

## Myanmar's parliament convenes

Leader of army-backed party chosen as lower House Speaker

REUTERS

Myanmar's parliament convened yesterday for the first time since a coup five years ago, in one of the final steps in a nominal return to democracy where its powerful military retains tight control.

The gathering of the new parliament comes after a recent phased election dominated by the army-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party amid low voter turnout and no viable opposition.

USDP chairman and retired Brigadier General Khin Yi was elected lower House Speaker yesterday. Reuters had earlier reported Khin Yi had been touted for the role, which is seen by some analysts as pivotal for the military in advancing its agenda.

Myanmar has been plagued by civil war and a humanitarian crisis affecting millions of its people since its generals staged a 2021 coup against the government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, just as it was preparing for a second five-year term in office following a landslide election win.



Traders dismantled their makeshift shops near Sughandha Point after receiving directives from the Cox's Bazar district administration, which managed to have over 500 structures cleared from the sea beach on Sunday. Dependent on tourism ahead of Eid, traders voiced uncertainty over livelihoods, while authorities pushed on to remove illegal structures and gradually restore the natural landscape. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MOKAMMEL SHUVU

## Husband sent to jail over JU student murder

Students form human chain demanding justice

STAR REPORT

Husband of slain Sharmin Jahan, a student of Jahangirnagar University, was sent to jail following his arrest yesterday in a case filed over the murder.

Fahim Al Hasan, prime accused in the case, was arrested and produced before a court yesterday with a five-day remand prayer. The court fixed March 24 for remand hearing and ordered Fahim to be sent to jail.

Sharmin's uncle Monirul Islam filed a case with Ashulia Police Station on Sunday night, accusing Fahim and several unidentified individuals.

Sharmin was rescued from her rented house in the Islamnagar area of Savar at around 4:30pm on Sunday in a bloodied and unconscious state and was taken to Enam Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared her dead.

Meanwhile, JU students formed a human chain and brought out a protest march yesterday demanding justice for Sharmin, a student of the 51st batch of JU's Public Administration Department.

The human chain and protest march were organised in front of JU's Shaheed Minar under the banner of Jahangirnagar University Research Sangsad around 2:00pm.

Protesting students demanded exemplary punishment for those involved in Sharmin's brutal murder through a fair and impartial investigation.

## Shady pilot licences expose Biman to risk Iran vows to fight on 'wherever it leads'

FROM PAGE 1

Mahtab said, "I got released from Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) on April 1, 1992, due to my unwillingness to serve in Ground Branch. In BAF, I have flown a total of 210 hours and 30 minutes..."

He submitted his flying hours certificate along with the application dated May 3, 1992.

A document signed by the then director of flight standards and regulations at CAAB on May 9, 1992, noted that Mahtab had 33 hours and 45 minutes of solo flying. "It should be stated here that no application with such a short tenure of service in the Air Force and so little flying experience has ever been received by this authority before."

Even when he applied for an instrument rating, he had half the required flying hours. An instrument rating is an advanced qualification that allows a pilot to fly an aircraft solely by reference to the cockpit instruments in cases of poor visibility or adverse weather.

"Upon reviewing his experience, it appears that, according to the Civil Aviation Rules, he must complete 15 hours of flying within six months from the date of application. In this case, it is seen that Mr Mahtab has only seven hours and five minutes of flying time. Therefore, issuing the rating in this situation seems to be against the regulations. However, the chairman may relax this requirement at his discretion," said a document signed on March 23, 1993.

A CAAB member (operations and planning) allowed a waiver for him in "public interest" the same day.

Since then, Mahtab has renewed his CPL year after year and passed all his checks and tests.

"It should be mentioned that CPL is the starting point for all pilots' commercial airline flying careers. All other licences and ratings are obtained later. As such, any issues with CPL negatively impact all further licences and ratings and calls into question the validity of all other licences and ratings," said the Biman probe report, concluding that Mahtab willfully provided false documents to obtain his licence.

When asked, Mahtab claimed that the investigation was biased.

"We have filed a complaint with Biman, stating that this investigation is not fair. This was done to vilify Biman and destroy the aviation industry. We were not even interviewed by the committee," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

In an interview with this newspaper earlier last year, he had said that his flying hours were less on paper than his actual experience because flying hours are counted differently in the air force.

"During civil flying, taxi hours are counted as flying whereas this is not the case with jet fighters. I believe I have the required hours," he had pointed out.

The Biman probe also found preliminary evidence against Rahman.

