

‘Lies and conspiracy’

Modi defends farm reforms as protests grow

AFP, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday said his government was a victim of “lies and conspiracy” as it struggled to defuse growing protests by tens of thousands of farmers threatening to encircle New Delhi.

With more protesters gathering at entrances to the capital every day, Modi stepped up efforts to placate the rural agitation against his market reforms.

Protesters have blocked major roads into Delhi for more than three weeks opposing laws which enable them to sell produce on the open market instead of just through state-run bodies that guarantee a minimum price.

Farmers have demanded the repeal of the laws, which they say invite corporate domination of food production.

So far, the protesters have mainly come from northern Indian states. But yesterday a union in the central state of Maharashtra said thousands of members would join the protesters.

Union leaders say they will take the action into the new year, and have set up tent cities for protesters to counter the freezing cold.

They have threatened to cripple the capital with a huge rally involving tractors on January 26, when British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is to be a special guest at the annual Republic Day celebrations.

Modi said in a video speech to one farmers’ group that opposition parties had exploited the protests, despite having supported the rural reforms. The government’s rivals were “spreading lies for their own political gain. They are using the farmers’ shoulders to fire their guns”, he said.

Claims that minimum prices would be ended were just part of the “lies and conspiracy”.

“I just want to make the farmers’ lives easier,” Modi said.

Agriculture employs about 70 percent of India’s 1.3 billion people and accounts for 15 percent of its \$2.7 trillion economy.

Five rounds of talks between ministers and unions have failed to produce a breakthrough.



Rescued Nigerian school boys sit together at the Government house in Katsina, Nigeria, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

MASS ABDUCTION BY BOKO HARAM IN NIGERIA

344 schoolboys released; many remain missing

AFP, Kankara

More than 300 Nigerian schoolboys seized in a mass abduction claimed by Boko Haram experienced their first full day of freedom yesterday after a nearly week-long ordeal.

But relief at their survival mingled with concern that many others could still be captive, and the circumstances of their release remained unclear.

Looking dirty, worn-out and distraught, and most of them without shoes, the boys were brought to the governor’s offices in Katsina, the capital of Katsina state in northwestern Nigeria, after being released late Thursday.

The assault last Friday on a rural school in Kankara, carried out by gunmen arriving on motorbikes, was initially blamed on criminal gangs who have terrorised the region for years.

But on Tuesday Boko Haram, the brutal jihadist group behind the abduction of 276 schoolgirls in Chibok in 2014, claimed responsibility.

Local officials announced late Thursday that 344 boys had been released and would spend the night in the protection of security agents.

A security source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said they had been left in the forest after negotiations between the authorities and the abductors, but gave no further details.

It remained unclear, though, if all the abducted schoolboys had been released, amid ongoing uncertainty over the number taken in the first place.

In an interview with state channel NTA, the governor added: “I think we have recovered most of the boys, it’s not all of them.”

In a video released by Boko Haram Thursday, a distressed teenager said he was among 520 students kidnapped.

AFP, Brussels

British and EU negotiators plunged into the “final hours” of their scramble for a post-Brexit trade deal yesterday, deeply divided on the highly-charged issue of fishing rights.

The UK will leave the EU single market in less than two weeks and time has all but run out for any agreement to be approved in time to head off a severe economic shock.

The European Parliament has demanded that it see the text of any accord by Sunday at the latest, and the UK government says it will not allow talks to go beyond December 31.

Brussels’ chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier told the MEPs before heading to talks with his UK counterpart David Frost that Friday marked a “moment of truth”.

“We have very little time remaining, just a few hours to work through these negotiations... if you want this agreement to enter into force on January 1.”

Britain left the European Union on January 31 and will leave the EU single market on December 31 at midnight, with or without a follow-on accord.

Britain’s Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday acknowledged difficulties in Brexit trade talks but vowed to plough on.

“Our door is open. We will keep talking but I have to say that things are looking difficult and there’s a gap that needs to be bridged,” he said on a trip to Bolton, in northwest England.



“We have done a lot to try and help, and we hope that our EU friends will see sense and come to the table with something themselves.”

Without a trade deal, cross-Channel trade will be conducted on basic WTO rules and a market built over 47 years of economic integration will be disrupted by tariffs on goods.

Late on Thursday, Johnson and EU chief Ursula von der Leyen held talks by phone that failed to break the logjam in the eight-month-old negotiation.

Barnier confirmed that fishing remains the main sticking point, with both sides now moving closer on the broader rules for ensuring fair

competition.

And he stressed that the issue of fish could not be side-stepped: “Everything comes together as a whole. Nothing’s agreed until everything is agreed.”

Britain is adamant that it will decide who gets to fish it in its waters after January 1, but Brussels wants to secure a long-term agreement guaranteeing access for EU boats.

Many in Brussels see the doom-laden rhetoric coming from both sides as manoeuvring for advantage in the last moments before the deal -- which is said to be 95 percent ready -- is signed.

“It’s like always in politics. It happens always at the end,” veteran MEP and former Belgian premier Guy Verhofstadt told Sky News.



