



## DHAKA-TORONTO

# Biman not launching direct flight

Authorities don't find it commercially viable

RASHIDUL HASAN

Biman Bangladesh Airlines will not operate a direct flight on Dhaka-Toronto route considering that it is not commercially viable.

The authorities of the national flag carrier yesterday told The Daily Star that the long-awaited flight will be operated with a stopover in any of the European or Asian countries for getting extra passengers and refuelling.

"Because of the stopover, we will be able to refuel the aircraft and get extra passengers from that destination [the third country]. It will make the route commercially viable," Abu Saleh Mostafa Kamal, managing director and CEO of Biman, told The Daily Star.

He also said operation cost of the Toronto flight will be reduced due to the refuelling opportunity and Biman will be able to carry more passengers.

"Therefore, Biman will be able to cut the airfare of the Toronto flight, and this will build competitiveness with other foreign airlines on this route."

Biman on March 26 operated an "experimental commercial" flight on Dhaka-Toronto-Dhaka route amid criticism from different quarters as the passengers included 35 to 40 government officials and two MPs who



flew at the expense of public money.

Besides the officials and lawmakers, 36 general passengers boarded the plane from Dhaka and only six were on the flight back, said Biman sources.

Mahbub Jahan Khan, director (corporate planning and training) of Biman, at a press conference held hours before the flight stated that around Tk 4 crore would cost to operate the direct flight.

Biman used its Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner to operate the experimental flight on this long-haul route that takes around 16 to 17 hours without any stopover, Biman officials said.

Although the aircraft has 298 seats, it will be able to carry only 120 to 130 passengers on its direct flight to Toronto considering fuel and luggage capacity and other factors, said Abu Saleh Mostafa Kamal.

The aircraft, however, will be able to carry around 210 passengers on the flight back to Dhaka, he added.

The experimental flight's ticket price for the round trip was Tk 1,20,647 in Economy class, Tk 1,83,530 in premium economy class and Tk 2,68,547 in business class.

The airfare will go up during the full operation of commercial flights.

Aviation expert ATM Nazrul Islam raised the question whether passengers, specially students and many Bangladeshis living in Canada, will choose Biman for the route paying extra \$ 200 to \$ 300 in the premium economy class compared to other airlines.

"Has Biman conducted any market analysis or study on the choice of the passengers before fixing its fare?" he also asked.

Sources at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport said

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The BIWTA is building embankments along both banks of the Turag river to prevent erosion and flood damage. Walkways are also being constructed there. The photo was taken at Diabari in the capital's Mirpur on Thursday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

# Pakistan reports plot to kill PM

Islamabad summons acting US envoy after Khan's claim of 'foreign conspiracy' to oust him

AGENCIES

Amid political turmoil, Pakistan Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry yesterday said that a plot to assassinate Prime Minister Imran Khan had been reported by security agencies.

"After these reports, the prime minister's security has been beefed up as per the government's decision," Dawn has quoted him as saying.

He didn't elaborate on the claims.

Earlier this week, Khan's party leader Faisal Vawda had made similar claims, stating that a conspiracy was being hatched to assassinate the prime minister over his refusal to "sell the country".

The news comes a day after the premier, during a nearly hour-long live address to the nation, vowed to foil "an international conspiracy" hatched against his government by opposition leaders and their alleged "foreign" handlers ahead of the no-confidence vote in the National Assembly on Sunday.

No Pakistan premier has ever seen out a full term, and Khan is facing the biggest challenge to his rule since being elected in 2018, with



opponents accusing him of economic mismanagement and foreign-policy bungling.

Fighting for his political life, Khan appeared to blunder when he named the United States as the origin of a "message" he said showed meddling in Pakistan's affairs.

"America has -- oh, not America but a foreign country I can't name. I mean from a foreign country, we received a message," he said.

Local media have reported the message was in a briefing letter from Pakistan's ambassador to Washington recording a senior US official telling him they felt relations would be better if Khan left office.

Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party (PTI) lost its majority in the 342-member National Assembly Wednesday when a coalition partner said its seven lawmakers would vote with the opposition in the no-confidence vote.

More than a dozen PTI lawmakers have also indicated they will cross the floor, although party leaders are trying to get the courts to prevent them from voting.

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## Recital artiste Hasan Arif no more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent recital artiste Hasan Arif, general secretary of Sammilita Sangskritik Jote, passed away around 1:50pm yesterday at the capital's Bangladesh Specialised Hospital.

He was 57.

Arif had been at the ICU of the hospital since December last year when he tested positive for coronavirus and had a heart attack.

Doctors recently put him on life support, said his longtime friend Ghulam Kuddus, president of Sommilito Sangskritik Jote.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held at the Dhaka University central mosque after Zohr prayers.