"Allegations against Captain Abdur Rahman Akhand were previously known, and Biman Bangladesh Airlines sent a letter to CAAB on August 6, 2025, seeking clarification from the regulator. To date, no reply has been received from CAAB regarding this issue," said the report.

Termining the allegations "very serious in nature", it said the documents "allege a gross violation of the law" and indicate that he "willfully provided false documents" to obtain a licence.

The Daily Star had previously reported on this pilot after scrutinising his flying hours.

According to this newspaper's own scrutiny, at the time of getting his CPL, he had 26 hours and five minutes of flying time as a pilot-in-command unsupervised and another 128 hours

and 30 minutes of flying time under supervision. All these hours were logged during his time in the air force.

A legal notice sent to Biman on December 14, 2025, stated that in addition to his flying hours in the air force, he had logged seven hours and 40 minutes at the Bangladesh Flying Club, when he applied for CPL.

According to aviation rules, a candidate must log 250 flying hours, of which 70 hours must be unsupervised, while the rest can be completed under supervision. In case of failure to log 70 hours of unsupervised flying, the candidate has to fly 500 hours as a pilot-in-command under supervision.

Rahman flew neither 70 hours unsupervised nor the alternative of 500 hours under supervision.

The legal notice said Rahman had submitted a forged No Objection Certificate (NOC) while leaving his previous job at Regent Airways. Dated December 20, 2014, a Regent Airways letter attached to the legal notice said Rahman had not obtained any such certificate before joining Biman.

"It is assumed that they all have submitted fake and improper NOC to your company which falls within the purview of a criminal offence," wrote Regent.

The probe body concluded that Rahman willfully provided false documents to obtain his licence.

The investigation into administrative fraud took on a new sense of urgency following a near-catastrophic operational error. While Biman's committee was investigating Rahman's licence, he taxied a Biman aircraft onto an incorrect runway in Guangzhou, China – an error that could lead to a fatal accident.

A letter sent by Biman's counterpart in Guangzhou said the incident occurred during take-off at 8:13am on January 23, 2026, at Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport.

The air traffic control "directed it to taxi along the standard Yellow 3, waiting outside Y20. The crew acknowledged correctly," read the letter.

Despite confirming the route verbally, the pilot went down the wrong path. "At 08:14 am, the controller noticed the aircraft had executed a right turn onto Taxiway Q instead of the required left turn. The controller immediately halted the aircraft and inquired about the reason. The crew responded that they had misread the standard taxi route," it stated.

The Civil Aviation Administration of China demanded that Biman urgently investigate the error, threatening to cancel Biman's slot allocation at the Guangzhou airport. Biman formed a probe committee on February 22.

A couple of months before the incident, Rahman was shortlisted by Biman for the position of deputy chief of flight operations and flight safety department.

Another aviator, Captain Anisur Rahman, also failed to meet licensing standards, according to the probe report.

"Allegations against Captain Anis are that he received his CPL licence with [flying] hours which were below the requirement at the time of his licence issuance. A logbook copy is provided showing him having 162 hours 40 minutes only from the Bangladesh Air Force, which is less than the required 200 hours for CPL prevalent at that time."

The report said it was not clear whether "he willfully provided false documents to obtain his licence". It, however, said he had fewer flying hours than needed.

When contacted, Anis said that following his stint in the air force, he logged hours at a flying academy before getting his licence, and that made up the 200 hours.

The committee also investigated Captain Yousuf Mahmud for licence fraud but could not find anything conclusive.

However, Yousuf's time at Biman has been marked by allegations of sexual harassment of cabin crew members.

He was served a show-cause letter on March 11, 2025, over sexual harassment in the cockpit.

On April 13, 2025, a departmental case was filed against him, and the probe report was submitted on November 5, 2025, concluding that there was undeniable proof of sexual harassment.

The report said the pilot touched an air hostess inappropriately; made unprofessional comments while she was serving beverages, initiated conversations on topics unsuitable for the workplace, forced a piece of fruit into her mouth, and pursued her for a date during their layover.

The pilot refuted all the allegations, but his co-pilot, a witness, said the pilot's behaviour amounted to sexual harassment.

In a testimony, the co-pilot said that Yousuf, in addition to verbal harassment, had forcefully pushed food into the mouth of an air hostess and grabbed her hands.

Alarming, while the investigation was ongoing, Biman allowed Yousuf to conduct flights, owing to a "shortage of pilots in the Hajj season".

The other pilot investigated was Captain Fariel Bilki Ahmed, with the committee pointing out improper logging of flying hours. "It needs to be assessed whether this was a simple error or a deliberate attempt to increase the hours."