A Palestinian demonstrator kicks a tear gas canister fired by Israeli forces during a protest against Jewish settlements, in Beit Dajan in the Israeli-occupied West Bank yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Defrauded online

FROM PAGE 1

and submitting a paragraph per day, for which she would receive a monthly salary of Tk 20,000. They would be on a wide range of topics -- like describing a winter’s morning or the feel of a village market, the kind of thing you were assigned to write on for English class at school.

Sounds preposterously easy, but there was a catch.

Besides, she was messaged, if she could recruit more job seekers like herself to the Messenger group, she would receive half the “add fee” as commission. She would also be entitled to a Tk 100 bonus if she was able to add 30 or more job-seekers.

After paying the ad fee, Samira was added to “Training Group-18”, where on an average 30 girls were added every day. She was also added to a “submit group”, where she was told to submit her daily paragraph.

Samira was also warned not to ask anyone else in the training group anything and if she had any questions, to directly message the person who had added her to the group. Otherwise, she was told, the group admin would remove her from the group and she would lose her “job”.

“After a few days,

although everyone started submitting paragraphs every day, I realised the admin was not interested in what we were writing. I don’t think they even saw what we submitted,” she said.

Rather, the group admin kept pressuring everyone to add more people to the group by posting the job offer in other women’s groups they were part of and collecting “add fees” from them, she said.

“Soon, I realised something fishy was going on. I saw the number of recruited persons become more than 250 in a few days and I was wondering how they would pay the promised salary to 250 people, which would be more than Tk 50 lakh a month,” Samira said.

Her suspicions were soon confirmed when the admin started removing everyone from the group who, like her, had been in the group for more than 20 days at that point and asked about their payment.

Afterwards, Samira searched but could not find the Facebook profiles of either the group admin or the person who recruited her -- she figured she was either blocked or they had deactivated their accounts.

When she called the mobile number where she had been sending the fees of those she recruited, she

found she had also been blocked from that number.

Samira’s account suggests that these group admins and the people behind the scheme -- if we count 250 members each in 20 groups who had sent them at least Tk 30 -- an estimated amount of Tk 1.5 lakh in two to three weeks, without investing a single taka.

To investigate further, this correspondent also replied to one such job offer and was added to “Training group-38” with more than 200 members at that point, in exchange for a Tk 300 fee.

If an average 200 people each in 40 such groups had sent half the fee to their respective group admin’s mobile banking account, the group admins have already received an amount of Tk 12 lakh in just a few weeks, by hoodwinking gullible young job seekers.

This correspondent spoke to 50 young women, mostly homemakers and students -- including some young men -- who were cheated by these scams. Technically resembling pyramid schemes, the members were forced to reel others into the Messenger groups in exchange for a fee ranging from Tk 60-500, half of which they got to keep.

The tasks ranged from placing a given code

number on images of clothes or selling clothes in girls’ groups to writing paragraphs. But none of these lasted a whole month -- all the members being removed from the groups at around the 20-day mark.

NEW TWIST, OLD SCAM In 2013, the government banned pyramid marketing by passing the Multilevel Marketing (MLM) Activities (control) Ordinance 2013.

The law was introduced after several scams like Destiny 2000, Unipay2u and ITCL were busted, which had been embezzling vast amounts of money from clients by selling non-existent products and services.

The scams these young people are encountering on Facebook are structured like the now-banned pyramid schemes, albeit on a smaller scale but with a new twist -- going online -- said experts.

Co-founder of Bangladesh Cyber & Legal Centre Gazi Mahfuz Ul Kabir informed this correspondent that they had encountered around 150 victims of such cyber scams and received around eight complaints.

AFM Al Kibria, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police’s Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit, said they have

also received a number of complaints related to such scams based on Facebook Messenger groups.

The CTTC has also received two cases on this. “After our investigation, we found they are basically frauds, having no business,” he said.

“We even arrested two criminals who embezzled more than Tk 50 lakh, by adding people to their Messenger group, and seized around Tk 6 lakh from them,” Kibria added.

According to Kibria, since the amount is small, victims don’t want to complain, leading these frauds to continue their schemes online.

“The victims can come to us if they want to make a complaint against such Facebook fraud. Because if they don’t report, it becomes difficult for us to take action since these happen in ‘closed’ groups on Facebook.”

According to Facebook community standards, it has policies to prevent and disrupt fraudulent activities and removes content aimed at deceiving people deliberately. This includes users not posting content on false recruitment and ponzi or pyramid schemes, confidence schemes, or setting up false businesses or entities.

UN: 3,174 MIGRANTS DIED IN 2020

AGENCIES

Over 3,100 people lost their lives in 2020 on migration routes in the world despite limits to movement imposed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

As of Thursday, the Missing Migrants project of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) had recorded this year some 3,174 deaths on migration routes around the world, a drop from the 5,327 in 2019.

The decrease in the number of deaths recorded on dangerous migration routes is not necessarily an indication that the number of lives lost did actually drop in 2020 since Covid-19 also complicated the IOM’s ability to collect data on deaths during migration and to monitor specific routes, the organization said in a statement issued yesterday in Geneva as part of International Migrants Day.

