



Two brothers carry their aged and ailing mother through a partially engulfed road, with many others trailing behind, in Soldana village of Khulna's Paikgachha upazila. Water from the Shibsra river flooded multiple villages after an embankment breach during Sunday's storm. Top right, a father carries his son on his shoulders to keep him safe and dry while wading through the waterlogged Bongshal Road in the capital's Old Dhaka on their way back from school yesterday afternoon. Bottom right, locals of the fishing village in Chattogram city's Akmal Ali Road were trying to salvage whatever they could after Cyclone Remal destroyed many homes there. The photo was taken yesterday.



PHOTOS: HABIBUR RAHMAN, AMRAN HOSSAIN AND RAJIB RAIHAN

ACC can probe ex-army chief Aziz if it wants

Says Quader

STAR REPORT



Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader has said the government is not at all embarrassed over the issues involving former army chief Aziz Ahmed and ex-IGP Benazir Ahmed, and it has the courage to bring all the corrupt people to justice.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has "zero tolerance" for corruption, he said at a press conference at the AL president's Dhanmondi office in the capital yesterday, reports BSS.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, said the Anti-Corruption Commission is free to decide on the Benazir issue and the prime minister has given it the freedom.

"An investigation into his [Benazir] illegal properties is going on."

The ACC can investigate Gen (retd) Aziz if he was involved in corruption, said the AL spokesperson. Quader said the AL government is always ready to take action against corruption.

"No criminal will be spared. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has proved it," he said.

The AL leader said the BNP is now making statements about Benazir.

"But I would like to ask them: Did they put Ashraful Huda or SP Kohinor on trial? Did the BNP investigate them?"

The kingpins

FROM PAGE 1
Meanwhile, the West Bengal CID yesterday recovered human remains, including a few strands of hair, from the septic tank of a Kolkata flat, believed to be the place where Azim was killed, reports our correspondent in New Delhi, citing sources in the department.

Matching the DNA of the hair with DNA samples taken from Azim's relatives will be the easiest and most effective way to determine whether the remains are of Azim, said the sources.

An officer of Dhaka Metropolitan Police said that West Bengal CID broke open the commode, sewer pipe, and septic tank of the flat at DMP detectives' request and found the remains.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan told The Daily Star that he was aware of the developments.

Investigators said some of the arrestees told officers that they flushed some of the remains down the toilet after dismembering the body.

Harun Or Rashid, additional commissioner (DB) of DMP, who is currently in Kolkata, said, "We do not think the trial will be very difficult. Three accused are in Bangladesh and one is in India. We are analysing the evidence."

Azim, who according to law enforcers, ran a gold smuggling racket with Aktaruzzaman went to Kolkata on May 12 and stayed the night at his friend Gopal Biswas's house. He left the next day, saying he had a doctor's appointment.

Gopal later received a couple of texts from Azim's phone, saying there was no need to call him. On May 22, India and Bangladesh police said Azim was murdered at a flat in New Town, Kolkata.

Meanwhile, Jihad Howlader, who was arrested in India, told interrogators from DMP DB and West Bengal CID that he walked out of the flat wearing Azim's shirt, because his outfit got smeared in blood when he dismembered the body.

Investigators said Tanvir Bhuyan, who is on remand in Dhaka, is the nephew of Amanullah, the one in charge of the killing mission.

An Indian CID officer said when Azim walked into the flat, Tanvir put chloroform on his face to make him unconscious. "As Azim started screaming and throwing his arms and legs, Amanullah, Tanvir, Faisal, Siam, and Jihad carried him to a bed. Amanullah told Tanvir to press a pillow against Azim's face. Tanvir did as he was told."

Of the suspects, Siam Hossain is believed to be hiding somewhere in Nepal while the investigators are yet to know where Faisal might be.

The woman named Celesty Rahman, arrested in Dhaka, was not present at the flat and she didn't know about the murder, said an Indian officer.

When she came to the flat, she saw four perfume bottles and an air freshener and asked the others why there was a foul smell, said the officer.

The men told her they used bleach to clean the flat after one of them had a little too much to drink and threw up, the source said.

Azim's shoes were in front of the flat for one hour until the assailants removed them after 4:00pm, according to CCTV footage.

The killers found around Rs 4.30 lakh in the lawmaker's pocket, and Jihad took around Rs 1.80 lakh rupees from it.

DB officers last night arrested Saiful Alam, an associate of Amanullah, in Chachara area of Jashore with 960 grams of explosive substance.

