

PASSENGER'S HEART ATTACK

Biman fires captain for negligence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman has fired Capt Dildar Ahmed Tufail for negligence in duty while captaining a flight on January 15.

He was reportedly napping in the crew rest area, leaving the cockpit of the Boeing 777 300ER technically unmanned.

A passenger had a heart attack during the overnight flight to Dhaka from Jeddah.

Capt Tufail did not declare medical emergency and landed the plane in Dhaka four hours after the incident.

The passenger, Kabir Ahmed, a migrant worker from Noakhali, was pronounced dead on arrival at a city hospital.

Aviation rules allow captains to take rest on flights longer than 8 hours, but only when a relief crew, which is usually on standby, takes over.

There was no relief crew as this was only a six-hour flight.

The cockpit is supposed to be manned by two pilots capable of flying the plane independently if required.

On this particular flight, Capt Tufail was the pilot in command. He had Irfan Ul Haq beside him who was under training and not qualified to fly the plane. The flight was actually Irfan's test flight.

Capt Fariduzzaman, a retired pilot, was evaluating Irfan from the jump seat in the cockpit. He also didn't have a pilot's licence as he was well over the age limit of 65 for being a pilot.

According to sources, when Capt Tufail went into the rest area, he left the plane in the hands of people who are not authorised to fly the plane.

Following an announcement by the cabin crew, a doctor on board, ABM Haroon, managing director of Samorita Hospital, advised emergency landing.

According to aviation rules, in such cases, a "medical emergency" is to be raised by the pilot, which notifies every nearby airport of a possible arrival with the need for emergency medical support.

However, Tufail did not divert or raise the alarm, confirmed civil aviation insiders looking into the event. The mandatory air safety report was also not filed after the flight.

Following an investigation, Biman authorities found evidence of Capt Tufail's negligence and served him a show-cause notice.

As the authorities were not convinced by his reply, Biman fired him.



A view shows destroyed vehicles following what was said to be Ukrainian forces' shelling in the course of Russia-Ukraine conflict in the town of Shebekino in the Belgorod region, Russia, in this handout image released yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Russia reports attacks on oil refineries, town

Ukrainian shelling kills five in Russian-occupied Luhansk; four hurt in a town in Belgorod border region

REUTERS, Moscow/Kyiv

Russia said Ukrainian artillery hit a Russian town for a third time this week and drones struck two oil refineries in an uptick in attacks on Russian territory as Ukraine prepares a Western-backed push to end Russia's invasion.

Inside Ukraine, Russian-installed officials said five people had been killed in Ukrainian army shelling of a Russian-occupied village in eastern Luhansk region, where Russia has fought months of bloody and inconclusive battles to try to seize more territory.

There was no immediate comment from Ukraine on the Russian reports, in a week when the two countries accused each other of spreading terror in their capitals with air strikes.

Thousands of civilians have been killed in Ukraine and towns and cities laid to waste since Moscow's forces invaded 15 months ago, but Tuesday marked only the second time Moscow had come under direct fire - from a flurry of drones - although oil and military facilities elsewhere in Russia have been hit.

In the Russian town of Shebekino in Belgorod border region, two of four wounded people were hospitalised and

shells damaged an apartment building, four homes and a school as well as power lines, regional governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said.

Gladkov said on Saturday that he had come under artillery fire when trying to enter the town, about 7 km north of the border with Ukraine, and that two industrial facilities were hit there on Monday.

Both sides say they are targeting the buildup of each other's forces and military equipment ahead of Ukraine's counteroffensive, which it says will come in days or weeks, to try to drive Russian forces out of its east and south.

Germany, once Russia's biggest energy market, reiterated that it deemed such Ukrainian attacks on Russian soil legitimate in terms of international law, and announced a sharp downgrading of diplomatic representation in both Russia and Germany.

Ukraine's general staff said its forces had fended off 22 Russian attacks in eastern Ukraine over the past day and Ukrainian aircraft had carried out 11 strikes on Russian personnel and military equipment, without specifying where.

Noab demands withdrawal of tax, duties on newsprint

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Newspaper Owners Association of Bangladesh has demanded the withdrawal of taxes and duties on newsprint in the budget for the fiscal year 2023-24.

In a press release yesterday, Noab said it made the demands during a pre-budget discussion with the National Board of Revenue. The release mentioned that NBR Chairman Abu Hena Md Rahmatul Muneem promised to consider the demands.

The release, signed by Noab President AK Azad, said newspapers have become a struggling industry in the era of globalisation and digital media. Due to the pandemic, there has been a significant decline in newspaper circulation and advertisements, making it impossible to cover production costs with advertising income.