So far this year, at least 1,773 migrants died on internal routes within Europe and ones toward it, accounting for most victims recorded in the world. An increase in deaths was recorded in South America as well with 104 lives lost - most of whom were Venezuelan migrants - compared with under 40 in all the previous recorded years.

IOM noted that there is not sufficient evidence to corroborate information received on some shipwrecks. The Missing Migrants project is aware of at least 14 “invisible” shipwrecks in which an alleged about 600 lives were lost but which could not be included in this year’s figure.

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ফাইল নং ০৬.০২.৬৭৫৮.১৬৫.০৭.১৯৪.২০.৯৩৪

তারিখঃ ১৭ ডিসেম্বর ২০২০

পুরাতন গাড়ি বিক্রয় দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

অত্র প্রতিষ্ঠানের পুরাতন ০২টি গাড়ি ঢাকা মেট্রো-গ-৩৭-১০৬০ টয়োটা এলিও (কার) এবং ঢাকা মেট্রো-গ-৩৫-৯১৪৩ টয়োটা এলিও (কার) “যেখানে যে অবস্থায় আছে” এবং উহার রেজিস্ট্রেশন সনদ, ট্যাক্স ট্রেন্ডেন ও ফিটনেস সনদ “যে অবস্থায় যে পর্যন্ত নয়ান আছে” সে ভিত্তিতে নিলামে বিক্রয়ের জন্য বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত নাগরিক, অস্থায়ী রেসিডেন্ট/টিকাদারদের নিম্নে থেকে সীলমোহরকৃত নামে উল্লিখিত তারিখে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাইতেছেঃ

১	স্থান	ডকইয়ার্ড এন্ড ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ওয়ার্কস লি., সোনাকান্দা, বন্দর, নারায়ণগঞ্জ।
২	গাড়ির ধরণ	পুরাতন ০২টি গাড়ি, ঢাকা মেট্রো-গ-৩৭-১০৬০ টয়োটা এলিও (কার) এবং ঢাকা মেট্রো-গ-৩৫-৯১৪৩ টয়োটা এলিও (কার)।
৪	সিডিউলের মূল্য	টাকা ১০০০.০০ (এক হাজার) মাত্র (অফেরতযোগ্য)।
৫	বিড সিকিউরিটির পরিমাণ	এটো দরের উপর ৩% আন্টেনিটন হিসাবে ব্যাংক ড্রাইফট/পে-অর্ডার ডকইয়ার্ড এন্ড ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং লিমিটেড এর নামে দরপত্রের সাথে জমা দিতে হবে। (তালিকাভুক্ত টিকাদার প্রতিষ্ঠানের জন্য প্রযোজ্য নহে)।
৬	সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের স্থান	হিসাব বিভাগ, ডকইয়ার্ড এন্ড ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ওয়ার্কস লি., বাংলাদেশ নৌবাহিনী, সোনাকান্দা, বন্দর, নারায়ণগঞ্জ।
৭	সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ	৩১ ডিসেম্বর ২০২০ অফিস সন্ধ্যাকালীন সময় পর্যন্ত।
৮	দরপত্র জমা দেওয়ার শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	০৩ জানুয়ারি ২০২১ বেলাঃ ১২১৫ ঘটিকা।
৯	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	০৩ জানুয়ারি ২০২১ বেলাঃ ১২৩০ ঘটিকা।
১০	যোগাযোগের মাধ্যম	মোবাইলঃ ০১৭৬৮৭১৯৮৮৭ www.dewbn.gov.bd
১১	দরপত্রের সহিত যে সকল কাগজপত্র জমা প্রদান করিতে হইবে	ট্রেন্ড লাইসেন্স, হালনাগাদ আয়ের সার্টিফিকেট, ভাট রেজিস্ট্রেশন সার্টিফিকেট, ব্যাংক সলভেন্সি, পাসপোর্ট সাইজের ছবি ০১ কপি। (তালিকাভুক্ত টিকাদারদের ক্ষেত্রে প্রযোজ্য নহে)

১২। বিশেষ আত্বায়ঃ

- দরপত্র সংক্রান্ত অন্যান্য তথ্যাবলী দরপত্র সংগ্রহকালে বাণিজ্যিক শাখা হতে জানা যাবে।
- দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ হতে ৩০ দিন পর্যন্ত দরপত্র বলবৎ থাকবে।
- নিদিষ্ট সময়ের মধ্যে মালামাল ডেলিভারী দিতে হবে।
- দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্তৃপক্ষ যে কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতীত দরপত্র বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।
- অফিস সন্ধ্যাকালীন সময় সকাল ০৮.০০ ঘটিকা হতে বিকাল ০৩.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত সিডিউল ক্রয়কারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের সর্বোচ্চ ০৩ (তিন) সদস্য সমন্বয় প্রতিনিধি দল যানবাহন শেপের কর্তৃত্বভার কর্মকর্তা/কর্মচারীদের মাধ্যমে উল্লিখিত গাড়ি ও মোটরসাইকেল সরঞ্জামে পরিদর্শন করতে পারবেন।

জিডি-২০১১

পক্ষে ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক