

Greek islanders stage new protests over migrant camps

AFP, Lesbos Island

More than 1,000 people yesterday rallied on the Greek island of Lesbos to protest against new migrant camps, a day after violent clashes left more than 60 injured, mostly police officers. Lesbos businesses and unions called for a general strike on the island to continue, with shops shuttered for the second day in a row.

"No camps on the islands, either open or closed," the demonstrators chanted as they marched in the port town of Mytilene.

On the neighbouring island of Chios, hundreds of protesters took part in a similar rally.

The demonstrations were more peaceful than the previous day when locals had clashed violently with police over the construction of new migrant camps on the islands of Lesbos and Chios.

On Wednesday, hundreds of angry islanders threw stones at police who responded with tear gas, stun grenades and rubber bullets.

The Greek government said that hundreds of anti-riot police who had deployed to the islands to ensure the construction work could continue had now left.

"The first phase of digging is complete, (so) the police forces can now return," said government spokesman Stelios Petsas.

"The overwhelming majority of riot police left the islands on Thursday morning," police spokesman Thodoros Chronopoulos told AFP.

"Forty-three officers were injured slightly on Lesbos on Wednesday... but they are not in any danger," the spokesman said. Three had foot injuries from rifles fired by local residents, he said.



Campaigners against Heathrow expansion celebrate outside the Royal Courts of Justice in London, yesterday after a decision by the Court of Appeal on legal challenges to the UK government's approval of plans to expand capacity at Heathrow airport. Britain's Court of Appeal ruled in favour of green campaigners who oppose a third runway at London's Heathrow airport, Europe's busiest. The court said the UK government that had given the Heathrow extension the green light in 2018 had failed to take into account the Paris Agreement to limit climate warming.

PHOTO: AFP

Bangladeshis' Umrah

FROM PAGE 1

Nearly seven million Umrah pilgrims visit the Kingdom each year. The majority of them arrive at airports in Jeddah and Madinah.

23 BANGLADESHIS EVACUATED Meanwhile, an Indian Air Force aircraft yesterday carried 112 people, including 23 Bangladeshis, from coronavirus-hit Chinese city of Wuhan and sent them to a 14-day quarantine facility in South Delhi, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

The C-17 Globemaster III transport aircraft, which was sent to Wuhan on Wednesday with 15 tonnes of medical supplies for coronavirus-affected people in China, returned to Delhi in the morning.

On its return flight, the aircraft carried 23 Bangladeshis, 76 Indians, six Chinese, two each from Myanmar and the Maldives, and one each from South Africa, the US and Madagascar.

Three Indian mission officials coordinated the evacuation in Wuhan, the epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak.

In a statement, Indian External Affairs Ministry said nationals "from some of our neighbouring countries had sought assistance in travelling to India..."

Those returning from Wuhan underwent thermal screening at the Indira Gandhi International Airport and they were later taken to a quarantine facility of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) in Chhawan camp in South Delhi, where they will be kept for a fortnight, officials said.

An ITBP spokesperson said a team of doctors, paramedics, and others would be deployed at the quarantine facility round the clock and the quarantined would be provided with facilities like food, beds, and indoor entertainment.

While the number of mobile court drives and cases were 194 and 2071 respectively in July last year, it came down to 133 and 864 in January this year, shows BRTA document. The number of drives and cases were 61 and 446 in November last year.

In July last year, mobile courts realised 47.21 crore in fine, jailed 24 persons and dumped 38 vehicles while they realised 19.25 lakh in fine, jailed 11 persons and dumped two

vehicles last month. In November, mobile courts realised Tk 5.17 lakh and neither gave jail term to anyone nor dumped any vehicle. Apart from these, magistrates of district administrations, upon getting request from BRTA, conduct mobile courts in their districts.

REASONS BEHIND BRTA'S STANCE The Jatiya Sangsad in September 2018 passed Road Transport Act providing for stringent punishment but the act was not enforced allegedly due to the opposition of road transport leaders over several sections.

When the government went to enforce the law from November last year replacing Motor Vehicles Ordinance-1983, the mobile courts did not get the authority to execute it as the Road Transport Act was not incorporated in the schedule of Mobile Court Act, 2009.

Mobile courts run by the BRTA and district administrations got the power to enforce Road Transport Act after two weeks but the courts did not get the full authorisation regarding the law.

The act's two key sections that deal with checking unauthorised modifications made to vehicles and overloading are not incorporated in the schedule of Mobile Court Act, 2009.

As a result, the mobile courts cannot check modification and overloading, let alone file cases accusing the violators and have become less effective, BRTA officials said.

Besides, the government, following huge protests from transport owners and workers in November last year, decided not to penalise commercial vehicles for violations of several key sections of the act until June this year.

As per the decisions, the authorities decided to relax several sections of the Road Transport Act and because of this, the drivers of heavy vehicles would not

be penalised for driving with licences meant for light or medium vehicles and public transports would not be penalised for illegal parking.

The government already waived the dues of transport workers and owners for not renewing their licences and fitness certificates of vehicles in time.

"We impose nominal fine as they [transport workers] were given time till June," a BRTA executive magistrate said.

"Actually, we are fearful about fresh unrest in transport sector due to imposition of hefty fine," he told The Daily Star recently wishing anonymity.

"We are now giving more importance on updating documents. We want them [owners and drivers] to update their papers within the deadline," he added.

WHAT BRTA SAYS AKM Masudur Rahman, director (enforcement) of BRTA, cited three reasons behind the decline of mobile court drives.

The reasons are: waiving the fines of vehicle owners and workers for not renewing their licences and fitness timely and allowing drivers with light licence to drive heavy vehicles till June and lack of power of mobile courts to punish for modification and overloading.

"When the new law came into force, our minister called for taking go-slow policy, so we are not taking harsh step," he told The Daily Star on February 23.

Asked about the target, he said it would be "difficult" to achieve.

BRTA Chairman Kamrul Ahsan said decline in number of executive magistrates is a reason behind decline of drives.

However, the number of drives increased from this month, he told this newspaper on February 26.

Replying to another question, he said, "We are aware of our target and would try to achieve it."

BRTA drives falter

FROM PAGE 20

Following a High Court directive, BRTA in June last year submitted a report saying more than 4.58 lakh unfit vehicles were on the road and 1.68 lakh of them operated in the capital.

On February 12, BRTA submitted another report to the HC saying that only 1.65 lakh out of 4.58 lakh vehicles renewed their fitness certificates till December 30 last year.

Therefore, 2.92 lakh vehicles without valid fitness documents are plying the roads since December 30 last year. The number reached more than 4 lakh this month.

DRIVES DECREASED There are 13 posts of executive magistrates for conducting mobile courts under BRTA's enforcement department, which is responsible for enforcing different traffic-related laws and thus bring discipline in the sector, besides police.

Out of 10 executive magistrate posts for Dhaka, one remains vacant, one magistrate did not get power for conducting mobile court while another is taking part in long-time training. On the other hand, two out of three magistrates in Chattogram do not have the power.

In this given situation, only six to seven magistrates have been conducting mobile courts in Dhaka and Chattogram for the last three months, an official of enforcement department said.

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I know my son is dead

FROM PAGE 1

She regained consciousness for a couple of minutes around 10:30am and was frequently asking in a low voice for her baby and her husband.

Another family -- of vegetable trader Monir Hossain, 40, his wife Sumyia Akter, 30, and sons Mahadi Hasan Rifat, 9, and nine-month-old Mahmudul Hasan -- were being treated at the burn and plastic surgery unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital after suffering slight injuries from the fire.

The family members of the two deceased -- Liton and Juthi -- took the bodies after autopsies conducted at the DMC morgue.

Talking with The Daily Star, Md Nurunnabi, Liton's nephew, said he was taking his uncle's body to their native village of Luxmipur. Liton used to live in a small room in the ground floor to save money with his 18-year-old son, Akaduddin Rony, a student of Tejgaon College. But according to Nurunnabi, Akaduddin recently went back to the village due to financial constraints.

"I do not know what will happen to my uncle's family now," he said.

17-year-old Juthi was supposed to attend the Higher Secondary Examination on April 1. She used to live with his father Jahangir Alam, an official of department of public works, and her mother Umme Kulsum. Her elder brother Ashik Apon is a student of Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University.

Juthi's uncle Md Suruzzaman said his father and mother sustained leg injuries while trying to escape to the adjacent building's rooftop. Her brother had escaped, but Juthi died in the fire when trying to exit by the stairs, he added.

Lutfur Rahman, the security guard of the building told this correspondent that he wake up around 4:00am yesterday by the sound of burning wire and soon found a fire had originated in the electric meter box in the garage.

"A wooden bed was near the meter box and the fire spread very fast. I then ran out of the building with my grandchild Sifat [13]," he said, adding that he then tried to alert the residents and neighbours by shouting and asked them not to come downstairs.

Abul Hosen, deputy director of Mymensingh Fire Service and Civil Defence, also the member secretary of the committee, said they had started their investigation.

'SHE WAS FREQUENTLY ASKING FOR HER BABY' Relaying her last conversation with her brother, when he told her of the incident, Nasrin told this correspondent that Rony tried to escape the building through the stairwell, carrying Rushdi in his arms. But unable to see in the dark, Rony stumbled down the stairs and Rushdi fell out of his arms.

"Then he [Rony] tried to crawl back up the stairs [for his son], but lost consciousness," Nasrin said.

Nasrin's cousin Sheikh Marufa, standing beside her, said, "We do not know what fate awaits us. Our sister-in-law [Nasrin] stopped talking and has been on life support since 12:00pm.

under private management would have to pay an additional amount of Tk 12,000 for a Qurbani (sacrificing animals) coupon from the Islamic Development Bank in Saudi Arabia.

Earlier on February 24, the cabinet approved the Hajj Package 2020, under which a Bangladeshi hajj aspirant will have to spend Tk 4.25 lakh for package-1 and Tk 3.60 lakh for package-2 to perform hajj under government management, which is Tk 6,500 and Tk 16,000 more than the corresponding packages of the previous year.

The rate was Tk 3,32,886 in 2018 and Tk 319,000 in 2017.

The Haab boss also said every pilgrim

government for the first time introduced package-3, which would cost Tk 3.15 lakh.

As per an agreement between Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia, a total of 1,38,198 Bangladeshis will perform hajj this year. Of them, 17,198 will perform the ritual under government management and the rest under private management, according to government data.

The registration of prospective hajjis will start from March, said the HAAB president.

Depending on moon sighting, the hajj is likely to be held on July 30.

Considering affordability, the

that the world has seen. And as a result, you have emerged as strong, united and determined nation."

SOURCES: February 29, 1972 issues of Dainik Bangla, The Daily Ittefaq, Azad, Morning News, The Bangladesh Observer and Purbodesh.

97 yaba dealers

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During last year's surrender, the peddlers also handed over 350,000 yaba pills, 30 locally-made firearms and 70 bullets to law enforcers.

Two cases were filed under the narcotics control act and firearms act by the police on the day of the surrender.

Police submitted two charge sheets accusing 101 yaba dealers before Cox's Bazar Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court on January 20 this year.

Later, the cases were transferred to the District and Sessions Judge's Court in Cox's Bazar.

The next hearing in the case will be on April 12, Public Prosecutor Faridul Alam told our local correspondent.

El Salvador approves law to punish civil war crimes

AFP, San Salvador

El Salvador's Congress on Wednesday night approved a law to investigate and punish crimes committed during the country's 1980-1992 civil war, but President Nayib Bukele said he would veto it.

Bukele considered it a "disguised amnesty" that does not guarantee the principles of "truth, reparation and justice," according to a statement from the presidency.

The Special Law on Transitional Justice Reparation and National Reconciliation was narrowly approved with the votes of 44 of the 84 deputies.

It was ordered by the supreme court in 2016 after it declared a post-war amnesty unconstitutional.

The deputies had until February 28 to pass the law.

The legislation will be applicable to any person who "committed crimes against humanity and war crimes constituting serious violations of international humanitarian law" during the armed conflict from January 1, 1980 to January 16, 1992.

But lawmaker Juan Jose Martel of the minority Democratic Change party (CD) said the legislation "has no teeth" and described it as "a fake reconciliation law."

Civil society organizations also disagreed with the law because it gives judges the power to reduce the sentence of a person accused of war crimes or crimes against humanity just because he accepts his participation in these crimes and asks the victims for forgiveness.

"This shows it is not justice that is wanted, but impunity," said former human rights attorney David Morales.

Julio Fabian of the opposition right-wing Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) defended the law and said "victims of human rights violations need to find justice."

The Salvadoran civil war left more than 75,000 dead and more than 7,000 missing.

Govts ramp up

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US President Donald Trump put his vice president, Mike Pence, in charge of America's response, while France's President Emmanuel Macron rallied the nation.

"We have a crisis before us. An epidemic is on its way," Macron said at a Paris hospital where a 60-year-old Frenchman this week became the second person to die from the coronavirus in France.

Saudi Arabia yesterday banned pilgrims from visiting Islam's holiest sites to try to contain the spread of virus.

Taiwan raised its epidemic response level to the highest as it readied a \$2 billion package to cushion the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on its export-reliant economy.

Spooked by the impact on China, the world's second-biggest economy and the heart of corporate supply chains, and the increasing effect on other countries, stock markets sank deeper into the red and oil prices fell.

Global markets have dropped for six straight days, wiping out more than \$3.6 trillion in value, reports Reuters.

A rash of countries have had their first cases in recent days, the latest being Denmark with a man back from a ski holiday in Italy, and Estonia with someone returning from Iran.

Iraq announced the first confirmed case of coronavirus in the capital Baghdad yesterday, taking nationwide infections to six.

There is no cure for the virus that can lead to pneumonia, and a vaccine may take up to 18 months to develop.

New cases in South Korea took its total to 1,261 with 12 deaths, while Europe's hotspot Italy had 453 infections and 12 deaths, and Iran reported 245 cases and 26 fatalities.

Urging people to avoid unnecessary travel, Tehran extended its closure of cinemas, cultural events and conferences for another week. Iran's outbreak has added to the isolation of a nation already under US sanctions.

Greece cancelled all carnival festivities planned for the weekend as two new cases were found in Thessaloniki and Athens, raising the total to three, reports AFP.

The coronavirus has played havoc with global aviation and tourism as airlines cancel flights, countries ban visitors from hot spots and nervous passengers put off travel.

News that a Korean Air flight attendant who worked on flights between Seoul and Los Angeles later tested positive was likely to unnerve passengers further.

The United States is managing 59 cases - most of them Americans repatriated from a cruise ship quarantined in Japan where almost 700 cases developed. But Trump said the risk was "very low" in the United States which was "very, very ready."

Chinese authorities said the number of new deaths stood at 29 yesterday, its lowest daily tally since January 28.

UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet said countries should only use quarantine against the deadly new coronavirus when truly needed, and must respect the rights of those in isolation.