

Biman training chief removed

Move comes following slew of allegations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman removed Capt Sazid Ahmed from the post of chief of training with immediate effect yesterday.



He will act as a line pilot of the Boeing 777-300ER from now on.

The decision was made following allegations against Capt Sazid that include misusing power, giving undue privileges to his pilot wife Sadia Ahmed and others, and discriminating against female cockpit crew members.

The move came after the national flag carrier on March 6 formed a three-member investigation committee to look into alleged irregularities in hiring pilots for the Boeing 777-300ER and paying them hefty salaries.

The committee was also asked to investigate the alleged forgery of pilot Sadia Ahmed's HSC certificate.

Biman formed the probe body in response to a report by The Daily Star published on March 1.

Headlined "Biman paying for hiring unqualified Boeing 777 pilots", the newspaper reported that in February last year, Biman recruited a batch of contractual pilots to fly its Boeing 777-300ERs, 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 were 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.

Biman's 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, including Sadia, met that criterion.

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

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People search the rubble of a house following a Russian strike in the village of Velyka Vilshanytsia, some 50km from Lviv, Ukraine yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

ROAD CRASHES

Funds there, victims yet to get compensation

Trustee board formed for this yet to function fully

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Although vehicle owners have been giving money for the fund for road accident victims since January, the authorities could not yet start handing out the compensations yet.

The trustee board, formed in October 2021 for the management of the fund, could not start full-fledged operations for several reasons.

The Road Transport and Highways Division on Tuesday even issued a circular regarding changes to be made in the board.

These developments came over two months after the rules of the Road Transport Act-2018 came into force, though the absence of the rules was cited as one of the reasons behind the board, led by Bangladesh Road Transport Authority

chairman, being non-functional.

BRTA has received several applications for compensations but could not yet start giving the money to the victims.

Road transport authority sources said the money collected for the fund, along with earlier contributions by vehicle owners, goes directly to the finance ministry.

BRTA recently wrote to the ministry, requesting a transfer of the money to the fund, but it is yet to get a response, the sources said.

BRTA Chairman Nur Mohammad Mazumder yesterday told The Daily Star, "The problems regarding the fund are almost over. We will call a board meeting soon."

Under the Motor Vehicles Ordinance-1983, victims or their family members can seek compensation at the

Motor Accident Claim Tribunal for deaths, injuries, and damage caused to properties in road crashes.

But the ordinance was repealed after the Road Transport Act-2018 act came into force in November 2019, narrowing the victims' scope for getting compensation.

In some rare cases, victims file writ petitions with the High Court for compensation.

Hundreds of people are killed and injured in road crashes every year – a serious cause of concern for the country.

As per Road Transport Act, the government will set up a fund for compensation and treatment, if necessary, for road crash victims, and a trustee board will manage the fund and related works.

On October 10, 2021, the government

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Rajuk not sure

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the original design was approved in 1983. Besides, the construction was done in various phases.

Tonmoy Das, member (development control) at Rajuk, told The Daily Star that the building's current holding number was 180/1 and its original holding number was different.

"Now we are looking for owners and documents of the nearby buildings to determine the old holding number with which we will search the documents," he said.

The owner of this building has died and his sons cannot say anything about the documents, he said, adding that their mother was too old to remember anything about the documents.

Rajuk formed a committee convened by Major (retired) Shamsuddin Ahmed Chowdhury to decide the fate of the building.

Shamsuddin said the explosion damaged nine of the 24 columns and the structure needed to be stabilised first.

"The committee will conduct a detailed assessment from an engineering perspective by Friday. After that, we will decide whether the building should be retrofitted or demolished," he said.

Deaths won't stop as justice a mirage

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The deadly fire at the BM Container Depot in Chattogram's Sitakunda on June 4 last year shook the whole nation with the scale of the disaster and its sheer human cost. Yet, it has now become a distant memory.

The fire killed 48, including 10 firefighters, and the depot was up and running within five months.

The Detective Branch of police in Chattogram is still investigating the incident and it is yet to submit a report. Nobody is in jail in connection with the incident.

While investigators were dragging their foot with the probe, there was another fire at the very depot in December, indicating lessons were not learnt.

On July 8, 2021, a fire at a factory of Hashem Foods and Beverages Ltd killed 51 people, of whom at least 20 were children.

The children were engaged in hazardous labour at the factory, and the gates were locked, preventing them from escaping the fire.

