

Painting a river black

A study by Stamford, Jahangirnagar and Waterkeepers Bangladesh shows how dyeing factories pollute the Buriganga

MOSTAFA YOUSUF

The level of pollutants in the Buriganga water samples taken from some dyeing factory effluent release points is much higher than standard levels, found a study.

Three institutions yesterday jointly released the study on the water quality of the river and the impact of dyeing factories on it.

The three are – Department of Environmental Science of Stamford University, geography and environment department of Jahangirnagar University and Waterkeepers Bangladesh.

The study found that the pH levels in the water were 7.6, 6.7, and 8.5 in pre-monsoon, monsoon and post-monsoon seasons respectively against the standard level of 7.

The Total Suspended Solids in the water were 108, 57, and 195 per litre against the standard level of 10. The Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD) were 190, 227 and 276 mg per litre against the standard level of 4. The Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) were 87, 72, 106 mg per litre while the standard is 0.2 mg per litre, said the study.

Dozens of dyeing factories being operated along the five-kilometre stretch of the Buriganga bank from Postogola bridge to Mary Anderson point now appears to be a big hurdle to decontaminate the water as the government relocated more than 100 tanneries to Savar's Hemayetpur in 2017.

Following a High Court order, the Department of Environment early last year snapped water, power, and gas supply connections to at least 50 factories in Shyampur-Kadamtoli area to force them to set up effluent treatment plants (ETPs).

The HC, however, in mid-2021 reinstructed the DoE to restore the connections after the setting up of ETPs.

Sharif Jamil, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA), said they hoped there would be a positive impact on the water quality as ETPs were supposed to be installed at dyeing factories.

"But this sadly is not the case. The water quality in the Buriganga is

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- Some 80 to 100 dyeing factories in operation
- 60,000 cubic metre effluents being discharged per second into the Buriganga
- 39 pipes release effluents into the river, despite a court ban
- Land shortage hinders CETP installation



Laundry workers washing clothes, including those given for cleaning by hotels, hospitals and clinics, in the heavily polluted Buriganga. For several decades, the river has been victim to various forms of pollution, including those caused by dyeing factories. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

20pc Covid patients are down with Omicron

Finds BSMMU study on 96 samples

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As much as 20 percent of the Covid-19 patients examined by BSMMU researchers in the month to January 8 were infected with the Omicron variant of the coronavirus, indicating that the highly transmissible variant is fast putting down its roots in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh reported its first confirmed cases of Omicron on December 9 last year, and as of Sunday, the tally stands at 55.

None of those Omicron-infected patients, however,

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Scrap unnecessary projects

PM also asks DCs to go tough on militancy, drug menace

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the deputy commissioners to ensure that no development projects that damage the environment and ecological balance are taken up.

"Cancel all the unnecessary projects," she said while presenting



a 24-point directive on the first day of the annual DC Conference yesterday.

For it, the DCs framed 263 proposals, one of the which was to form committees at the district level to oversee development projects.

Rejecting the proposal, the government suggested that the DCs carry out

supervision as per the law.

The PM inaugurated the conference

as the chief guest, joining virtually from the Ganabhaban, reports BSS.

She asked the DCs to discharge their duties with the mindset of serving the people and ensuring welfare of the commoners.

"I call upon you to focus on some issues out of all the huge tasks you are already doing.

