

# Biman awards crew for bravery in dealing with 'hijack attempt'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman yesterday awarded the seven cockpit and cabin crew members of flight BG-147, which was allegedly exposed to a hijack threat on February 24 on its way to Dubai from Dhaka.

The national flag carrier honoured them for their courage and quick thinking during the alleged hijack bid at a ceremony at Balaka, its head-quarters, at the capital's Kurmitola. Biman's two IT employees were also awarded for their courage in putting out a fire at the carrier's data centre.

Biman's Managing Director and CEO Capt Farhat Hasan Jamil distributed the awards and crests as the chief guest, said a Biman press release.

The Dubai-bound Boeing 737-800 aircraft made an emergency landing at Hazrat Shah Amanat International Airport in Chattogram after passenger Polish Ahmed allegedly attempted to hijack the plane.

The pilots and other crew members had tackled the situation with bravery and intelligence, the release said. The alleged hijacker was killed in an eight-minute operation

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## Less than 5-hr

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hours from Dhaka while it took around four-and-a-half hours for a passenger bus to reach Chattogram from the capital.

"It took only one-and-a-half hours to reach Cumilla from Dhaka yesterday, which is unbelievable. I hope our usual sufferings will come to an end from now on," Sayeeda Roksana Mummun, a commuter, told The Daily Star.

Kabir Hossain, in-charge of Bhober Chor Highway Police Outpost, told this newspaper that he was informed that passenger buses from Dhaka yesterday reached Chattogram within four-and-a-half hours.

Previously, a trip to Cumilla would take seven to eight hours, while commuters from the capital would have to spend 10 to 12 hours to reach the port city.

The situation worsened ahead of Eid and during weekends, as more vehicles plied the roads.

Highway police yesterday said holiday-makers of the country's eastern region would not have to face immense gridlocks during the Eid holidays due to the opening of the two new bridges on the Meghna and Gumti rivers.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the two four-lane bridges through a video conference on May 25.

Another newly-built bridge, the Kanchpur bridge, is already in operation and it has also contributed to reducing the sufferings of commuters.

A new overpass on the east end of Kanchpur bridge will also be opened before Eid, further easing traffic movement on the Dhaka-Chattogram and Dhaka-Sylhet highways, and boosting businesses as well.

Although some works will remain incomplete, the overpass on the east end of Kanchpur bridge will be opened to public on May 31.

The two new bridges are open in addition to the old two-lane ones.

The otherwise dual carriageway between the port city and the capital shrinks to a single one at the Meghna and Gumti bridges.

The old Kanchpur bridge is technically a dual carriageway but its width is not adequate.

Given this situation, traffic often crawls to a halt at the approaches to the bridges.

Around 95 percent of all export and import is done via Chattogram port, but traffic congestion caused by narrow bridges often results in losses for businesses.

Aminul Islam, a businessman, said opening of the new bridges would save two days and help boost exports and imports.

## Israel restores Gaza fishing zone to ease humanitarian crisis

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel said it eased fishing restrictions off the blockaded Gaza Strip yesterday with the aim of preventing a deterioration in humanitarian conditions in the Palestinian enclave.

The move came just three days after Israel had reduced the offshore fishing limits in response to Palestinians floating balloons fitted with incendiaries over the border.

COGAT, the defence ministry unit that oversees such regulations, said the fishing zone was being "expanded to 15 nautical miles," back up from 10.



Dhaka University Central Students Union President Nurul Haque Nur being taken to hospital after he was assaulted allegedly by activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League in Bogura yesterday. Five members of Bangladesh Sadharan Chhatra Adhikar Sangrakkhan Parishad, which led the quota reforms movement, were also injured in the attack.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Ducsu VP beaten up in Bogura

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Nur and Rasul Sarker, joint convener of the platform, were taken to a local hospital, Yamin Molla, joint convener of the platform, told The Daily Star.

Other injured activists include Rakibul Hasan, Shetu, Faruk and APM Sohel.

"We had earlier informed police about the iftar party. But yesterday afternoon they asked us not to arrange it anywhere in Bogura," Yamin said.

Rakibul, convener of the platform's Bogura unit, said the attack was pre-

planned. Contacted, Bogura BCL President

SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH VIDEO



Naimur Rajjak Titas said that there was a pre-scheduled iftar party of Swachhchasebak League near the venue. That is why some people requested Nur and his associates to leave the place.

"No one was beaten up. Nur and his men were shouting, and at one stage, the two groups engaged in an altercation. Nothing more than that happened," he claimed.

The Daily Star has video clips showing Nur and several others being beaten up and shoved at the scene.