Hashem Foods and Beverages Ltd is yet to suffer any consequences. All its units in Rupganj of Narayanganj

Writing was on the wall

FROM PAGE 1

"We have been conducting the rescue operation since the morning. So far, we came to know there are no missing persons. There is no other body inside the building," Md Akhtaruzzaman, assistant director (Dhaka) of Fire Service and Civil Defence, told reporters on the spot.

Besides, another victim of the Siddikbazar tragedy died at the Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery.

Yasin Arafat, who was on life support with 55 per cent burns, breathed his last around 8:00pm, Samanta Lal Sen, chief coordinator of the institute, told The Daily Star.

Arafat, 26, of Noakhali's Begumganj, used to live with his uncle in Moghbazar, and worked at the Bangladesh Sanitary.

Eight others undergoing treatment at the burn institute are in critical condition.

The death toll from the blast now rose to 22.

The incident left over 100 injured and 29 of them are now undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital and Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery.

POLICE FINDINGS

The explosion took place in the basement around 4:45pm on Tuesday and ripped through the seven-storey

building in Siddikbazar, a major commercial area in the capital.

The top four floors of the seven-storey building, known as Queen Sanitary Market, on North-South Road were for residential use while the rest for commercial.

Police said Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk), the public agency responsible for coordinating urban development in Dhaka, approved the plan for a 10-storey building in 1992.

Haji Mohammad Rezaur Rahman, the father of arrested Rahman brothers, first constructed the basement and ground floor.

He then started an eatery called Café Kitchen on the ground floor with a kitchen in the basement. In 2004, he constructed six more floors.

This kitchen used to get commercial gas supply from Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Limited. The line was surrendered to Titas in writing after the café was closed.

But the gas connections to different floors of the building remained operational. So the accumulation of gas from any leakage was possible and just a spark could lead to an explosion, police said.

After the closure of the café, the owner initially rented the basement to be used as a warehouse and later it was rented out to the Bangladesh Sanitary owner.

Rezaur Rahman died in 2011, and his three sons, two daughters and wife are the current owners.

According to the DB findings, the septic tank of the building is seemingly beneath a narrow lane – not more than three feet wide – between the Queen Sanitary Market and an adjacent five-storey building.

Outdoor units of heavy-duty ACs of the shops in the market faced that lane. None of those ACs were serviced since 2010. They did not clean the septic tank of the building ever.

Had there been a car parking in the basement, there would have been an air ventilation system in place and such an explosion might not have happened, they said.

Mentioning some other possible reasons for the explosion, police also said as the septic tank was not cleaned for a long time and it is possible that biogas was deposited and caused the explosion.

There were five shops on the ground floor while the first floor housed two clothing shops and a sanitary shop. If the ACs in those were not serviced regularly or had any faults, that also could have caused the blast.

Harun Or Rashid said, "We talked to the present owners of the building who do not even know where the building's septic tank is located.

"Our investigation will continue taking everything into consideration."

in their remaining working lives.

Shahbagh police eventually charged truncheon on them and beat up the handcapped workers to chase them away.

Meanwhile, the owner of the factory was able to climb the political ladder. He joined ruling party politics in 2018 and in May last year, he was elected president of Matshajibi League's Dhaka city north unit.

At the court, the trial goes on at snail's pace with the recording of a handful of witnesses' testimonies in seven years.

On Dec 24, 2021, a fire broke out in the engine room of MV Abhijan-10 on the Sugandha river in Jhalakathi. At least 41 died.

Vessel owner Hamzalal Sheikh and two others were arrested but they are now out on bail.

Even in the case of the Rana Plaza collapse, the worst disaster in Bangladesh's history that caused 1,140 deaths, only one out of the 41 people accused is in jail.

The charges were framed in 2016 but none of the 40 could be arrested in six long years.

KHALEDA'S JAIL TERM

Law ministry gets petition for extending suspension

UNB, Dhaka

The law ministry yesterday received a petition from the home ministry seeking another extension of the suspension of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's jail term.

"We have received a file from the home ministry regarding the extension of Khaleda Zia's conditional release. We'll send it back to the home ministry with our recommendations," Law Minister Anisul Huq told UNB.

Replying to a question on whether the BNP chief would be allowed to go abroad for treatment this time, the minister said he still did not see the file. "But I can say that the previous conditions will remain in our recommendations."

Khaleda's younger brother Shamim Eskandar submitted a fresh application to the home ministry seeking an extension of her release period.

In the application, he asked to relax the conditions of her release and allow taking her abroad for treatment.

