

## Idols desecrated at 12 temples in Thakurgaon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Thakurgaon*

Unidentified criminals desecrated 14 idols of Hindu gods and goddesses at 12 temples in Thakurgaon’s Baliadangi upazila early yesterday.

The temples are located at Shindurpindi, Collegepara, Kamatpara, and Shahbajpur areas in the upazila, said locals and police.

“I have a temple in front of my house. Like every other day, I woke up early in the morning today [Sunday] and went to the temple for prayers. But I found that the idol of goddess Laxmi was vandalised,” said Dulal Chandra Singha, 40, a resident of Shindurpindi.

Similarly, Shamvu Ram Singha, 40, of Kamatpara village, said, “The idol of lord Krishna was vandalised in my temple.”

Both of them said that the incidents happened sometime between Saturday night and the early hours of yesterday.

“The criminals were very quiet because we did not hear anything,” said Dulal.

“There were idols of various gods and goddesses including Saraswati, Laxmi, and Manasha in these temples. The criminals vandalised these idols to intimidate local Hindu communities,” said Tapon Kumar Ghosh, general secretary of Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad’s Thakurgaon chapter.

“We demand exemplary punishment to the criminals responsible,” he told The Daily Star.

Contacted, local MP Md Dabirul Islam, said, “We have a long history of communal harmony existing in our area. But, vested quarters are trying to ruin the peace. We have asked law enforcers and local administration to catch the perpetrators immediately.”

On information, the deputy commissioner and superintendent of police visited the spots and assured that the criminals would be brought to book shortly.

A case was filed with Baliadangi Police Station against unnamed criminals in this connection.

“Police are trying to trace the criminals within the shortest possible time,” said Khairul Anam, officer-in-charge of Baliadangi Police Station.



A view shows a building of the National University of Urban Economy heavily damaged by a Russian missile strike, amid Russia’s attack on Ukraine, in central Kharkiv, Ukraine yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Battle for Bakhmut intensifying

Says head of Russia’s Wagner group as Ukrainian forces ‘fighting to the last’

### AGENCIES

Heavy fighting was underway in the northern parts of the frontline hotspot Bakhmut yesterday, while Russian missile strikes on Ukraine’s second-largest city Kharkiv wounded five people.

Despite the flow of Western weapons to Ukraine, Russia has in recent days claimed gains around war-ravaged Bakhmut in the eastern region of Donetsk.

However, the head of Russia’s mercenary group Wagner said yesterday that the Ukrainian army was not retreating and that fighting raged on in northern parts of Bakhmut.

“In the northern quarters of Artemovsk, fierce battles are going on for every street,

every house, every stairwell,” Yevgeny Prigozhin said in a statement, referring to Bakhmut by its old name.

“The Ukrainian armed forces are fighting to the last,” he said.

Russian forces have been trying to seize control of Bakhmut in the eastern region of Donetsk for months in what has become the longest and bloodiest battle since Russia invaded Ukraine last February, reports AFP.

The fight for Bakhmut has turned the town with a pre-war population of roughly 75,000 into a ghost town dotted with hedgehog anti-tank defences and burnt-out cars. The town has no water, gas or electricity.

## Rohingya man shot dead in Ukhiya

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Cox’s Bazar*

A Rohingya man was shot dead by criminals early yesterday in Ukhiya, Cox’s Bazar.

Noor Boshor, 33, of Kutupalong refugee camp, was a night guard for an NGO based in the camp, said Syed Harun-ur-Rashid, additional deputy inspector general of the Armed Police Battalion (APBn).

Quoting family, he said, Noor left home for work early in the morning.

His body was later found on the road at Kutupalong 2 (east) camp.

“On information, APBn members rushed to the spot and recovered his bullet-hit body,” said Syed Harun, also commanding officer of APBn-14 in Cox’s Bazar.

Police initially suspect that the killing might have taken place as a result of an internal feud between the Rohingya refugees inside the camp.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

## Relocation of zero-line Rohingyas begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The process of relocating stranded Rohingyas who fled into Bangladesh territory from a zero-line refugee camp amid violence began yesterday.

To this end, at least 180 Rohingyas from 35 families were taken to a transit camp in Ukhiya’s Kutupalong, said Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Mohammad Mizanur Rahman.

They are among the nearly 3,000 people who fled the gunfights between two Myanmar armed groups near the Tambru border of Bandarban’s Naikhongchhari upazila.

## Panel mayor sued over sexual harassment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

A female councillor in Dinajpur’s Ghoraghat filed a case against a panel mayor on Saturday night for sexually harassing her.

She also lodged a written complaint to the Deputy Commissioner’s office against Abdul Kader, panel mayor of Ghoraghat Municipality.

Contacted, Abdul denied the allegations.

## Man crushed to death by train

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Moulvibazar*

A 32-year-old man was crushed under a train near Kulaura Rail Station of Kulaura upazila in Moulvibazar yesterday morning.