The statement mentioned that even a year and a half ago, the price of foreign newsprint was \$570 a tonne when a dollar was worth Tk 85, but now it has risen to over \$700 and a dollar is worth Tk 109.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

PM may visit Switzerland this month

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is likely to visit Switzerland to attend the "World of Work Summit: Social Justice for All" to be held in Geneva on June 14-15.



The summit is a high-level forum for global voices to address the need for increased, coordinated and coherent action in support of social justice.

It will provide an opportunity to discuss and inform the proposal to forge a Global Coalition for Social Justice, which was welcomed by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office at its 347th Session.

Once finalised, the PM will visit Geneva from June 13 to June 16, a diplomatic source told UNB.

The summit will feature addresses by heads of state and government, UN secretary general, ILO director-general and high-level representatives of employers' and workers' organisations.

It will provide a forum for participants to share their vision of, and priorities for, social justice and to showcase the actions they are taking and they commit to take to advance social justice.

Man dies falling from roof of CU shuttle train

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A man was killed after falling from the roof of a shuttle train of Chittagong University at Chowdhury Hat Railway Station yesterday afternoon.

The dead is Mohammad Yasin, 30, of Fatehpur village in Chattogram's Hathazari upazila, said police.

Yasin boarded the train from the Chittagong University Station. He tried to climb to the roof when the train was approaching Chowdhury Hat Station around 2:00pm, said witnesses.

He then fell down and seriously hurt himself, they added.

The CU students and locals took him to a nearby clinic, but doctors there referred him to Chattogram Medical College Hospital.

CMCH doctors declared him dead around 2:50pm, said Nurul Alam, in-charge at Chattogram Medical College Hospital's police camp.

Woman found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Police yesterday recovered the body of an unidentified woman from a building in Savar's Bank Colony area.

The victim is aged around 35, said Zahirul Islam, sub-inspector of Savar Model Police Station, adding that her body was found in a plastic sack under the staircase of the building.

Police primarily suspect the woman was suffocated to death, he added.

A team of Police Bureau of Investigation is working to identify the body, said Dipok Chandra Saha, officer-in-charge of Savar Model Police Station.

Meanwhile, police arrested a man for quizzing.

EU chief hails 'big progress' in Moldova membership bid

AFP, Chisinau

Brussels chief Ursula von der Leyen congratulated Moldova's President Maia Sandu yesterday on making "big progress" in the reforms required to back a bid for European Union membership.

The President of the European Commission was making a joint press appearance in Moldova's capital Chisinau, on the eve of a major summit of European leaders.

"Moldova is at the heart of Europe. Moldova is Europe. And today and tomorrow, the whole of Europe is Moldova," von der Leyen said.

Moldova hopes that its hosting of dozens of leaders at today's European Political Community (EPC) summit will showcase the strength of its European ambition.

28 arrested

FROM PAGE 1

According to the report, 545 political activists were injured during 35 political events and in electoral violence.

At least 24 cases filed against BNP men led to the arrest and imprisonment of 565 leaders and activists.

However, the BNP has claimed that between May 19 and May 24, at least 650 of its leaders and activists were arrested across the country and 148 cases were filed against 5,000 BNP men.

Meanwhile, violence against women and children continues to rise as 457 cases of violence against women and children were filed in May. Ninety-three of those were rape cases.

There have been seven incidents of persecution of religious and ethnic minorities at various levels, it adds.

At least 11 people died in prison in May.

Bracing for budget of self-preservation

FROM PAGE 1

happening, as disclosed by a recent survey of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies: in 2022, 51 percent of Dhaka's total poor were new.

In other words, had Kamal managed to ramp up the government's revenue base in line with the economic progress, the Bangladesh economy would not be staggering from the blows of the Ukraine war more than a year on, when much of the world has learnt to live with it.

Neither would it have to desperately seek budget support from development partners nor would it need to borrow heavily from banks and the Bangladesh Bank, which is fuelling inflation further.

It really seems like a losing battle, one that could have been managed with grace had Kamal worked on boosting the tax morale of the citizens during his time in office.

As of April, less than 2 percent of the population pays tax, which is more than 6 percent in neighbouring India.

Tax morale is the intrinsic motivation to pay taxes and voluntary compliance of taxpayers is a vital aspect of the tax system. It depends on the citizens' trust in the government and their satisfaction with the quality of public services received.

Corruption, especially extreme

levels of corruption, can significantly erode people's trust in the system leading to tax evasion. On the other hand, corruption in tax administration can also create opportunities to evade taxes.

Therefore, corruption can be both a reason and a tool for tax evasion. And Kamal failed to work on either.

