



"President Putin cannot continue to attack neighbours. He wants to control Ukraine and...he is planning for more war."

Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg



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Biman paying for hiring unqualified Boeing 777 pilots

ZYMA ISLAM and RASHIDUL HASAN

In February last year, Biman recruited a batch of contractual pilots to fly its Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, claiming that it needed pilots immediately due to a shortage.

A year later, only five of the batch of 14 pilots, have taken to the air. The rest are lost in a quagmire of forged certificates, incompetence and failed licensing exams.

Biman spent a huge amount for their inflated salaries and training, all of which are now money gone down the drain.

Its own operation manual mandates that to fly the Boeing 777, the world's largest passenger jet in production, all first officers must have at least 300 flying hours in the preceding two years under their belt.

But none of the recruits met that criterion.

Bangladesh Airlines Pilot's Association alleged corruption and foul play. "Why would unqualified pilots be hired contractually when qualified pilots could be promoted?" they had said last year.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) called it a "safety concern" in official correspondence and even the Prime Minister's Office intervened and asked the national flag carrier to investigate.

According to a document of Biman dated February 13 this year, out of the 14 recruited, only four captains and a first officer passed all the tests to fly the plane.

Biman, however, has been flouting rule after rule and going to great lengths to protect the pilots who failed.

Take First Officer Sadia Ahmed as an example. A recent investigation revealed that she submitted a forged educational certificate, claiming that she was a student of the science group during her higher secondary school exams.

Data retrieved from the Dhaka Board of Education, however, shows that she was a student of humanities, passing in second division from Shaheed Anwar Girls' College in Bangla, English, civics, psychology, and home economics.

The CAAB rulebook mandates that all commercial pilots must have an educational qualification of HSC (Science) or equivalent with mandatory physics and mathematics.

Sadia is the wife of Biman Chief of Training Captain Saizid Ahmed.

Sadia is not the only pilot in this batch of recruits to have forged a document. First officer Al Mehedi Islam had his contract terminated for having forged his Airline Transport Pilot Licence (ATPL), which is required to be a pilot in command.

The licence had a forged signature of Shirin Sultana, former assistant director of flight safety at CAAB.

Sultana refused to comment on the issue but said the matter was being handled by higher authorities.

However, a copy of the results of his tests taken in October 2020 showed that out of 14 exams required for the ATPL licence, Mehedi did not sit for 11, and failed two of the three he sat for.

A Biman document dated February 12, 2023, confirmed that it had ended Mehedi's tenure with the carrier late last year.

FAILING TESTS

To fly a certain aircraft, all pilots have to obtain a type rating for that aircraft.

- ➔ Only five out of 14 pilots recruited are qualified for Boeing 777
- ➔ Two recruits furnished fake certificates, licence
- ➔ Biman training director violated laws to protect his pilot wife
- ➔ None of the first officers had the required flying hours
- ➔ A huge amount of Biman's money going down the drain

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina poses for a photo with President Abdul Hamid at Kamalpur Haor of Kishoreganj's Mithamoin upazila during her visit to the district yesterday.

PHOTO: COURTESY BY YEASIN KABIR JOY

Vote for 'boat' in next polls

PM repeats call at Kishoreganj rally

UNB, Kishoreganj

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday reiterated her call to the people to vote for "boat" in the next general election for their continued wellbeing and further development of the country.

"If only the [party contesting the polls with] 'boat' symbol forms the government the next time as well, you will see improvement and the country will witness development," she told a rally.

The meeting was organised by Mithamoin upazila Awami League at the Mithamoin Helipad Ground.

Hasina, also the AL president, said whenever the BNP or the BNP-Jamaat alliance came to power, sufferings of the people

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Tigers up for English hustle

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Casting aside the fallout from the purported rift between national-team stalwarts Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal, Bangladesh will be hoping to continue their dominance in the 50-over format when the Tigers take on England in the first ODI at the Sher-e-Bangla National in Mirpur today. The match is scheduled to start at 12:00pm.

The three-match ODI series will also be the first assignment for newly-appointed head coach Chandika Hathurusingha and he will want his team to have an impact against the world champions.

After missing the previous series against India, ODI skipper Tamim is also set to stage a comeback, but the Tigers will undoubtedly face a stiff challenge in maintaining their dominance at home in their favoured format.

