free Bangladesh. Let us work hand to hand to fulfil his dream and build a prosperous and modern Bangladesh," she said.

Hasina was addressing a function arranged at the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

7 ship breakers hurt in fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Seven workers were injured when a fire broke out at a ship-breaking yard at Madambibir Hat under Sitakunda upazila in the district yesterday.

The accident occurred at ZN Enterprise when an oil-tank of a scrap ship caught fire while the workers were cutting it around 11:00am using a gas cutter.

Sparks coming from the gas cutter caused the fire, said the authorities of the ship-breaking yard.

The injured were Mohammad Saiful, 22, Nowab Ali, 27, Milon Mandal, 25, Belal, 20, Mohammad Rony, 24, Razzak, 40, and Shahidur Rahman, 24.

They were undergoing treatment at the burn unit of Chittagong Medical College Hospital, said Mohammad Rafiq, manager of the yard.

Rafiq said the injuries were not severe as the fire was doused immediately after it broke out.

This ship was imported last December violating the Supreme Court order to clean up ships before bringing those to the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

BCL men clash at RU over iftar: 1 hurt

A RU CORRESPONDENT

An activist of Bangladesh Chhatra League at Rajshahi University was injured critically as supporters of another BCL faction beat him up following a row over distribution of iftar token on the occasion of National Mourning Day yesterday.

Injured Nasirullah Nasim, a fourth year student of History Department of RU and a resident of Shah Makhdoom Hall, was sent to Dhaka in a critical condition as the doctors of Rajshahi Medical College and Hospital (RMCH) referred him after giving primary aid.

The incident happened at

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Plan to build 3rd seaport at Kuakata

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

The government has started the groundwork for the country's third seaport at Kuakata aiming to improve the economic condition of the people in the region as well as to facilitate India, Nepal and Bhutan to transit goods.

A high-powered technical committee, headed by Captain S Arif Mahmood, member (marine and harbour), Chittagong port authority, visited Kuakata last month and primarily recommended the site for a port.

The committee submitted its report to the shipping ministry last week.

"The site is feasible as we observed from the surface," Mahmood said on Tuesday, "We suggested that the government carry out a techno-economic feasibility study before going

ahead with the construction."

Shipping Minister Sahjahan Khan on Wednesday said everything will be finalised based on the technical report, adding, "It'll be a small port initially."

A seaport in Kuakata will make movement of goods more convenient than through the ports at Chittagong and Mongla, since it is positioned at the centre of the coast, the minister earlier said.

Chittagong port is the country's prime seaport that handles about 90 per cent maritime export-import trade with an average 10 per cent yearly growth. The Mongla port, the second largest seaport, handles the rest 10 per cent of the trade.

If all goes well, the construction of the port

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Bangabandhu remembered in India

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The observance of the 35th death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman here yesterday was as much an occasion for rich tributes to the architect of Bangladesh's independence as a stroll down memory lane for veteran diplomats and journalists.

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Notice

The Daily Star does not carry its Business Section today, as business activities were lean on the death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman yesterday.

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