The incident occurred at the level crossing in Porinagor area, said Jahanara Begum, officer-in-charge of Kulaura Railway Police.

## Operations of 5 medical colleges suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The activities of five medical colleges have been suspended due to a lack of quality education programmes, Health Minister Zahid Maleque told parliament yesterday.

The suspended private medical colleges are Nightingale Medical College, Ashulia, Dhaka; Northern International Medical College, Dhaka; Aichi Medical College, Uttara, Dhaka; Northern Private Medical College, Rangpur; and Shah Mokhdum Medical College, Rajshahi.

## Restaurant manager shot by landlord

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Narayanganj*

A restaurant manager was shot and injured by the building’s landlord at Chasara in Narayanganj yesterday following a feud over water supply.

The incident occurred in front of the restaurant called “Sultan Bhai Kachchi” around 9:30pm.

Azhar Talukdar, 65, who shot the manager, Shafiur Rahman Kajal, 58, was later held by police.

# Pilots’ blunder, cover-up put 500 lives at risk

FROM PAGE 1

The promotion was, however, rescinded a day after this paper called the carrier and enquired about the probes into the incident and the pilots in question.

The pilots deliberately concealed the information about damaging the engines.

After overstressing the engines during a flight, it was mandatory for them to file an air-safety report. This would have ensured the immediate grounding of the aircraft, inspections of the engines, and if needed, replacement of the engines altogether.

Filing the report is a Biman flight safety protocol. The pilots did not do that.

They allegedly erased the “maintenance message and fault code message” that should have automatically popped up in the plane’s instrument panel. This is according to multiple investigation reports prepared for the government by several agencies, including Biman.

Everything the pilots tried to hide, however, came out because the Dash-8’s engines automatically reported to its maker Pratt & Whitney that they had been damaged and let the cat out of the bag.

Biman conducted an investigation but the findings of the investigation report, submitted in March 2022, never saw the light of day.

Biman also had to pay Tk 16.5 crore to fix the plane which was just a year old. This incident also jacked up insurance premiums for all aircraft in Biman’s fleet.

When The Daily Star asked about why he did this, the pilot who was in command refused to comment.

### THE MISTAKES, COVER-UP

The damage was done during the 2:20pm flight BG601 from Dhaka to Sylhet on February 1, 2022. The plane had 71 passengers.

The pilot in command was 42-year-old Capt Ali Rubyat Chowdhury and his first officer was 27-year-old Rafi Uz Zaman. At the time of the flight, Ali Rubyat had eight times more flying hours under his belt than Zaman.

The investigation report states that the plane took off at 2:33pm and at 2,000 feet altitude, the pilot set the airspeed to 165 knots (nautical miles per hour), which was 20 knots less than the standard operating procedure for the plane.

“As per approved Dash 8 Q400 standard operating procedure, normal climb speed is 185 knots,”

said Biman’s investigation report.

While climbing the next 9,790 feet, the pilot changed the airspeed thrice in four minutes, before finally setting it to 170 knots.

“The captain said that they wanted to climb faster to avoid cumulonimbus [thunderclouds] clouds. This technique to climb out of the weather is not supported by the standard operating procedure,” said the report. The meteorological report for the day said that there was “no significant cloud”.

The pilot said that they hit turbulence at 12,000 feet just a few seconds after he set 170 knots airspeed.

He said that 12 seconds into the turbulence, the “ice detected” light flashed, meaning ice had started forming on the wings.

However, his statement was not supported by the flight data recorder, which is popularly known as a black box and is an electronic recording device that all commercial planes have to facilitate incident investigations.

As the aircraft’s speed was 15 knots below the standard minimum of 185, to begin with, the icing conditions supposedly sent the plane’s speed plummeting, the pilots claimed.

“As the selected speed was 170 knots, the speed went [...] to 162 knots,” said the report, adding, “They [the pilots] could not recognise the speed requirement in icing conditions.”

As per the aircraft’s manual, they should have maintained 210 knots above 10,000 feet, the report said.

Setting 170 knots was in violation of standard procedure, it added.

The pilots claimed that they were losing altitude but the flight data recorder mentions nothing of that sort.

When the speed supposedly dropped to 152 knots, the pilot disengaged the autopilot and pushed both engines to “emergency” power level, which compromises engine components.

The turbine temperature shot up by over 100 degrees. The temperature should have been 880 degrees Celsius tops, but it shot up to 1,004 and 1,006 degrees Celsius, causing metals inside the engines to melt.

The report states that yanking the plane into emergency power was a deviation from the aircraft operating manual. This power level is for emergencies like trying to avoid a mountain and once this is used, the

plane’s engines must be inspected and if needed, overhauled.

While explaining as to why they put the engines on emergency mode, the pilots told the investigation committee that there was severe turbulence and “wind shear”, or erratic winds over a short distance.

