Narita route was revived without proper planning

Say Biman officials, experts; blame poor assessment for suspension

RASHIDUL HASAN

Biman Bangladesh Airlines did not conduct a proper feasibility study on the commercial and profitability viability before resuming operations on the Dhaka-Narita-Dhaka route, several officials of Biman told The Daily Star.

As a result, the national flag carrier was forced to suspend the flight on this route within 21 months of resumption due to huge losses, they added.

The sudden decision also drew widespread criticism from Bangladeshi expatriates, while aviation experts termed it "unfortunate and suicidal".

Biman first launched flights on the Dhaka-Narita route in 1979. After a temporary suspension in 1981, the route was resumed, only to be suspended again in 2006 due to continuous losses. Seventeen years later, on September 1, 2023, the Narita flight was resumed amid much fanfare, with passengers welcoming the move for reducing travel time to six to seven hours and eliminating lengthy transit stops.

However, Biman ceased operations on the Narita flight from July 1 this year citing aircraft shortage and continuous financial loss. The move forced passengers to rely on third-country transits, significantly increasing both travel time and expenses.

Biman sources said each Narita flight incurred losses of nearly Tk 95 lakh. The average cabin occupancy stood at 69 percent, with overall losses amounting to Tk 215.58 crore on the route, they added.

Several Biman officials said then managing director Shafiul Azim was the key person behind the resumption of the Narita flight, which was promoted as an achievement of the then Sheikh Hasina government.

Biman operated the six-and-a-half-hour-long Narita flight with Boeing 787 aircraft, which have 271 seats. According to insiders, half of the capacity remained vacant on almost every flight.

"Then authorities of Biman launched the route without assessing commercial viability and feasibility study, ignoring market demand and financial analysis," a top official involved in resuming the flight told this correspondent.

"Those, especially the then fleet planning committee, should be held responsible for giving nod to resume the Narita flight without conducting proper study for which the airline incurred huge loss," he said.

- Biman suspends Dhaka-Narita flights from July 1
- Resumed on Sept 1, 2023
- Route incurs Tk 215.58cr loss; each flight lost Tk 95 lakh
- Average cabin occupancy 69%
- Boeing 787 used, but half the seats remained vacant
- Abrupt suspension tarnished Biman's image
- Biman failed to draw transit flyers from India, Nepal

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Dhaka University Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury, former director general of Bangla Academy Prof Monsur Musa, lyricist Shahidullah Farazi, Rajshahi University Prof A Al Mamun, writer-politician Hasnat Quaiyum, writer Firoz Ahmed, and journalist Tahmidal Jami, along with the winners of a speech competition on Abul Mansur Ahmad, at a lecture and award-giving ceremony titled "New Political Settlement: The Culture of Bangladesh" at the Prof Muzaffar Ahmed Chowdhury Auditorium of Dhaka University yesterday. The event was organised by Abul Mansur Ahmad Smriti Parishad and Tarkajaal.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Equal rights, opportunities key to democracy

Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury tells event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Democracy is not only about elections but also about ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all, said Dhaka University Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury yesterday.

He was speaking at a lecture and award-giving ceremony, titled "New Political Settlement: The Culture of Bangladesh", held at the Prof Muzaffar Ahmed Chowdhury Auditorium of Dhaka University yesterday. The event was organised by Abul Mansur Ahmad Smriti Parishad and Tarkajaal.

Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury, also the president of the Abul Mansur Ahmad Smriti Parishad, said Abul Mansur Ahmad never separated politics from culture.

"According to Abul Mansur Ahmad, politics is shaped by culture, and culture is also influenced by politics. His political and literary vision aimed at the liberation of peasants, social revolution, and the establishment of a democratic society."

Abul Mansur Ahmad dreamed of breaking the colonial political system. His works reflected deep sympathy for people, philosophical insight, and a desire for freedom. Even in his satirical writings, he highlighted inequality and oppression in society.

"Democracy cannot be limited to elections only. Real democracy will be established when equal rights and opportunities exist, power is decentralised, and people's true representatives hold authority," he said.

