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Budget carrier Flynas to ferry hajj pilgrims

Biman, Saudia duopoly ends this year

RASHIDUL HASAN

After 10 long years, a third airlines -- Saudi Arabian budget carrier Flynas -- has been granted permission to transport Bangladeshi hajj pilgrims to and from the kingdom.

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) in a letter on Friday gave the go-ahead, breaking the duopoly of hajj passenger transport business of Biman and Saudia.

Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh (HAAB), a platform of over 1,500 private hajj operators and different other platforms, had long been demanding more airlines be allowed as the current system was costing the pilgrims higher airfares.

Biman and Saudia were the only two airlines transporting hajj pilgrims from Dhaka since 2012 as per a hajj agreement signed between the two countries that year.

Since then, the two companies have enjoyed the duopoly, charging pilgrims high airfares, said leaders of HAAB and Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (ATAB).

"The price of air tickets will drop due to competition from more than two airlines," ATAB President SN Manzur Murshed told The Daily Star.

The government has fixed this year's hajj airfare at Tk 1.40 lakh per person, up from Tk 1.28 lakh in 2019.

HAAB leaders said they were happy that the

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The Directorate of National Consumers' Rights Protection, during a raid, found 15,000 litres of illegally stockpiled soybean oil at a shop in Chattogram's Pahartali. The oil was later sold in cartons for retailers and stray bottles for consumers at Tk 150 per litre under the directorate's supervision. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: STAR

TIB ON DRAFT DATA PROTECTION ACT

Law may enable govt actors to control data

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The draft data protection act empowers certain government actors with unbridled power to control the personal data of citizens, said TIB.

Transparency International Bangladesh analysed the law and pointed out several provisions that will lead to this.

The Digital Security Agency has been given limitless power in a manner that is contradictory to the constitution, said Sheikh Manjur-e-Alam, TIB's director of communications, at a virtual discussion

yesterday.

The director general of the Digital Security Agency will be considered the person in charge of overseeing the enforcement of the law.

In addition, the DG cannot be held accountable if any mishaps happen in "good faith".

"The police have been empowered to investigate these violations, but it [the law] does not take into account if the police have the capacity to investigate these offences," said Alam.

Furthermore, the law does not contain

any provisions regarding how to seek legal redress in case of abuse of power.

These, combined with the provision that allows the DG to give any "data controller" an exemption from following the law, ring an ominous bell, the speakers said.

TIB said this is extremely concerning, and giving such blanket power to the DG is not appropriate.

The organisation also said several provisions in the law can be susceptible to abuse or misuse unless relevant guidelines are passed extrapolating on their use.

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Two AL men shot in clash with LDP

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Two ruling Awami League men were shot allegedly by Liberal Democratic Party's General Secretary Redwan Ahmed in Cumilla's Chandina upazila yesterday.

Redwan was arrested shortly after the incident and his firearms were seized.

The incident occurred following tensions over holding programmes by both parties on the same venue at the same time.

The injured are Jony Sarker, 27, a Dhaka University student and member of Chandina municipality Chhatra League, and Nazmul Islam Nayem, 28, member of Chandina upazila Swechhasebak League.

Witnesses and police said both AL and LDP men organised programmes at the auditorium of Redwan Ahmed Degree College yesterday afternoon.

As both groups began gathering at the college around 3:00pm, they chanted slogans that triggered tensions.

A few minutes later, Redwan arrived on an SUV that was chased by AL men.

At one stage, Redwan fired his gun twice from the window of his car, leaving the two injured, said witnesses.

He then rushed to Chandina Police Station to take shelter. He was, however arrested there later, said police.

"During primary investigation, we found evidence that he shot two people. That is why we have arrested him," said M Tanvir Ahmed, additional superintendent of Cumilla police.

The injured were rushed to Chandina upazila health complex, where doctors said one victim was shot in the hand and one in the leg. Both were moved to Cumilla Medical College Hospital after primary treatment.

Redwan was elected MP for Cumilla-7 in the 2001 election under BNP. He later joined LDP.

Meanwhile, LDP President Col (retd) Oli Ahmad condemned "the attack on Redwan Ahmed's car" and demanded that the attackers be punished. He also sought Redwan's immediate release.



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

The Karnaphuli is ravaged by pollution due to mindless dumping of household and industrial waste every day. If it were not a tidal river, it would have died long ago, say environmentalists. Like the Karnaphuli, many rivers across the country are in their death throes, but the authorities concerned seem to remain oblivious.

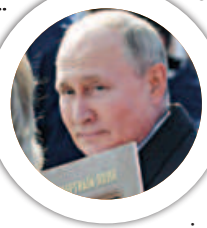
Russia defending 'motherland'

Says Putin, blames West for war in Ukraine; heavy shelling reported in eastern Luhansk

AGENCIES

President Vladimir Putin yesterday insisted Russia was defending the "motherland" by its war in Ukraine, as Moscow staged a show of force at a military parade marking the 1945 victory over Nazi Germany.

Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky sought, however, to undercut his Russian rival's display



of might, saying Kyiv would not allow Moscow to appropriate the Soviet Union's triumph in World War II.

Putin blamed the West and Ukraine for today's conflict, telling thousands of troops in Moscow's Red Square that Russia faced an "absolutely unacceptable threat" and warning against the "horror of a global war".

But as huge intercontinental

ballistic missiles rumbled through the square, Putin made no major announcements, despite reports in the West that he could unveil an escalation of the Ukraine invasion.

The war, now well into its third month, is currently focused on eastern Ukraine. Russia is seeking to secure the region, having tried and failed to take the capital Kyiv and the north.

An AFP team saw columns of trucks filled with soldiers and heavy

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