

BB seeks banks' briefing on stayed bankruptcy cases

Some Tk 1,000 crore stuck up in 136 pending cases

INAM AHMED

With cases piling up at Bankruptcy Courts, the Bangladesh Bank (BB) yesterday asked all banks to send briefs on why their cases are getting stayed by the courts.

There are now 136 cases pending with the two Bankruptcy Courts, in which about Tk 1000 crore are stuck up. Of these, 41 cases involving some Tk 600 crore have been stayed by the High Court.

On the other hand, 25 cases have been settled by the courts, but the banks could not recover any money from any of the debtors due to failure of the receivers.

Against this backdrop, Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru Wednesday sat with a Bangladesh Bank Task Force formed to look into the problems in settling cases at the Bankruptcy Courts.

Others present in the meeting were the Law Secretary, Bangladesh Bank's Deputy Governor Majid Khan and Executive Director Nazrul Huda, Additional Finance Secretary Soaib Ahmed and Attorney General Mahmudul Islam.

According to sources, the Attorney General asked the BB to inform him about the grounds on which the High Court passed stay orders in the bankruptcy cases.

Once the grounds are known, state lawyers will sit and identify the weaknesses in the cases. Once the problem is identified, the AG will fight one single case and then get verdict in favour of the bank.

This single instance will then be used as reference against all the cases which have been stayed. It may so happen that all the stay orders will be vacated on a single day.

The meeting also discussed that in case the office of the Attorney General fails to make any headway, the Law Ministry will then take steps to amend the Bankruptcy Act.

Wednesday's meeting also discussed the situation of the Artha Rin Adalat (money loan court). Till June 30 last year, 57275 cases involving Tk 8832 crore were filed with the six Artha Rin Adalats. Of these, 24570 cases involving Tk 834 crore have been settled. But only 9.45 per cent of the loans have been finally recovered.

It was also mentioned in the meeting that an amendment to the Artha Rin Adalat law was awaiting vetting by the parliament. The amendment proposes that a case can not be delayed for more than six months and that the defendant can not take time more than thrice during the trial.



State Minister for Youth and Sports Obaidul Quader inaugurated Grameen Phone Under-17 Asian Cup cricket tournament at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. BCB chief Saber Hossain Chowdhury is on his left.

Hartals raise fear of severe congestion at Chittagong port

NURUL ALAM, Chittagong

A severe congestion is feared at the Chittagong port in view of hartals from last week that disrupted handling of ships and cargo, port sources said.

"We are fearing congestion at the port if things go on like this with a spree of hartals", Chairman of Chittagong Port Authority Commodore Golam Rabbani told this correspondent yesterday.

"The average turn-around period for a vessels at the port has already gone up to 7 days from 5 days earlier. It may rise further if such hartals continue. We are trying our best to cope with the dislocation by ensuring port operation on weekly holidays", he said.

"Despite that it will really be difficult to avert congestion if political unrest persists", he said.

Harbour Master Kamrul Islam said, "The spree of hartals is leaving a chain-effect on our operational activities. This will lead to a severe congestion within a few days".

He apprehended that ships calling at Chittagong port might face a delay of six to seven days on an average due to hartals.

Other sources said over 30 vessels loaded with about one lakh tonnes of cargo are now at the port.

Of these, 20 vessels are anchored at the jetties and river moorings and the rest at the outer anchorage, he said.

President of Bangladesh Master Stevedores Association (BNSA) Monjur

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Move to strengthen disaster management body

SHEHAB AHMED

The Disaster Management Bureau (DMB) is compiling an inventory of available resources and equipment to cope with the aftermath of earthquakes in the country as part of a government's plan to upgrade the almost non-existent rescue and relief capability.

"We've so far gathered the list of equipment like heavy lifting cranes, bulldozers and ladders from the Armed Forces, City Corporations, Municipalities and Fire Brigades",

said Khitish Chandra Kundu, DG of DMB yesterday.

But a number of organisations are yet to send the list of equipment, he added.

The list of equipment will be completed this month as per instruction by the Disaster Management and Relief Ministry which held a meeting earlier this month to review the situation in the wake of the quake in Gujarat.

It ordered the concerned authorities to speed up the work to procure equipment and set up three seismic

observatories in Dhaka, Sylhet and Rangpur and upgrade the country's lone observatory in Chittagong, having virtually no capability to measure and pinpoint the epicentre of a tremor.

But the available rescue equipment all not at the fully functional stage needs repairing and servicing, Kundu said. The inventory would help identify the need for making them fully functional.

Besides, the DMB is planning to arrange a massive public awareness

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

CID to probe train mishap near Feni

UNB, Comilla

CID will take up the case from GRP to investigate the train accident at Kendua under Chouddagram upazila on February 7.