It recommended grounding Fariel while the verification was being completed.

When asked, Fariel said the probe committee worked with fabricated evidence, and that the flying hours in her logbook accurately represent her flying experience.

"I was never called or interviewed by this committee. They did not ask me for evidence," Fariel told The Daily Star.

Rahman and Yousuf could not be reached despite multiple attempts over phone and WhatsApp.

When contacted, Biman Managing Director Humaira Sultana said, "We wrote to CAAB 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."

Boshra Islam, the spokesperson for Biman, said they are waiting for CAAB's audit before deciding on any action.

While Biman claims to be waiting for CAAB, the regulator's own process appears to have been derailed from within. Transfer documents show that just a month into the audit, CAAB sidelined the investigator, moving him to a largely redundant administrative role.

On March 12, Saiful Haq Shah, director of personnel licensing, was transferred and attached to the chairman's office as an "officer on special duty".

Sources confirmed that Saiful was the only investigator in the division with the technical qualifications needed to oversee licensing.

Asked whether the move would compromise the integrity of the entire external audit, the CAAB Chairperson, Air Vice-Marshal Md Mostafa Mahmood Siddiq, said the investigation into the pilots' anomalies is being conducted transparently, and Saiful's transfer will not affect the process.

He, however, admitted that CAAB could not complete the investigation within the stipulated two-week timeframe.

"Once completed, we will make the report public," he added.

FROM PAGE 1

Despite the unprecedented bombardment, Iran yesterday took a more defiant tone and struck targets across the region and Israel.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards yesterday said they had targeted Tel Aviv and Ben Gurion Airport in Israel, as well as military bases used by US forces in the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

"By now they have... understood what kind of nation they are dealing with, one that does not hesitate to defend itself and is ready to continue the war wherever it may lead, and take it as far as necessary," Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told reporters in Tehran.

A drone sparked a fuel tank fire near Dubai airport, disrupting travel, while a missile killed a civilian in their car in Abu Dhabi, and another drone sparked a blaze in an area housing oil infrastructure in the eastern emirate of Fujairah.

"It has been a difficult few weeks hearing explosions regularly, but the Iranian attacks followed me in my last hours before I could fly back home," a witness at Dubai airport told AFP, adding that passengers had been evacuated to a lower floor after the attack.

Explosions hit the Iranian capital on Monday as air defence systems were activated, an AFP journalist said, and Israel said it had also targeted the cities of Shiraz and Tabriz.

A loud blast rang out over Jerusalem as well, after the military detected incoming missiles.

Meanwhile, Israeli military spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Nadav Shoshani said the country's war with Iran may continue for at least the next three weeks, with additional plans extending beyond that.

The military has framed its aims as limited to weakening Iran's capacity to threaten Israel by striking ballistic missile infrastructure, nuclear facilities, and the security apparatus.

"We want to make sure that they are as weak as possible, this regime, and that we degrade all their capabilities, all parts and all wings of their security establishment," Shoshani said.

The military has said it still has thousands of targets to hit inside

Iran.

On Sunday, Trump told the Financial Times it would be "very bad for the future of Nato" if they refused, and he has threatened to delay a planned summit with Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

Several European governments rejected the idea outright, with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's spokesman saying the war had "nothing to do with Nato". Japan and Australia said they would not be deploying warships.

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said London was working with allies to craft a "viable" plan to reopen the waterway, but ruled out a Nato mission.

Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski noted the country's president had already "ruled out the participation of the Polish Armed Forces in this operation" as Spanish Defence Minister Margarita Robles said Madrid was "absolutely not" mulling a military intervention.

European Union foreign ministers, after a meeting, showed "no appetite" for extending the bloc's Red Sea naval mission to help reopen the strait.

Amid the snub, Trump slammed US allies yesterday. He called for more "enthusiasm" from other countries, as he said he believed France and Britain would somewhat reluctantly get involved.

The US president lashed out at others who were not "enthusiastic."

"For 40 years, we're protecting you, and you don't want to get involved," Trump said.

On Sunday, Trump told the Financial Times he may postpone a meeting with President Xi Jinping scheduled for later this month if China does not help to unblock the Strait. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, however, said that if the trip is rescheduled, it will be because of logistical issues due to the war, and not related to the strait.

Meanwhile, a Pakistani oil tanker was able to transit the Strait of Hormuz yesterday with its location transmitter activated – suggesting it may have negotiated safe passage.

On another key front in the wider war, Israel announced "limited ground operations" against Iran-backed Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, aimed at enhancing the

forward defence area".

