



# The Daily Star

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## BIMAN STRIKE AT SHAHJALAL AIRPORT Passengers held hostage for hours

26 flights delayed; no luggage handling for 5 hours; strike withdrawn on govt assurance of meeting staff's demands

**SHARIFUL ISLAM**  
A seven-hour strike of a section of Biman employees left around 3,000 passengers stuck at Shahjalal International Airport, flight schedule of many airlines in disarray, and Biman and Bangladesh embarrassed. No flights left Shahjalal International Airport between 8:00am and 1:00pm and some arriving passengers had to walk to the terminal from taxiways and the tarmac as there were no buses to take them there. There were no luggage handlers either, forcing incoming passengers to remain stranded at the airport for hours. They at one stage lost patience and vandalised seven computers, glass panes and electronic billboards inside the airport, prompting the authorities to deploy riot police. They demonstrated chanting slogans against Biman officials, staff and the minister concerned. All the while, departing passengers were pouring in for flights that had been delayed.

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Relatives and friends of passengers wait outside Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday as flights ground to a halt after Biman staff go on a strike.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## PADMA FINANCING Goldstein optimistic

Expects WB panel report this month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

World Bank Country Director Ellen Goldstein yesterday said she was hopeful about finding a solution to the impasse over financing the Padma bridge project and starting the implementation process.

"I remain optimistic that we are going to find a way forward," she said.

She was speaking to the press after the opening ceremony of a four-day Global Development Learning Network Asia Pacific Regional Meeting at Mohakhali in the capital.

Goldstein also said she expected to get the report from the three-member

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## Nirmal Sen passes away

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**  
Veteran journalist and left politician Nirmal Sen died at LabAid Hospital in the capital yesterday. He was 82. He breathed his last around 6:30pm, Al Imran Chowdhury, a director of the hospital, told The Daily Star. Born in 1930 at Kotalipara in Gopalganj, he participated in the anti-British movement and also played a vital role

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## Good news for 26,000 schools

PM declares nationalisation today; non-govt teachers continue agitation for MPO

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today declares the much-awaited nationalisation of 26,193 non-government primary schools of the country.

With the announcement, to be made at a grand rally of teachers at the capital's National Parade Square, jobs of 1,03,845 teachers will be nationalised in three phases, said Primary and Mass Education Minister Afsarul Ameen yesterday.

"This will be a historic event for the teachers in Bangladesh," he told reporters at a press briefing at his ministry.

Once nationalised, the teachers of these schools will get the same salaries and benefits as those in government primary schools.

However, more than several hundred teachers staging sit-in since Monday to press for the inclusion of their institutions in the monthly payment order (MPO) list will continue their agitation.

They have announced to lay siege to the education and finance ministries today.

Around 10:00am yesterday, under the banner

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PHOTO ON PAGE 20

## GSP REVIEW USTR seeks stakeholders' opinions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The US Trade Representative office has sought opinions of stakeholders by January 31 on the possible withdrawal, suspension or limitation of Bangladesh's duty-free benefits under the generalised system of preferences (GSP).

A GSP subcommittee under the Trade Policy Staff Committee (TPSC) is

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## Country chilled on season's coldest day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A cold wave is sweeping the country with the season's lowest temperature recorded at 4.9 degrees

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## Harbin back with powerful lobby

May get Barapukuria 250MW power plant contract today in controversial process

SHARIER KHAN

Chinese company Harbin has returned as a selected bidder, again controversially, in a tender for building a 250-megawatt coal-fired power plant in Barapukuria.

It had triggered a lot of controversy during the tenure of the last BNP-led government by setting up a low-quality power plant in Tongi.

The company that was then blessed by the Hawa Bhaban is now backed by a powerful lawyer parliamentarian. The MP has allegedly secured several other power projects by influencing bidding processes.

Once blacklisted by the government, Harbin's controversial selection was exposed following a formal complaint to

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## Was president's permission sought?

Bangabhaban asks eminent awardees of int'l prizes

SHAKHAWAT LITON and MORSHED ALI KHAN

In a sudden move, the Bangabhaban has asked some eminent citizens of the country to inform the president's office whether they had taken prior approval of the president before accepting international awards.

A letter issued to the

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সোস্যাল ইসলামী ব্যাংক লিমিটেড (এসআইবিএল) সম্প্রতি সম্মানজনক আন্তর্জাতিক ইউরোপ বিজনেস অ্যাসোসিয়েশন অ্যাওয়ার্ড অর্জন করেছে। "বেস্ট এন্টারপ্রাইজ" এবং "ম্যানেজার অফ দ্যা ইয়ার" - দুটি ক্যাটাগরিতে প্রাপ্ত এই বিবল সম্মাননার অংশীদার আমাদের সকল গ্রাহক, শেয়ারহোল্ডার, রেগুলেটর, পৃষ্ঠপোষক এবং শুভানুধ্যায়ীগণ। এভাবেই আমরা সাফল্যের সহযাত্রী হয়ে একসাথে এগিয়ে যেতে চাই অবিরাম উৎকর্ষের পথে।

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