“It was in their words, a life and death situation, still they did not submit any air safety report,” noted the investigators. This is a violation of the safety manual.

In addition, the operations manual says that if the plane is pushed to emergency power, it is to be reported to the aircraft maintenance log, but that was not done either.

“Both the captain and first officer mentioned that after landing [at Sylhet], the captain advised ground engineers to check for any defects/ fault messages in the audio and radio control display unit [ARCDU], and the airframe [plane’s structure]. So there were suspected defects. Instead of writing the details of suspicion they recorded ‘nil’ in the aircraft maintenance log,” said the investigation report.

There is more: the committee found that ARCDU had no message about the engines’ parameters having been exceeded and suspected that the pilots had erased it.

“It appears that either no maintenance message was displayed due to an aircraft system glitch or because the message was erased,” said the investigators.

Another report by a government agency said, “The pilot tried to hide the whole incident by wiping out the maintenance message on the ARCDU.”

### HOW THE COVER-UP FAILED

Approximately an hour after the plane landed in Sylhet, Biman Engineering Services got a notification from Pratt & Whitney.

“CAMP Systems Canada, the engine manufacturer nominated vendor, provides Engine Health Monitoring Services for Biman Dash 8-Q400 fleet. [...] the three brand new Dash 8 Q400 aircraft can transmit data automatically,” said the report.

This newspaper has a copy of the notification sent by CAMP.

Biman Engineering Services told the Maintenance Control Centre to investigate, but they could not find any pilot report about such an incident or maintenance message in the plane’s systems.

“Pilots’ ‘nil’ entry into the aircraft maintenance log and no-fault code

or message in the aircraft system created confusion in the engineering services team, especially as it involved simultaneous removal of both engines from only a one-year-old aircraft,” said the report.

The next day, Engineering Services contacted Pratt & Whitney, and the airframe manufacturer De-Havilland Canada.

Both analysed the data and recommended grounding the plane and taking the engines out and sending them to an overhaul facility.

But by then, the plane had flown seven flights, any of which could have ended in a disaster, said the investigation report.

Repairing the engines cost Biman Tk 16.5 crore “since the damage of the engines was solely the pilots’ fault”. That’s why the insurance company did not bear the cost, said a show-cause order signed by Biman Managing Director Shafiul Azim on December 20, 2022.

In addition, the plane had to be grounded for three months, leading to a decrease in the number of domestic flights, and depriving Biman of major revenue at a time when the company was still paying monthly instalments and insurance premiums for the aircraft.

The insurance premium of this aircraft was also hiked by a large margin, according to the document.

Insiders said that all the aircraft in the fleet saw a similar hike as a result of this incident.

When asked for an explanation, the pilot blamed the turbulence and wind shear.

In an email sent to the deputy chief of safety on February 13, 2022, Capt Ali Rubyat claimed that they “suddenly got hit by severe wind shear” and “both of us were struggling to keep the aircraft’s wings level and prevent altitude loss because of the violent force of the shear”.

But multiple investigations called him out on that. “It is evident from a holistic review that the pilot either has no idea about wind shears or is knowingly taking refuge in falsehood,” said one report prepared for the government.

The Biman probe stated, “They mentioned the wind shear encounter [...] However, the committee does not consider this as wind shear.”

Biman’s probe also ruled out illness as a cause of the mistake, saying the pilots were in perfect health.

To the investigators, the pilots

board, we formed a committee for further investigation one week ago which will provide evidence from the technical sides and all issues of the incident [will be presented] impartially and fairly so that no one is punished unlawfully,” he said on Wednesday.

A day after getting a call from The Daily Star, the promotion order dated January 22, 2023, was re-issued and signed again with Ali Rubyat dropped.

This newspaper called Azim again to ask why Rubyat’s promotion was cancelled. “The Biman management made the decision that the two pilots will not be able to avail any promotion until the departmental action against them is resolved,” he said.

When asked why he was considered in the first place, Azim said, “If they were not given promotions, they would have lagged behind.”

Capt Ali Rubyat Chowdhury told The Daily Star that since there is still an investigation going on, he will not make any comments.

The Daily Star could not reach first officer Zaman.

## Why should we

FROM PAGE 1

The Investment Building would be used as offices of three agencies — BIDA, Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA), and National Skills Development Authority (NSDA).

Hasina said the production cost of electricity per kilowatt is Tk 12, but its price is only Tk 6. “Despite this, the government is criticised for electricity tariff.”

In the UK, electricity price has increased by 150 percent. “We have not yet reached that stage [such a bad situation],” she said.

The PM asked the countrymen to make larger investments in the food and agro-processing industries, particularly in the 100 economic zones that are now being developed throughout the country.

She said there is a high demand for food in the world due to the fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.

Food prices have soared significantly, she said.

PM’s Private Industry and Investment Adviser Salman Fazlur Rahman presided over the event.

BIDA Executive Chairman Lokman Hossain Miah delivered the welcome speech.