



"This war has nothing to do with Nato. It's not Nato's war."  
German Chancellor Friedrich Merz



DHAKA TUESDAY MARCH 17, 2026

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXXVI No. 62

CHAITRA 3, 1432 BS

www.thedailystar.net

RAMADAN 27, 1447 HURI

16 PAGES PLUS LIFESTYLE: Tk 15.00

## Shady pilot licences expose Biman to risk

Probe by nat'l carrier finds two of its senior pilots obtained licences thru fraud; discrepancies detected in licences of three others

RASHIDUL HASAN and ZYMA ISLAM

Forged flight records and a blatant disregard for safety protocols have revealed a deep seated rot within Biman Bangladesh Airlines, where the very pilots entrusted with passengers' lives appear to operate without accountability.

A Biman investigation has uncovered a pervasive culture of impunity and systemic licence fraud, showing that senior captains advanced their careers through forged flight records.

This lack of accountability appears to extend beyond paperwork. Pilots remained in the cockpit despite a near-catastrophic operational error or proven cases of sexual harassment.

The impetus for these revelations came early this year. Biman formed a committee on January 28 to investigate five of its pilots over forged flying licences.

The committee, which submitted its report on February 3, found that two senior aviators – Captain Abdul Basit Mahtab and Captain Abdur Rahman Akhand – willfully submitted forged documents to obtain licences. It also pointed out discrepancies in the licences of three others.

The probe body recommended grounding four of the five pilots while the investigation was ongoing. The authorities, however, allowed the pilots to fly, disregarding immediate safety concerns.

The gravity of the findings triggered an external enquiry – the Civil Aviation Authority of

and development of the country's commercial pilots and upholding aviation safety standards in the national carrier.

"Captain Mahtab obtained a Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL) in 1993. He served in the Bangladesh Air Force but was suspended from conversion/advanced flying training owing to his slow progress," said the Biman probe report.

"Captain Mahtab's flying certificate, issued on April 16, 1992, shows that at the time of obtaining his CPL, he had only 33 hours and 45 minutes of solo/pilot-in-command experience, including three hours and 30 minutes on the Bell 206-L4 helicopter; the remainder of his flying time was as a co-pilot (listed as dual hours in the official BAF record)."

Referring to another document dated June 10, 1992, the report pointed out that a certificate issued by the BAF Academy in Jashore shows that Mahtab had accumulated 155 hours as pilot-in-command (solo hours). "It directly contradicts the other flying hours certificate issued by the same officer from the same academy on April 16, 1992."

The BAF Academy certificate with the increased flying hours was issued several months after he had been taken out of flying.

The Daily Star has independently verified Mahtab's documents.

A document signed by Group Captain Ataur Rahman, the then Air Secretary, on April 25, 1992, stated, "This is to certify that M Abdul Basit Mahtab was a



Prime Minister Tarique Rahman formally inaugurates the nationwide canal restoration programme in Kaharol upazila of Dinajpur yesterday. PHOTO: PID

## CANAL RESTORATION Goal is to boost agro economy Says PM after launching programme in 54 dists

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday pledged to transform Bangladesh into an economically and politically strong nation with the support of its people.

At a rally near Sahapara canal in Dinajpur's Kaharol upazila after inaugurating a canal restoration programme, he said, "We want to build a Bangladesh where people can assert their own rights."

"Many of you have relatives abroad. When you speak to them, they often praise other countries and say how beautiful those places are. But it is the people of those countries who have built and developed their nations, not outsiders. If they could do it, why can't we? Inshallah, we can do it too."

The prime minister recalled the heroic efforts of the people who fought for independence in 1971 and of the students who ended dictatorship through the 2024 mass uprising.

"It was the people of this country who doubled food production through efforts like irrigation and canal digging during the rule of martyred president Ziaur Rahman. If they could achieve so much, we too can build the Bangladesh of the future."

He said public support and proper planning are key to moving the country forward.