A team of senior officials of CID will visit the place of accident tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Chouddagram Magistrate Court sent Hafez Mazharul Islam to Comilla jail. Arrested in connection with the train accident, Hafez Mazharul was produced before the court by the railway police on Wednesday at the end of a five-day remand.

Tk 1.5cr embezzled against DESA's paper projects

Probe finds 21 officials, employees responsible

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A probe committee has found 21 officers and employees of the Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) responsible for embezzling nearly Tk 1.5 crore of public money against its three non-existent projects taken up in 1998.

The committee, in its report, concluded that DESA officials and employees of various levels are

involved in the process of grabbing public money with the DESA Finance and Accounts department providing all-out support in the process. All the money was embezzled in connivance with the contractors, the report said.

"More irregularities may be unveiled if detailed investigation is carried out on other projects," the report said.

The committee headed by

Superintendent Engineer of Ninth and Tenth Power Projects SR Talukder started functioning early last year and found widespread irregularities in the three projects which were never implemented and remained confined only on papers.

The DESA took up the three projects rehabilitation, reestablishment and transformer protection of 1170.4KV lines in Tejgaon area, Line

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Ctg-Kolkata bus service from Apr likely

BSS, Ctg

Chittagong City Corporation is planning to introduce Chittagong-Kolkata bus service from April this year.

"Preparations are underway to sign an official-level agreement soon between Bangladesh and India in this regard," city mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, who took the initiative, told the news agency yesterday after returning from Kolkata.

"At the initial stage, at least 15 luxury buses will run from the city's Nasirabad area to Benapole and after completion of the immigration formalities on the border the passengers will be ferried to Kolkata by special transports", Mohiuddin Chowdhury said.

"A full-fledged modern waiting-cum-rest house will be built on both sides of the border, he said.

The intending passengers will be able to book tickets in advance through "E-mail" for their respective destinations in India," he said, adding that each passenger will have to pay Taka 1500 for travelling from the port city to Kolkata.

"Soon after the agreement we will go for bus service on trial basis under the aegis of private companies," he said.

First time in four years

Convict hanged at Dhaka Jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After about four years' break, a convict was hanged at the Dhaka Central Jail Wednesday night, sources concerned said.

The convict-Firoze Mia, 52 - was guilty of murdering four persons including two minor boys. He was hanged at 12:01 am.

Representatives of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), civil surgeon, jail physician, jail super, jailer and other officials and employees were present at the gallows when Firoze was hanged.

The last capital punishment implemented in Dhaka Central jail was on April 9, 1997.

In the country, the last such punishment was implemented in Barisal Jail on July 22 the same year. One Khalek Mir was hanged in Barisal Jail for killing his daughter.

Eleven convicts including three women are facing death sentence at Dhaka Central Jail. The number is 168 in the country, which includes nine women.

With execution of Firoze Mia's death sentence, the number rose to 355 in the country since independence. Of them, 271 are army men.

Firoze Mia of Gakulnagar village under Raipur thana in Narsingdi district was accused in a murder case in 1991. On June 21, 1991, there was an altercation between his minor son and some children over playing marble.

Firoze Mia intervened and at one stage he took a machete from his wife Ramzannessa and chopped the head of a neighbour's minor son, Sohag. Sohag's brother Alam Chan Polash came to stop him. Angry Firoze chopped the heads of Polash, his mother Anowara Begum and grandfather Bhikhan one by one when they came to stop him.

Sohag's father filed a case on the same day. The Additional District Judge, Narsingdi, in the verdict on November 30, 1995 gave death sentence to Firoze and his wife Ramzannessa. Ramzannessa was acquitted by the High Court following an appeal.

Opposition to hold gayebana janaza today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led opposition alliance will hold countrywide Gayebana Janaza and bring out mourning procession today in memory of those killed at Malibag by the ruling party activists during Tuesday's hartal hours.

In Dhaka, the BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami, Islami Oikya Jote, Jappa, Democratic League and some other smaller parties will jointly hold a Gayebana Namaj-e-Janaza on the Baitul Mukarram mosque premises after the Jumma prayers.

Later, leaders and activists of the opposition parties will bring out a mourning procession in the city.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan announced the programme at a post-hartal press briefing on Wednesday and yesterday.

2 BDR personnel shot by smugglers in Kushtia

UNB, Kushtia

Two BDR personnel were shot yesterday as smugglers opened fire on them near Thotarpara BOP, some 50 kilometres from the town.

Kushtia Sector Commander Colonel Abdul Hannan and Subedar Emdadul Huq received bullet injuries when they came under attack by the miscreants in the afternoon during a surprise visit to the BOP.

BDR jawans accompanying them retaliated with fire, forcing the attackers to flee away.