Sonaton Chakroborty, additional superintendent of police in the district, said police did not have information about the quota reformists' programme.

SM Budiuazzaman, officer-in-charge of the Bogura Police Station, said police went there to investigate the incident.

BCL General Secretary Golam Rabbani said that Nur was patronising Shibir activists in the name of holding iftar parties. That is why local people resisted them.

## A father's cry continues in vain

FROM PAGE 1  
in Mirpur-2. Two others came on a motorcycle, made Mohan sit between them and sped away.

In the same footage, Mohan's father Jamsher then appeared to talk with some people, who in another clip got on a microbus parked a little far from the spot. He had walked with them up to the microbus.

Jamsher said he was present at the scene and he talked to the "plainclothes" men. When he asked them why his son was being picked up, they claimed "there was a complaint against Mohan".

Afterwards, allegations of the involvement of men belonging to Rapid Action Battalion also arose. Jamsher claimed to have evidence to prove their involvement.

The elite force vehemently denies the allegation.

Mohan, who used to run a small shop, remains missing till date. His father, who has tried everything to find him, alleged that police were not even interested in investigating the incident.

"If my son had committed any crime...if he was killed, please return his body. At least I could cry and say that I have buried him," said the 67-year-old, expressing his utter helplessness.

Jamsher said about ten days after the abduction, a man named Hafizur Rahman, claiming to be a Rab-4 officer, went to his house and told them that Mohan was in custody of the elite force.

On the first day, the desperate father gave Hafizur some money and medicines for his son.

The next day, Hafizur returned, this time with a letter apparently written by Mohan to his wife. The letter read Mohan was in confinement and being tortured in custody.

"I can bet that the handwriting was Mohan's. But police are not even interested in investigating the letter or finding Hafizur," Jamsher said.

Hafizur had asked Jamsher to contact alleged Rab informant Joy Ahmed alias Babu.

Contacted by the family in the first week of July, Babu demanded Tk 3 lakh for Mohan's release.

The family agreed to pay Tk 2.5 lakh.

Jamsher claimed he along with some locals went to Babu's clothing store in Mirpur on July 12, and gave him Tk 2 lakh. But the money could not bring Mohan back.

Denying the allegations, Babu said he was once a driver of civil team of Mirpur police when Jamsher's house was raided over alleged involvement of Mohan in drug peddling.

According to Jamsher, Mohan was accused in two narcotics cases filed with Mirpur and Shah Ali police stations and had been on bail when he was taken.

Asked about the allegation raised against him, Babu said, "I didn't take any money from Jamsher. He has falsely framed me in the case."

Babu was arrested in the case filed by Jamsher and he is on bail now.

At a press conference on August 28 last year, Jamsher provided journalists with what he said was the call history of Hafizur's phone. He claimed to have collected it from the phone carrier. The call history provided by Jamsher showed that he and Hafizur were in contact and that about a hundred calls were made from Hafizur's number between June 13 and June 24.

Ninety-four of the calls were from Mirpur-Paikpara area. Of the remaining six calls, one was from Rajarbagh Police Lines. There were also other calls to three official numbers of Rab-4, according to the call history.

Jamsher also showed journalists what he said was the registration form of Hafizur's SIM card, which came attached with a picture of Hafizur in police uniform.

The Daily Star could not independently verify these details.

These correspondents called several numbers on the contact list in August last year. During one phone call, a woman had said she was Hafizur's cousin.

"Hafizur earlier worked in police.

Then he was transferred to Rab-4," she added.

Hafizur uploaded several pictures of him wearing Rab uniform on his Facebook profile. With the pictures, these correspondents went to Mohan's house in Mirpur. The family members and neighbours said this was the man who visited Mohan's house in June last year.

Recently, our Jhenidah correspondent visited Hafizur's house in Boalia village in Maheshpur upazila.

His house is a one-storey building and it was locked from outside. A holding plate was attached, citing names of Hafizur and his father. The names matched with that in the SIM card's "registration form" provided by Jamsher.

His family members identified Hafizur when the correspondent showed them his picture.

Hafizur's step mother Ayesha Khatun said he worked for Rab-4 and he came home on holidays.

The Daily Star called Hafizur over phone recently. Asked about Mohan's incident, he said it was a case of misunderstanding and he has been "victimised" in the incident.

Hafizur, however, didn't want to go into details.

When asked if he was ever posted in Rab, he first sidestepped the question and then he said, "Now I have been posted to Meherpur."

He declined to say anything more.

Wishing anonymity, one of his cousins in Jhenidah on Saturday night said he was in Rab-4 and later was transferred to Meherpur.

"He has been in trouble over the last one year because of this incident," the cousin said, after he was asked about abduction of Mohan.