Cost overruns in projects are always accommodated and low-priority projects were given funding. In 2022, Bangladesh was the 12th most corrupt country in the world second-most corrupt country in South Asia, according to Transparency International's Global Corruption Perception Index.

In the four years, he could neither make much headway in automating the tax administration, which would have addressed corruption in the National Board of Revenue nor expand the capacity of the organisation to be able to expand the tax net meaningfully.

Neither did he show any resolve in pushing for VAT and income tax laws befitting an economy in the 21st century, which would have made evasion costlier.

Studies show that people evade paying taxes payment when the cost of evasion is smaller than the benefits from it. Taxes are evaded because paying the bribe along with the small chance of getting caught are much

he said.

According to the CPD report, the allocation for compatible safety net programmes has declined from 1.6 percent of GDP in FY 2010 to 0.8 percent of GDP in FY 2023. In terms of the national budget, it has declined from 9.5 percent in FY 2010 to 5.0 percent in FY 2023.

The government should increase financial allocations for social safety net programmes in order to provide relief to the poor from the pressures of upcoming economic reforms, said

less costly than paying the requisite level of tax.

Similarly, the tax collectors may find it more rewarding to get paid by the taxpayers than waiting to be rewarded by the authorities for recording and collecting the correct tax payments.

Kamal continued to extend tax exemption to industries, which is not only costing the state in missed revenues but is also failing to get businesses to prepare for the competitive post-LDC world.

The narrow fiscal space also means the government was found wanting in social spending, again leaving it ill-prepared to face the challenges of graduation from the least-developed country bracket.

Which is why, today's budget holds much significance: it would be a test of the current government and Kamal's resolve and sincerity in lassoing the economy back from heading back into the hangar.

Already, the International Monetary Fund has provided guidelines on what needs doing in the upcoming fiscal year's budget in terms of revenue mobilisation, social spending, development spending and deficit financing.

It remains to be seen whether the government heeds the good advice or reverts to type.

Khan.

Referring to a study conducted by the CPD in 2020, Khan said that around 65.6 percent of the country's households that receive financial assistance under the government's social safety net programmes are ineligible for the scheme as they belong to the non-poor category.

The government should remove ineligible beneficiaries and focus on ensuring that the benefits from these safety net programmes reach the right people, added Khan.

Govt trying its best

FROM PAGE 1

economy to the path of high pre-Covid growth through dealing with the negative impacts resulting from the global economic recession, inflation and instability caused by the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war.

"Despite the severe crisis during the Covid-19 pandemic, our GDP growth was 3.45 percent in the 2019-20 fiscal year, which was one of the highest in the world during that period," she said.

The leader of the House said the GDP growth increased to 6.94 percent in the FY 2020-21 due to various steps taken by the government to boost the country's economy. "It further increased to 7.10 percent in FY 2021-22."

She highlighted various measures,

including rationalisation of government expenditures, subsidies given to the power, energy and agriculture sectors, and incentives on exports, taken by her government to keep the economy vibrant.

Responding to another question from Jatiya Party MP Syed Abu Hossain, Hasina said the government has taken different steps to control prices of essentials and that's why it has been possible to control the prices, and the poor people are benefiting from it.

Replying to a query from JP MP Rustam Ali Farazi, the premier said that it will be possible to start rail services on the Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga section of the Padma Bridge Rail Link Project by September and the Bhanga-Jashore section from June 2024.

New visa policy

FROM PAGE 1

"I have informed them that issuing visas is an internal matter of a country.... The announcement they made on the issuance of visas is their own matter," he said.

The home boss said the US wants a fair election in Bangladesh.

"The US has expressed enthusiasm about it [election] and we welcome the visa policy for that."

Asked if more US sanctions were on the way, the minister said, "It is a matter of the US. I don't know what they will do."

Regarding escorts to certain envoys on roads, Asaduzzaman said that he told the US ambassador that the security for them was being changed and the foreign missions concerned were also informed about the matter by the foreign ministry.

He said the US envoy was told about the government providing them with security with the Ansar Guard Regiment.

Arrangements will be made to

ensure security in the diplomatic areas and also during the movements of diplomats, he added.

The government on May 15 withdrew "additional police escorts" given to the heads of missions of four countries - the US, the UK, India, and Saudi Arabia.

Earlier, the home minister had said if any envoy thought that they needed additional security, then the new Ansar Guard Regiment would give protection.

Foreign debt

FROM PAGE 1

The debt servicing cost is increasing as the interest payment for these project's loans is gradually rising, according to an Economic Relations Division (ERD) official.

In the next fiscal year, the government would be using foreign loans and grant of about Tk 127,190 crore, of which about Tk 29,290 crore would be taken as budget support, which is equivalent to \$2.87 billion.