The government extended Khaleda's conditional release in two corruption cases several times.

The former prime minister was sent to Old Dhaka Central Jail after she was sentenced to five years imprisonment by a special court in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case on February 8, 2018.

She was convicted in the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case later.

The 77-year-old BNP chief has stayed at her Gulshan residence since her release. A special team of her personal physicians has been overseeing her treatment.

Man gets death penalty for killing his cousin after rape

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka tribunal yesterday sentenced a man to death for killing his cousin after rape in the capital's Bhasantek in 2018.

Judge Begum Shamsunnahar of Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-5 handed down the verdict.

Md Tariqul Islam Raihan was later sent to jail with a conviction warrant.

He had raped the girl, a first-year student of Dhaka's Pallabi Shahid Zia Degree College, around 9:00am on February 24, 2018.

Raihan then strangled her to death and later dumped her body at Dhaka's Airport Railway Station area.

Following the incident, the girl's uncle Nurul Islam filed a case with Dhaka Railway Police Station. Police then recovered the body and arrested Raihan.

Tigers show authority in win

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dominated Mark Wood early could all be cited as singularly memorable events of the game as Bangladesh won the first T20I at Chattogram's Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday.

However, all those things happening during the same game brought a much-needed collective effort to the forefront in a confidence-boosting victory.

Having won the toss, skipper Shakib Al Hasan elected to field, citing that they were not quite sure what total they needed. During the first few overs of the England innings, the decision appeared to backfire.

Buttler and Phil Salt started steadily and soon switched to aggressive mode, with two dropped catches in the sixth over – one by Nasum Ahmed off his own bowling before Shakib dropped a sitter to let Buttler off on 19 – saw England put on 51 in the Powerplay. And they were looking for more.

Salt departed in the 10th over, getting the slightest nick through to Liton Das and not even realising he had done so until umpire raised his finger. His partnership with Buttler had set the tone and, although Dawid Malan was dismissed cheaply by Shakib, Buttler kept powering through, hitting to back-

to back sixes off Hasan Mahmud on way to his fifty. England reached 126 for two in 15 overs before Mustafizur Rahman removed Ben Duckett in the 16th.

Hasan had been expensive in his first two overs, conceding 21, but he came back remarkably, removing Buttler after a 42-ball 67 and Sam Curran. More importantly, his last two overs produced just five runs. England run-rate's steep climb was thwarted and they managed just 156 for six.

The way Bangladesh started their chase was crucial and a surprise was in store as Rony Talukdar came in to open with Liton Das. The duo started positively, taking the attack to the England pacers.

After Rony and Liton departed to a 14-ball 21 and nine-ball 12 respectively, Shanto and debutant Towhid Hridoy took over. The Powerplay produced 54 runs as Hridoy showed he was a proper player. Then Shanto smashed Wood for four fours on the trot in the seventh over. The game was set.

Shanto smacked a 30-ball 51 while Hridoy got 24 during a 65-run stand off just 39 deliveries. Shakib came in and, along with Afif Hossain, produced a 46-run stand during an unbroken stand to take Tigers to a tremendous win.

Tk 9cr of Tk 11.25cr looted

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when officials of Money Plant were heading towards Ashulia EPZ in a microbus from Mirpur DOHS, with Tk 11.25 crore in four trunks, Morshed Alam, deputy commissioner of DMP's Uttara Division, told reporters at his office.

There was a manager, a supervisor, two guards and a driver of Money Plant in the vehicle. When it reached near Uttara Centre metro rail station, seven-eight men in a black microbus intercepted the vehicle, he added.

"The door of the microbus was so weak that the robbers dislodged it. They forced three passengers and the driver to get down. After driving the microbus a few yards, they pulled over; moved the four trunks into the black microbus and fled," the police official said.

Morshed said that the security agency was carrying the huge sum without taking any help from the DMP.

He said that they identified the black microbus in footage which was captured by the dashcam of a car.

Later, a DB team located the vehicle in Khilkhet area around 3:45pm; detained two men, including the driver, and seized the vehicle and three trunks from there.

Abul Kashem Md Shirin, managing director of DBBL, said the bank appointed a private company to carry

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2020
N'ganj mosque blast killed 25, chargesheet submitted

2021
Hashem Foods fire killed 51, factory reopened

2021
Blast at Moghbazar shop killed 12, investigation ongoing

2021
Fire on launch killed 41, investigation ongoing

2022
BM Depot fire killed 48, factory reopened