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**We wrote to CAAB [Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh] but are yet to get any response from them. That is why we still do not know what action we should take against the pilots.**

Humaira Sultana  
Managing Director of Biman Bangladesh Airlines

Probe body recommended grounding 4 of the 5 pilots but authorities allowed them to continue flying

Findings prompted CAAB audit, but the regulator transferred its only technically qualified investigator

Bangladesh (CAAB) initiated its own audit of the pilots. However, barely a month after the launch of the audit, CAAB transferred the only official with the technical expertise to probe the complex licensing fraud.

At the centre of the investigation is Mahtab, who was elected president of Bangladesh Airline Pilots' Association in February 2025. He was tasked with advocating for the rights, welfare,

commissioned (on probation) in flying branch as a pilot officer on January 3, 1991. He was suspended from subsequent conversion and advance flying training owing to his slow progress. Since the officer was on probation, his commission was terminated as a normal procedure." They cleared him for commercial flying.

In his application to CAAB for obtaining CPL,

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## Cap lifted, but city pumps still short on fuel

ASIFUR RAHMAN and MOHAMMAD SUMAN

The government has managed to curb the drain on national fuel stocks by imposing restrictions on purchases for 10 days straight, bringing daily demand back to near last year's levels.

On Sunday, the cap on fuel purchases was withdrawn, but many filling stations in Dhaka continued operating on a limited scale yesterday, with some closed and others rationing supplies. Queues, however, have begun to shorten.

In Chattogram, pumps operated smoothly yesterday after receiving fresh supplies, with motorists refuelling without difficulty.

Officials concerned and pump owners in the capital said the government is supplying fuel based on last year's demand, leading to some shortages, but expected the situation to improve soon.

As of yesterday, diesel stock stood at 1.25 lakh tonnes, while petrol and octane stocks were 16,000 tonnes each, which is enough for 10-14 days.

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## Meta must act against online incitement

Says Amnesty citing attacks on Star, Prothom Alo

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Amnesty International has warned that Bangladesh could face serious human rights abuses unless Meta, the parent company of Facebook, takes timely and effective action to address harmful content on its platform.

"Bangladesh is not yet in a human rights crisis, but the warning signs are visible," Alia Al Ghussain, head of Big Tech Accountability at Amnesty International, said in a statement published on the organisation's website yesterday.

"The combination of cross-border harmful content, political tension, sectarian narratives, and algorithmic amplification creates a volatile environment that could put freedom of expression and the rights of minority communities at risk," she said.

Amnesty said there has been a rise



**"This is a moment for prevention and taking responsibility for the power that social media companies wield in this space."**

ALIA AL GHUSSAIN  
Head of Big Tech Accountability at AI

in harmful online content in the lead-up to the February 12 parliamentary election, some of which originated outside Bangladesh.

The rights body cited the December

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Emergency personnel work at the site of a strike on a residential building in Tehran yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Iran vows to fight on 'wherever it leads'

Strikes hit Gulf transport, energy hubs; Trump 'not happy' as allies push back on his call for help to reopen Hormuz

Israel eyes at least three more weeks of war, launches ground ops in Lebanon

Trump warns of 'very bad' future for Nato if allies refuse to help

Iran war, not trade, may delay Trump-Xi summit: US

Iran 'fired some 700 missiles and 3,600 drones'

AGENCIES

Iran said it was ready to take the Middle East war "as far as necessary" as it launched strikes across the region yesterday, while US President Donald Trump piled pressure on world powers to help reopen a vital shipping lane.

Israel, meanwhile, yesterday said it has detailed plans for at least three more weeks of war as its military pounded sites across Iran overnight.

The US-Israeli war on Iran is now in its third week, with no clear end in sight, shutting down the Strait of Hormuz through which 20 percent of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas flow,

pushing up oil prices and raising fears of a renewed spike in global inflation.

Nato allies and other Western nations yesterday pushed back on Trump's demand that alliance members help reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

On Sunday, Trump called for a coalition of nations to help reopen the vital shipping route and warned that the Nato alliance faces a "very bad" future if its members fail to come to Washington's aid.

However, US allies voiced support for diplomatic efforts to reopen the route but signalled caution about the possibility of military action.

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