Rab-4 Commanding Officer Chowdhury Manjurul Kabir denied his unit's involvement in the abduction.

He had said they had not picked up anyone named Mohan from Mirpur and that anyone claiming to be a Rab member, does not mean that he is from the elite force.

About the CCTV footage, he said

there was no proof that Rab was involved in the incident.

Contacted on April 22 this year, Salahuddin Karim, inspector of CID, who is now investigating the case, said they have collected all the evidence provided by the family and they were analysing the CCTV footage and investigating all possible links.

When asked about it again on May 20, the CID official came up with similar comment as there was still no development.

He said he had not contacted Hafizur yet.

Dadon Fakir, officer-in-charge of Mirpur Police Station, said they have tried their best to find some clues. But later the case was shifted to the Criminal Investigation Department of police.

But Jamsher alleged that he got no help from the police station.

He said he contacted all possible authorities--from police headquarters to the National Human Rights Commission. But there was no good news yet.

Jamsher took the banner used in the August press conference and hung it outside his house. He said the photo of his son on the banner helps him believe that one day he would return.

Citing media reports, rights body Ain o Salish Kendra said at least 34 people fell victim to abduction and enforced disappearance last year. They were picked up by people who identified themselves as law enforcers. Of them, 19 were later found.

Talking with The Daily Star yesterday, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Chairman Kazi Reazul Hoque said it is the state's responsibility to investigate every such incident and find out who are behind this.

"Whenever we get any report of disappearance from any trusted media, we tell the government that this person has the right to move freely and the state cannot avoid its responsibility," he said.

"The state should investigate how the person went missing."

## Conviction

FROM PAGE 1  
Even so, after five months of "investigation," the IO submitted the final report along with a letter of settlement from the victim's family in March this year. He also appealed to the court for the driver's acquit-tal, showing him absconding.

But the court quickly spotted the violation of the law and rejected his report. It also instructed the Police Bureau of Investigation to take over the probe.

In its observation, the court rebuked the IO for submitting the final report. "Investigation officers should demonstrate professional skills and act only in line with the law."

The PBI has since reopened the investigation and arrested Md Jashim, the driver of the Achim Paribahan bus that killed Ataul, a garment worker when he was crossing the road in Pallabi area.

Not all families are as lucky, however. Police and court sources said most road accident cases are set-tled outside the court, with police officers acting as middlemen.

A senior official at the Police Headquarters said only 4-5 percent road accident cases see conviction per year.

Last year, 2,609 accident cases were filed across the country, up from 2,562 the previous year.

Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Abdullah Abu said a large number of accident cases do not even reach the court.

"They are settled outside the court, resulting in a poor conviction rate. In other cases, the accused get acquitted because of faulty investigations," he told The Daily Star last week.

TK 70,000 FOR A LIFE?

In Ataul's case, bus owner Shukkur Mohamamd Khokon and his associates met Shamim, the complainant, after he filed the case. They then asked him to settle the matter in presence of police, said Md Ibrahim, a neighbour who was present at the time.

Inside the police station, the IO and the bus owner threatened him with consequences if he did not reach a compromise, said Sheikh Mohammad Alam, another neighbour present

YEAR	CASES
2017	2,562
2018	2609
2019 (Till Apr)	752

during the negotiation.

Pressured, Shamim said he would settle for Tk 5 lakh. But the bus owner boasted he could secure bail for the driver for only Tk 5,000 and offered Shamim Tk 50,000, witnesses said.

The IO intervened, and offered Tk 70,000 on behalf of the bus owner and compelled him to take the deal, said Rashida Begum, Ataul's widow.

Rights activist Nur Khan Liton said such settlements in road accident cases had become very common as police did not act properly.

"Besides, the lengthy investigation process often renders victims and their families helpless. So they reach a compromise to get some financial benefit," he added.

Asked, Sohel Rana, assistant inspector general (media) at the PHQ, said they instructed investigating officers to attach special importance to accident cases. "They are now more careful when dealing with accident cases."

'DID NOTHING, KNEW NOTHING'

Bus driver Jashim is now in jail and the PBI is planning to submit the charge sheet in a month, but the police took no action against SI Riazul.

Contacted, he said he had nothing to do with the settlement.

"The complainant reached a compromise with the bus owner. Why would the police be involved in this when they have no benefit out of this?" said Riazul, still posted in Pallabi.

He kept mum when asked why he submitted a letter of compromise in a case filed under non-compoundable section.

Nazrul Islam, officer-in-charge of Pallabi Police Station, said he was yet to receive the court order, although the PBI received the same order on March 27, two days after the court issued it.

"We will definitely take necessary initiative after receiving the court order," he added.