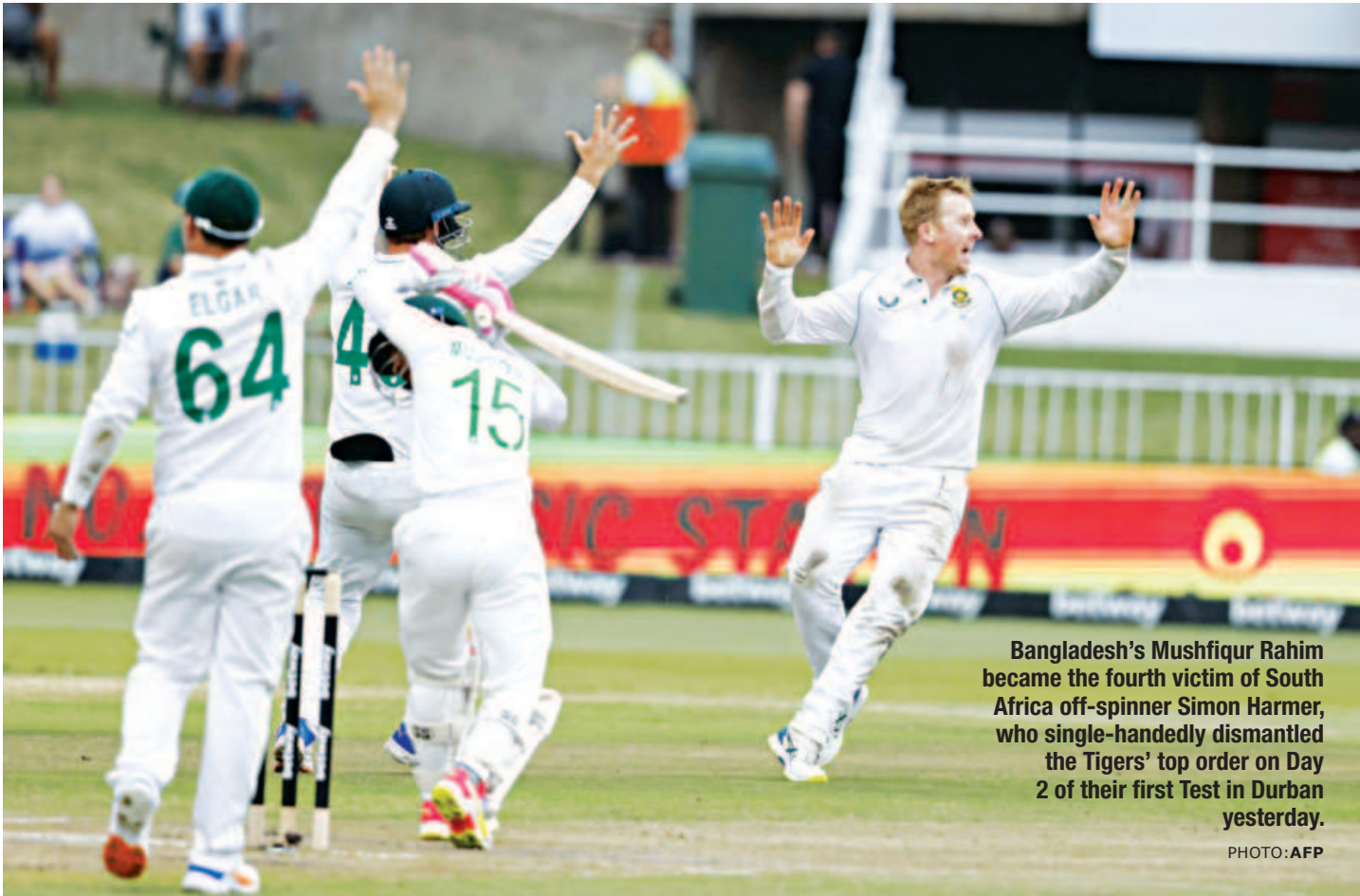
In a career spanning over three decades, Arif founded Bangladesh Abritti Samannay Parishad and had been a member of Shawrita Recitation Team since 1985. He was also the president of "Shrutighar", a reciters collective.

Arif's body will be taken to Dhanmondi, where he lived with his sister, in the morning today.

"We will take him to the Shaheed Minar at 11:00am and keep him there until 1:00pm for everyone to pay their tributes," said Ghulam Kuddus.

Prior to his passing, Arif donated his body to science, and it will be handed over to

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Bangladesh's Mushfiqur Rahim became the fourth victim of South Africa off-spinner Simon Harmer, who single-handedly dismantled the Tigers' top order on Day 2 of their first Test in Durban yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Proteas in driving seat

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh were left undone by South Africa's off-spinner Simon Harmer, who picked up all four wickets in the Tigers' first innings, as South Africa gained the upper-hand following Bangladesh's strong comeback with the ball earlier on Day 2 in Durban yesterday.

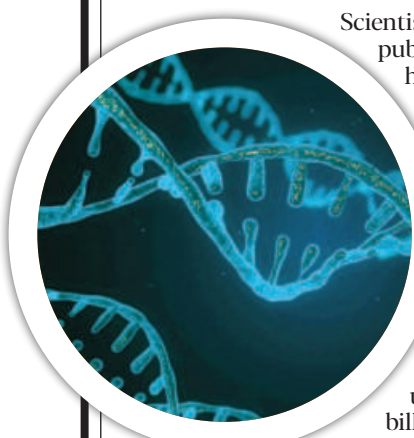
Harmer, who last played for South Africa more than six years ago and was only included due to a few South Africa stars being unavailable for Indian Premier League engagement, troubled the Bangladesh batters on a pitch that was seeing a great deal of turn available for spinners.

Bangladesh will find hope from how Mahmudul Hasan Joy applied himself to take Bangladesh through to close of play

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## Scientists publish the first complete human genome

REUTERS, Washington



Scientists on Thursday published the first complete human genome, filling in gaps remaining after previous efforts while offering new promise in the search for clues regarding disease-causing mutations and genetic variation among the world's 7.9 billion people.

Researchers in 2003 unveiled what was then billed as the complete sequence of the human genome. But about 8% of it had

not been fully deciphered, mainly because it consisted of highly repetitive chunks of DNA that were difficult to mesh with the rest.

A consortium of scientists resolved that in research published in the journal Science. The work was initially made public last year before its formal peer review process.