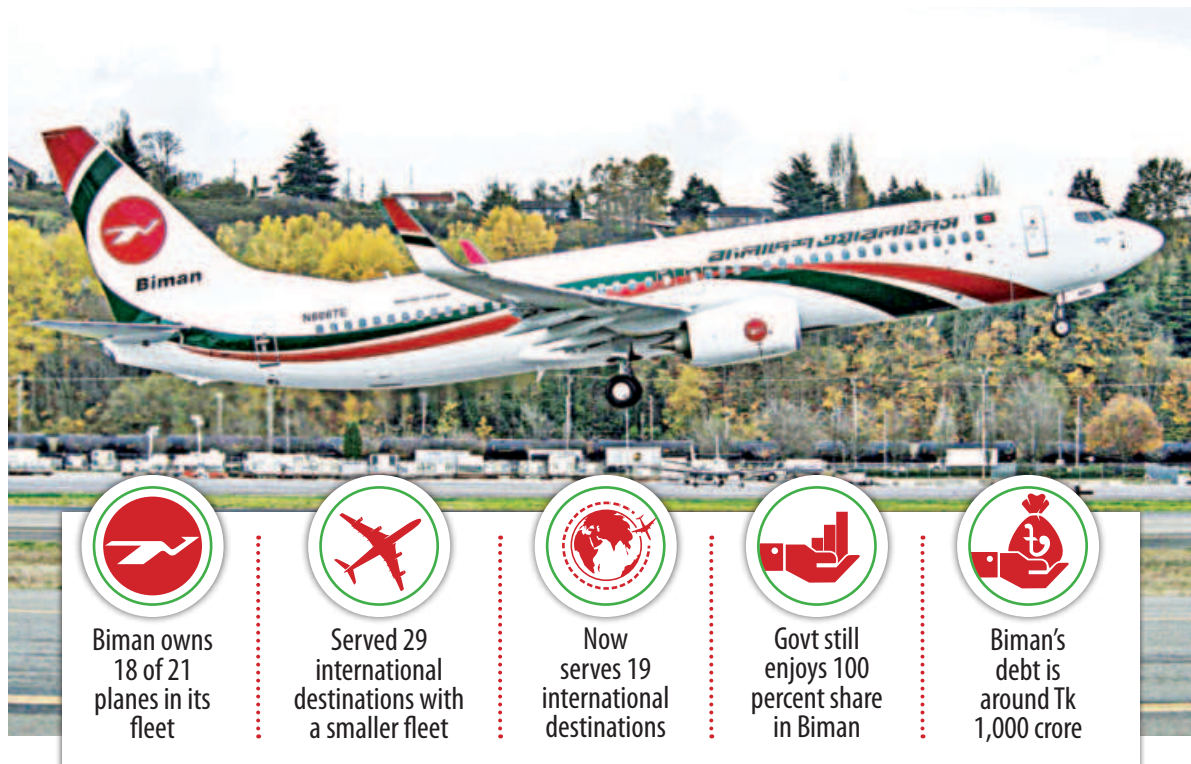
"Public welfare and service-oriented projects would have to be taken up considering the promises that public

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DON'T ABUSE POWER: PRESIDENT – PAGE 2



Narayan Debnath and his creations



BIMAN'S 50-YEAR JOURNEY Bumpy all along

RASHIDUL HASAN

Despite a robust fleet of 21 modern aircraft, Biman remains a losing concern due to a lack of planning and poor service delivery, said aviation experts.

The absence of planning ahead left many of its new aircraft underutilised and substandard services shrank its market shares over the years, they said.

Since its inception in 1972, the national flag carrier lost money in most of the fiscal years.

Biman made Tk 133 crore profit in 2020-21 (as of Dec 2020) and reported a loss of Tk 81.13 crore in 2019-20 fiscal year, according to Bangladesh Economic Review.

It owes over Tk 1,000 crore to different organisations and pays annual instalments of around Tk 250 crore for the new planes, according to aviation experts.

"Biman's profit actually cannot be called profit as the airline owes several hundred crores to Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation," Kazi Wahidul Alam, an aviation expert, told The Daily Star.

He also said Biman was not transparent with its financial statement.

It currently flies to 19 international destinations, most of which are short- or medium-haul. It had flights to 29 international destinations – from New York in the west to Tokyo in the east and major European cities – with fewer planes in its fleet, according to Biman insiders.

Since 2006, Biman gradually stopped serving around 10 destinations, including New York, Frankfurt, Rome, Tokyo, Brussels, Amsterdam and Libya, largely due to financial problems, shortage of modern planes, and routes becoming not viable.

After becoming a public limited company in 2007, Biman, to bolster its fleet, has been on a shopping spree since 2008 and spent around Tk 19,020 crore on new planes.

Despite having air service agreements with 42 countries, Biman failed to fly to new destinations or serve those it stopped serving, said Wahidul.

Even though it has a huge captive market and loyal passengers, Biman's market share has reduced 20 percent in recent years due to

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Manpower shortage a key crisis



Abu Saleh Mostafa Kamal

RASHIDUL HASAN

The shortages of experts and professionals, including pilots, have left Biman unable to realise the full potential of its modern fleet, said Biman Managing Director and CEO Abu Saleh Mostafa Kamal in an interview with The Daily Star.

Speaking at his office at the Biman headquarters in the capital's Kurmitola, Mostafa said the national carrier lost its market share in different destinations as it could not increase flights to those.

He said Biman had around 4,000 people on its payroll when it operated very few flights daily. Now flights have increased seven to 10

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