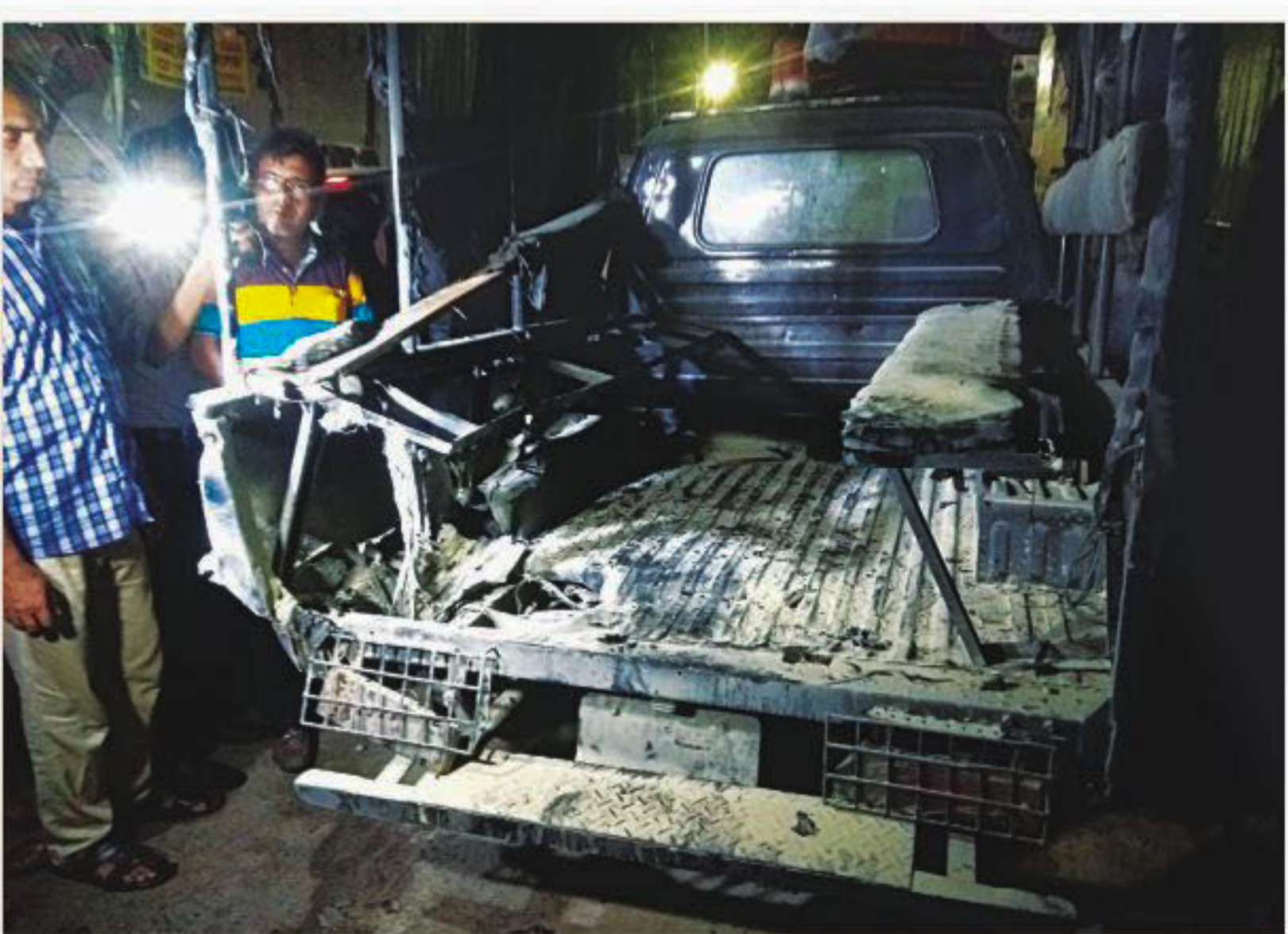
The Daily Star called the bus owner at least 30 times over the last one week, but he did not pick up the call. This paper also visited the Paribahan's bus counter, but its employees declined to comment.

## Two Indian fire officials suspended after blaze kills 22

REUTERS, Mumbai

Indian authorities said yesterday two fire department officials had been suspended over a fire at a coaching centre that killed 21 students and one teacher in the western Gujarat state, renewing questions about building safety standards.

Surat Commissioner of Police Satish Sharma said the owners of the Takshashila Arcade building, where the shoddy coaching center was built on the four-storey building's terrace, were absconding.



The damaged police pickup in the capital's Malibagh intersection.

PHOTO: SHAHEEN MOLLAH