He added that Abul Mansur Ahmad's literature was not written for entertainment alone. "His works reflected deep sympathy for people, philosophical insight, and a desire for freedom. Even in satirical writings, he highlighted inequality and oppression in society."

Speaking about Abul Mansur Ahmad's political thought, Prof Serajul said he dreamed of breaking the colonial political system.

"Abul Mansur Ahmad understood that to build a truly democratic society, it was necessary to end the feudal relationships between landlords and peasants, as well as between owners and workers, by creating a new social contract based on equal rights."

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STUDENTS' UNION ELECTIONS

Will ensure student voice in JU syndicate

Says Jucsu VP candidate Amartya Roy

ABU TALHA

Amartya Roy, a vice-president (VP) candidate in the Jahangirnagar University Central Students' Union (Jucsu) election, has pledged to include a student representative in the university syndicate if elected.

"This will ensure students' voices are heard at the policymaking level," he told The Daily Star in an interview. "This will also help maintain the continuity of Jucsu elections," Amartya added.

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Ensuring students' rights my first priority

Says Jucsu GS candidate Abu Touhid Siam

SHARIF M SHAFIQUE

Abu Touhid Mohammad Siam, general secretary (GS) candidate in the upcoming Jahangirnagar University Central Students' Union (Jucsu) election, sees the long-awaited polls as a tool for change.

Siam is contesting from the Shikkharthi Oikya Forum panel, supported by Bangladesh Ganatantrik Chhatra Sangshad.

"For the first time in 33 years, Jucsu election is

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A stray cat takes shelter from the scorching sun beneath a life-size spool on the rooftop of a factory building. The ongoing heatwave over the past week has left many struggling to cope with daily life. The photo was taken at Lalbagh in Old Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Former AL lawmaker Pavel, 7 others arrested

STAR REPORT

The Detective Branch have arrested former Awami League lawmaker Saddam Hossain Pavel and seven others for "planning and financing subversive activities".

Saddam, former MP from Nilphamari-3 constituency, was arrested around 10:45pm on Thursday night during a raid in Dhaka's Mohammadpur area, said a press release sent by Dhaka Metropolitan Police's media wing yesterday.

The others were arrested when several DMP teams conducted raids across Dhaka Thursday night, the release added.

The other arrestees are: Tanzil Hossain Ovi, 29, organising secretary of the Bauphal upazila unit of the banned Chhatra League

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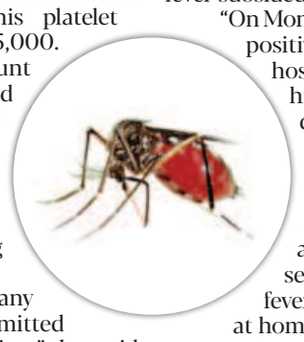
Late hospitalisation puts dengue patients at risk

HELEMUL ALAM

Mahbub Rahman, 25, a resident of Keraniganj, has been undergoing treatment for dengue at Sir Salimullah Medical College Mitford Hospital since Wednesday.

He was admitted in critical condition with nosebleeds and his platelet count dropping to 15,000. By Thursday, the count had risen to 40,000, and doctors said his condition improved yesterday.



Rahman was diagnosed with dengue on Wednesday, though he had been suffering from fever for a week.

"I could not take any liquids before being admitted as I couldn't eat anything," he said yesterday afternoon.

Rahman, who works in the Mitford area, added that this was his first experience with dengue and he had been unaware of the importance of drinking plenty of fluids during home treatment.

The condition of another patient, Mohammad Jamal, 40, also became critical when he was admitted on Wednesday. Jamal began drinking coconut water and papaya juice after developing fever on August 31. He returned to work the next day after the fever subsided.

"On Monday, he was tested dengue positive and got admitted to the hospital on Wednesday after his blood pressure started dropping," said Jamal's brother, Nowaz Sharif.

Faisal Hossain, 30, another dengue patient at Mitford Hospital, admitted that he did not seek medical care when his fever started. "I just took rest at home. But when my condition worsened on the fourth day, I went to a doctor, who diagnosed dengue and referred me to the hospital," he said.

Similarly, Shimul Mondal of Jatrabari ignored his illness and tried to return to work two days after developing fever. "I fainted while getting ready for

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