Saiful is an accused in another murder case and he had been hiding in India for a year, said Rupon Kumar Sarkar, officer-in-charge of the DB in Jashore.

He added that Saiful may have something to do with MP Azim murder as he and his associate Amanullah were in India at the time.

[Our New Delhi Correspondent contributed to the report.]

Biman U-turns to buy Airbus planes

FROM PAGE 1
Biman board, and the former head of the committee, Biman's engineering director, was changed. According to the board meeting minutes, the new committee was given three days.

The committee submitted a report on April 25 saying that buying two Airbus planes would be profitable. To achieve this complete U-turn, it based its calculations on a cabin factor that Biman has never been able to achieve — up to 92 percent.

Cabin factor refers to the percentage of the seats filled on average.

This allowed the second committee to show increased revenue by 20 percent when compared to the evaluation of the previous committee.

In addition, the second committee said the Airbus planes would be profitable on only two routes — one of which is Dhaka to JFK Airport in New York.

Bangladeshi carriers have not been able to serve this destination since the US Federal Aviation Authority placed the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh in its Category 2, after finding irregularities in its operational activities in 2006.

The new evaluation also estimated a decreased jet fuel cost, which added about a quarter of the increased revenue shown.

Fuel prices have historically been volatile. Statistics from the International Air Transport Association show that post-pandemic prices of jet fuel are significantly higher than pre-pandemic prices.

The first techno-financial evaluation committee said, "Based on the financial evaluation, the two A350-900 aircraft are not financially viable over the next 25 years as the net present value is found negative."

Net present value shows whether an investment will be profitable or not over a period of time, and is calculated considering all future cash inflows and outflows.

The second committee, however, calculated significant operational profits from the second year.

But the first one said, "Revenue generation compared to the cost is low due to poor yield."

"Huge initial investment is projected for payments for spare engine, spare parts, tools/equipment provisioning, cockpit crew/engineering training and other setup/transition costs, due to dissimilar equipment and small fleet size."

In addition, the first report said the interest cost was reported to be very high.

The second committee says operating the Airbus A350 on the Dhaka-New York route, three times a week, with a stopover in Istanbul, and daily on the Dhaka-Jeddah route, can generate a profit of \$135.34 million over 25 years.

The same routes were evaluated by the first committee, and it found that Biman would lose \$188.37 million over the lifetime of the planes.

The second techno-financial committee did not find the planes to be profitable on other routes, like Dhaka-Singapore or Dhaka-Rome, and both committees squarely found those to be making losses between \$249.4 and \$463.08 million over the planes' lifetimes.

The revised financial projections calculated profits based on estimates that in 2026, the cabin factor on the Dhaka-New York route would be 78 percent and by 2050 it would be 90 percent.

Similarly, it estimated that in 2026, the Dhaka-Jeddah route would have a cabin factor of 85 percent, and it would climb to 92 percent by 2050.

Biman's average cabin factor on international flights was about 76 percent last year, said Biman insiders, pointing out that this cabin factor was rather low since Biman usually flies high-demand routes only.

The second committee called their estimates "optimistic, but achievable".

After it submitted its preliminary report to the 305th Biman board meeting, the board formed another committee to negotiate the price; obtain permissions from the civil aviation ministry for signing an MoU; and proceed with the purchase, according to the Biman board meeting minutes.

Biman incurred a loss of Tk 25.91 crore in its main business, flight operations, in the last fiscal year, showed a report by the commercial audit directorate submitted to the parliamentary standing committee on aviation this month.

Biman is losing money on almost all of its 22 international routes, including the newly added Tokyo, Rome, and Guangzhou.

It makes money only on flights to Jeddah, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, said Biman insiders.

It garnered a net profit because its other services were profitable. These include ground and cargo handling at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, catering, and even its farm, Biman Poultry Complex.

Both evaluation committees pointed out that going to a mixed fleet from a Boeing based fleet would require some major expenditures.

While Biman estimated that it would take \$80 million for them to make this transition, Airbus rival Boeing calculated that figure to be \$146 million.

"Biman is already facing a significant shortage of crew in all its fleet. A new type of aircraft demands a new setup of pilots, exclusively for the A350. The crew of present fleet can never be used in Airbus unless trained to do so [...]. To withdraw crew from the present fleet to fly Airbus aircraft, Biman will have to either suspend operation in different routes or reduce frequency in different sectors," said the second committee which recommended buying the planes.

"Recruiting fresh crew to solve this crisis will have no impact as experience is of vital importance in aviation and there is no shortcut way to gain experience," it added.