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Electricity price hiked again by 5pc

Tariff raised for 3rd time this year despite fall in fuel, energy prices in global market

ASIFUR RAHMAN

The government yesterday increased the electricity price by 5 percent, the third such hike this year, at a time when fuel and energy prices are on the decline around the world.

From today, a consumer who previously paid Tk 1,000 a month will have to pay Tk 1,050 for the same amount of electricity, according to the notification from the ministry of power, energy and mineral resources.

The weighted average price of electricity will be Tk 8.25 per kilowatt hour, up from Tk 7.86. Before January, it was Tk 7.13.

For ordinary people already battling elevated inflation for the best part of a year, this is just another sprinkling of salt in their wounds.

In the first seven months of the fiscal year, inflation averaged 8.7 percent, much above the budgetary target of 5.6 percent.

The hike in electricity comes in line with the commitment made to the International Monetary Fund for the

\$4.7 billion loan programme.

"If you look at Bangladesh, a lot of subsidies are given for gas and electricity. Who drives cars? Who consumes air conditioning? It is not the poor, it's the rich people. Those people do not deserve the subsidy they are getting in the context of a country going through a fiscal problem," said Krishna Srinivasan, director of the IMF's Asia-Pacific department, last week in New Delhi.

In their letter of intent to the IMF in December last year, Bangladesh Bank Governor Abdur Rouf Talukder and Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said they will adjust electricity prices to reduce subsidies.

"Although budget subsidies for natural gas and electricity are expected to rise significantly in fiscal 2022-23, they should remain relatively contained at 0.9 percent of GDP. We will aim at adjusting electricity prices further to reduce subsidies," they said.

The Washington-based multilateral lender said the 20 percent hike in bulk

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TORTURE OF STUDENT AT IU Hall admin was indifferent all along: probe

MOHUDDIN ALAMGIR and ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Two probe bodies have found Chhatra League activists' involvement in the torture of fresher Phulpori Khatun at Kushtia's Islamic University.

One of them has also found serious negligence on the part of the university authorities in dealing with the incident.

The probe committee formed by the university in its report said that the torture of the student at a dorm was planned, and that university Chhatra League Vice President Sanjida Chowdhury was the mastermind.

The probe body, constituted by the Kushtia DC following a High Court order, said the hall provost and others did not take any steps to prevent such an incident. The university proctor was also indifferent, it added.

Yesterday, Deputy Attorney General Tushar Kanti Roy placed the two reports

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DOMESTIC WORK 10-yr-old girl 'tortured to death' in city

Police say injury marks found all over her body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The body of a 10-year-old domestic worker, which police recovered from a freezing van in front of a hospital in Moghbazar on Monday night, bore marks of torture, hospital and police sources said.

Police and family members suspect she was tortured to death, and the body was kept inside the freezing van with the intention to bury it secretly.

Law enforcers arrested the child's employer Farhad Badhan Mou, 69, after a murder case was filed by the victim's father with Shahjahanpur Police Station.

Mou claimed she is the joint editor of a weekly newspaper.

This newspaper could not get the arrestee's comments regarding the allegations.

Shah Alam Md Akhtarul Islam, additional deputy commissioner of Sabujbagh zone police, said they suspect it to be a murder and that it took place two days ago, as the body was found to be decomposing even in the freezing van.

"The employer tried to hide the body.

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Firefighters working to put out a blaze at HP Chemicals Ltd in Tingaon area of Narayanganj's Araihaazar upazila yesterday. The fire, which broke out at the factory's main production unit around 1:30pm, was brought under control around 5:30pm. No casualties were reported.

PHOTO: SAURAV HOSSAIN SIAM

ASYLUM IN EUROPE Number of Bangladeshi applicants up by 70pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 34,000 Bangladeshis sought international protection in Europe last year, a much higher number than the previous year.

In 2021, the European Union received some 20,000 asylum applications from Bangladesh.

According to a new analysis of the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUA) released last week, a total of 9,66,000 foreigners applied to the EU+ countries for international protection, up more than 50 percent from 2021, and the most since 2016.

The largest asylum applicant groups were Syrians, Afghans and Turks, but applications were also high for a wide range of other nationalities, while the caseload of applications pending decision hit its highest level since 2017.

The number of around one million asylum seekers is a significant increase from 2021 and is owed in part to the removal of Covid-19-related restrictions and longer-term underlying trends such as conflicts and food insecurity in many

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