Lebanon was drawn into the Middle East war on March 2 when Hezbollah attacked Israel in response to the killing of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

There were fresh Israeli strikes on Sunday on the southern suburbs of Beirut, a Hezbollah bastion usually home to hundreds of thousands of people.

Israel has ordered evacuations on an unprecedented scale across vast areas of Lebanon since the war began, and Defence Minister Israel Katz said the displaced "will not return" until northern Israel is no longer threatened.

The war has engulfed much of the region, with Iran striking at least 10 countries that host US forces. Its Revolutionary Guards say it has fired some 700 missiles and 3,600 drones.

Saudi Arabia intercepted more than 60 drones overnight, its defence ministry said yesterday, and Iraqi authorities said rockets wounded five people the day before at Baghdad's airport, which houses a US diplomatic facility.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Emirati President Mohamed bin Zayed expressed solidarity against "the continued and blatant Iranian attacks" in a call yesterday, without mentioning US-Israeli strikes, according to a statement published by Emirati media.

Despite the violence and 17 days of internet blackout, some Iranians have sought to restore a sense of normalcy, with cafes and restaurants reopening and the popular Tajrish bazaar busy over the weekend ahead of the upcoming Persian New Year.

There is little sign of a popular uprising within Iran, where security forces killed thousands during protests in January. Judiciary chief Gholam Hossein Mohseni yesterday said there must be no leniency in issuing "final verdicts" against regime opponents during the war.

More than 1,200 Iranians have been killed by US and Israeli strikes, according to the last toll from Iran's health ministry on March 8, which could not be independently verified.

The UN refugee agency says up to 3.2 million people have been displaced in Iran.

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

FROM PAGE 1

Officials said additional fuel shipments are due, including 60,000 tonnes of diesel.

According to data from the state-owned Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, the average daily diesel demand between March 1 and 15 was 13,000 tonnes, compared to 12,000 tonnes last year. Petrol and octane demand averaged 1,300 tonnes, similar to last year.

Demand spiked after the US-Israel war on Iran broke out on February 28, with diesel use rising to 24,000 tonnes and petrol/octane exceeding 2,000 tonnes in early March.

In response, the government imposed a cap on fuel purchases: 2-5 litres for motorcycles and 10 litres for cars per day. The restriction was lifted Sunday ahead of Eid.

This newspaper visited a total of 14 pumps in Dhaka city and four on the outskirts. The four pumps on the outskirts, located on the Banasree-Demra road, were not selling until the evening, citing fuel shortage.

In the city area, two stations were found shut and one partially closed, while 11 operated smoothly. Long lines

were reported at Trust Filling Station (Bijoy Sarani), Clean Fuel (Mohakhali), Southern Automobiles (Tejgaon), and Ideal Filling Station (Tejgaon-Gulshan Link Road).

Employees at those pumps told The Daily Star that the queues, though long, were shorter than in recent days.

At Trust, cars stretched only to the PMO gate, compared to Jahangir Gate the previous day. Southern's queue remained on the main road, not spilling into alleys.

Some stations, including Satata and City in Tejgaon, reported running out of octane or closing temporarily. Sikder station limited sales for vehicles.

Outskirts stations – Banasree Filling Station, Keeco Filling Station, Moon Filling Station and Shikder Filling Station – declined service, citing delayed tanker deliveries.

Keeco staff told customers at 3:00pm they had failed to secure fuel from the depot. Shikder staff said supplies would arrive in the evening.

Keeco, Shikder, Satata and City stations are dealers of the state-owned fuel distributor company Padma Oil PLC.

Contacted, Haris Ahmed Sarker,

assistant general manager (sales) at Padma Oil's Dhaka office, said Padma supplied fuel as per demand, but congestion delayed tanker deliveries.

"If fuel runs out quickly after supply, there is little we can do," he said.

"Keeco received fuel yesterday and also today. Why they said they would not get fuel today or did not receive it needs to be examined. City and Satata are also receiving sufficient fuel, but it is running out quickly."

Meanwhile, in the port city, fuel supply at filling stations began returning to normal, with queues thinning out.

Several filling stations that remained closed a day earlier due to a lack of fuel were found operating normally yesterday after receiving fresh supplies. As a result, motorists are now able to purchase fuel without facing the long lines.

Ayub Ali, a sales staff member at Tigerpass Agencies, one of the busy fuel outlets in the city, said they received fuel after a four-day gap and resumed regular operations yesterday. "Today there is no limit on sales. We are supplying as per customers' demand."