Biman will have to train engineers and mechanics for up to two years before the introduction of the Airbus aircraft, said the second committee. While they are in training, third parties would need to be hired for engineering and mechanical services in all Biman stations.

The carrier will also have to invest \$61.8 million in spare engines and spare parts for just two Airbus planes, found the report.

In order to overcome these massive costs, and still show a profit, the second committee had to project "optimistic" seat occupancies.

While 80-85 percent of the financing for the Airbus planes will be done by a low-interest loan from an export credit agency, Biman will have to come up with the rest, likely to be sourced from high-interest commercial loans.

Between 2019 and 2021, when Biman bought five planes, it was given \$550 million from the country's foreign exchange reserves.

On May 5 last year, a joint communique was signed by Lord Dominic Johnson, UK minister of state in the department for business and trade, and Salman F Rahman,

private industry and investment adviser to the prime minister, in London regarding the purchase of eight Airbus A350s and two freighters.

During French President Emmanuel Macron's September visit to Dhaka, he said Bangladesh committed to buying 10 Airbus planes.

But all of this happened even before Biman carried out a viability study on such a purchase, and the first techno-financial committee was formed after the decision to buy Airbus planes was made.

Biman board on May 3 last year, decided that the purchase of planes could only happen after a technical and financial evaluation. The board did not insist on a particular airframe maker, saying that Biman could buy "Up to eight Rolls-Royce powered A350-900/1000 aircraft (the "A350 Pax Aircraft") or any other suitable aircraft (wide or narrow) as per Biman's requirement."

The joint communique pledging Airbus purchases was signed two days later.

The second committee report also said, "The techno-financial committee is assigned to evaluate the proposal of Airbus's aircraft only. Thus, it could not compare A350 or A330 aircraft with comparable aircraft of other manufacturers."

An unevaluated proposal by Boeing has been on Biman's table, Ryan Weir, Boeing's vice president for the department of commercial sales and marketing in India and South Asia, told journalists at a hotel in the capital this month.

Biman Managing Director Shaiful Azim, who would be leaving the carrier this month, said, "We are in a process of evaluating the Airbus proposal at the moment and this is an intensive process. Once this reaches a certain stage, we will evaluate the Boeing proposal too, because we want to ensure that this is competitive."

When asked why a committee had been created to negotiate the purchase of the Airbus planes, he said the committee was yet to give their final decision.

Benazir summoned

FROM PAGE 1
former inspector general of police after a Bangla daily ran reports on this. It also formed a three-member committee to probe the allegations.

A Dhaka court on May 23 ordered the authorities concerned to confiscate the properties listed in 83 deeds belonging to Benazir and his family members, and freeze their 33 bank accounts.

Three days later, the same court ordered the authorities concerned to confiscate assets under 119 more deeds of Benazir and his family members in connection with the alleged corruption.

It also directed them to attach eight fully-owned and 15 partially-owned properties of Benazir, his wife Jissan and two daughters.

BO ACCOUNTS FROZEN
Following the freeze of the BO accounts, Benazir and his family members will not be able to trade shares in the stock market and liquidate investments.

"We have frozen the BO accounts following a request from the ACC," said a senior BSEC official requesting anonymity.

Benazir had been at the helm of the police from April 15, 2020 to September 30, 2022. He had also worked as the director general of the Rab.

Coastal belt grapples

FROM PAGE 1
"We have now become homeless," said Jemat.

Suman Bhuiyan, a resident of Kaur Char in Kalapara upazila, said his two-storey tin-built house was flattened by the strong winds brought on by the cyclone on Sunday night.

"I along with my family members have taken shelter at my neighbour's home. I cannot rebuild my house as I don't have enough money," he said.

DEATH TOLL TOPS 26
Remal claimed 13 more lives in seven districts in the last two days.

In Pirojpur, five people were killed during the storm on Monday. Of them, a three-year-old child drowned in flood water, a woman died of electrocution and a man died after a tree fell on him in Bhandaria upazila.

Another 70-year-old man died of electrocution in Old Bus Station area of Pirojpur town on Monday morning.

A woman, aged about 65, died after a tree fell on her home at Bhepsabunia village of Indurkani upazila on Monday night.

In Narsingdi Sadar upazila, a couple was killed after bricks stacked beside their tin-built home slid and crushed the house in Nazarpur early yesterday.

A teenage boy drowned in flood water in Noakhali's Hatiya upazila yesterday morning when he was returning home from a shelter at Nijhum Dwip.

In Gazipur, a garment worker was electrocuted to death in Ustusia area of Kaliakoir upazila early yesterday.

A firefighter died of electrocution in Khagrachhari's Matiranga upazila early yesterday when he was removing uprooted trees in Alutlia area.

In Bagerhat, a woman died after a tree fell on her on Monday.

A man died in Jhalakathi's Kathalia upazila after a tree collapsed on him on Monday morning.

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Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan), said, "Using unchecked power, Benazir Ahmed amassed huge wealth. It was an open secret. But no one, including the Anti-Corruption Commission, dared taking steps against him because he was so influential. What the former police chief has done is beyond imagination."

"When he had power, he could do whatever he wanted and get away with it. He thought it would always be like this. As he is out of the government's favour at the moment, action is being taken against him."

The authorities should conduct thorough verifications before conferring prestigious recognitions like the integrity award, he said.

"I also wonder whether the authorities were in deep sleep when Benazir was indulging in corruption as the chief of Rab and police."

The Public Security Division of the Home Ministry honoured him with the Integrity Award 2020-21.

He and his family bought nearly 87.9 acres of land in 2020 and 2021, ACC data show.

The Integrity Award winners receive a certificate, a crest, and an amount equivalent to a month's basic salary. After receiving the award in June 2022, Benazir announced he would donate the prize money to support flood victims in Sylhet and Sunamganj.

According to the National Integrity Strategy, integrity refers to behavioural excellence influenced by ethics and adherence to timeless standards, principles and customs of society. At the individual level, it means scrupulousness and honesty.

Benazir was named the best taxpayer in 2021 by the National Board of Revenue. At the time he was named the best tax payer, he and his family owned more than 138 acres of land.

Despite repeated attempts in the last two days, this newspaper could not reach Benazir over the phone.

Contacted yesterday, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said, "We follow some criteria while selecting the

In Barishal, a restaurant employee died after part of a brick wall fell on him in the divisional city's Rupatali area.

Earlier, 13 deaths were reported in seven coastal districts on Sunday and Monday.

1.73CR WITHOUT POWER
The power, energy and mineral resources ministry said around 1.73 crore people across the country were still without power yesterday.

According to official data, at least 3,833 electricity poles were damaged by the storm. Besides, many feeders, sub-stations, transformers, spans, and insulators were damaged.

Some 4.5 lakh customers of the West Zone Power Distribution Company Ltd experienced power cuts during the cyclone. At least 1.44 lakh of them were waiting for restoration of power supply yesterday.

According to Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, around 20,000 cell towers across the country were still offline yesterday due to power outages.

DAMAGE TO FISHERIES
The fisheries and livestock ministry said they received reports from the field level till yesterday that the damage from Remal to the fisheries sector was worth Tk 858 crore as nearly 50,000 fish enclosures, 34,000 ponds and 4,000 crab farms were flooded during the cyclone.

In Patuakhali, at least 15,000 fish enclosures and ponds were flooded.

Lutfar Rahman Babul, a fish farmer at Char Kasem of Rangabali upazila, said, "All the fish from my enclosure at Char Kasem were washed away. The enclosure was destroyed by about 7 feet high tide."

"Cyclone Remal has ruined us. Almost everyone in the area has become helpless," he said.

Our correspondents from Khulna, Barishal, Patuakhali, Bagerhat, Pirojpur, and Noakhali contributed to this report.

Wealth, awards piled

FROM PAGE 1
in the force, anti-militancy drive, political violence, and his contributions during the 11th parliamentary elections respectively, according to sources in the Police Headquarters.

Each BPM award included a medal, Tk 100,000, and a certificate. Additionally, a Tk 1,500 allowance was added to the basic salary every time he won an award, according to police sources.

As the commissioner of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) from 2010 to 2015, Benazir received BPM awards for his actions against Hefazat-e-Islam in 2013 and for suppressing political violence, curbing petrol bomb attacks, and leading the anti-militancy drive during the Holy Artisan café attack, which left 22 people dead, including two police officials.

Benazir, who studied English literature at Dhaka University, then served as the director general (DG) of Rapid Action Battalion from 2015 to 2020.

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LAND BOUGHT BY BENAZIR, FAMILY	
YEAR	LAND (Acre)
2009	0.4
2011	-
2012	0.05
2014	1.75
2016	9.8
2017	23.691
2018	11.4492
2019	3.2253
2020	15.3705
2021	72.5339
2022	66.1546
2023	0.0254
TOTAL	204.4499