The injured BDR personnel were first rushed to Jessore Combined Military Hospital and then shifted to Dhaka. Col Hannan was operated upon at Dhaka CMH.

BDR Director General Major General Fazlur Rahman visited them at the hospital.

10 hurt as AL factions clash at Rajshahi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

At least 10 people were injured, three of them seriously, in a clash between two factions of Awami League at Puthia upazila headquarters last night.

The clash ensued following formation of Zewpara Union Committee of Awami League the same afternoon.

The seriously injured AL activists were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, police said.



With public transports off the road these intending pilgrims had no option but to walk all the way to the Zia International Airport during yesterday's dawn-to-dusk hartal.

Two bids to sabotage train service foiled

UNB, Dhaka

Two attempts to sabotage train service were foiled yesterday, railway officials here said.

The first bid was made in northern Jamalpur district in the small hours of yesterday while the second allegedly by hartal activists at a place between Sharshadi and Feni stations.

The sabotage bids came at a time when the entire railway network has been put under a red alert after the derailment of a passenger train near Feni, leaving two people dead and 15 injured on February 10.

The train derailed on Dhaka-Chittagong route between Sharshadi and Goonabati stations after fishplates were removed from the tracks.

Railway workers in the first incident yesterday found a part of the track removed near a bridge, 30 kilometres from Jamalpur district headquarters, only minutes before an express train was to pass through the area.

The Jamalpur-bound 6 down waiting at Tarakandi railway station was to be followed by Jamuna inter-city express that was also waiting at the same station.

Railway officials said on-duty rail security personnel found 5-6 people moving suspiciously near railway bridge number 319 between Sharshabari and Tarakandi stations at about 1 am.

"As the security men Mohammad Ali and Abdul

Aziz came forward, the suspects ran away," said a release of central public relations department of Bangladesh Railway.

The security personnel found three feet of rail tracks removed. Later, they also found the group engaged in cutting rail tracks on the other side of the bridge and chased the group.

"The security people instantly informed the Tarakandi and Sharshabari stations of the sabotage attempts upon which the authorities postponed the scheduled departure of 6 Down express from Tarakandi at 1:02am," said the release.

Jamuna Express departed from Tarakandi station at 5 am after the rail tracks were repaired.

In the second incident, railway officials said, pro-hartal processionists at about 1 pm removed panel clips and fastening of rail tracks near a level-crossing between Sharshadi and Feni stations.

The on-duty gateman immediately informed the two stationmasters of the subversive act.

"Chittagong-bound Mohanagar Prabhati was to pass through the area shortly afterwards", said another release of the railway.

It said following the information of the gateman, the inter-city express train was halted at Sharshadi station and thus it could avert a major mishap.

Separate cases were filed with Jamalpur and Feni GRP thanas in connection with the sabotage bids. None was arrested.

Tuesday's victim identified

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One of the young men shot dead by anti-hartal activists at Malibagh yesterday was identified yesterday as Zahurul Haq.

Haq, 24, son of Nurul Haq of Dakkhin Pawna of Fatikchhari in Chittagong came to the city four months ago looking for a job, sources said.

Khalilur Rahman and Abdul Mannan who came to the city after seeing the victim's picture published in national dailies positively identified the dead at about 5:15pm at the DMCH morgue yesterday. Motijheel police however could not tell whether the body was handed over to them.

Earlier, Anjum-an-e-Mafidul Islam had obtained permission to take the body away from the morgue for burial.

Meanwhile the body of Monir Hossain, 25, a JCD activist who was killed in a bomb explosion at Lalbagh on Wednesday still lay unclaimed at the DMCH morgue yesterday, hospital sources said.

Even 12 days after the recovery of 'a pair of very sophisticated bombs' from inside a madrassah at Mohammadia Housing Estate, the police seem reluctant about seeking help from bomb experts in the army in order to analyse or disarm them.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Live bomb in bucket full of water!

'Powerful explosive' becomes 'not so powerful' in 12 days

STAR REPORT

Even 12 days after the recovery of 'a pair of very sophisticated bombs' from inside a madrassah at Mohammadia Housing Estate, the police seem reluctant about seeking help from bomb experts in the army in order to analyse or disarm them.

Now the Mohammadpur Police who have preserved these 'live' bombs inside a big bucket full of water are saying that the bombs appear 'not so powerful'. On the first day of their recovery, the same police however had claimed to the press that those were highly sophisticated explosives.

Higher authorities are apparently very reluctant about the state of the bombs that are visibly electronic devices.

On previous occasions, whenever any potentially powerful bomb was recovered, police immediately sought help from army bomb experts.

On October 8, 1999, a high capacity grenade was recovered from a mosque at Mirpur while an anti tank mine was recovered from the daily Janakantha office on the same day. Two days later on October 10, two bombs similar to that found in the mosque in Mirpur were found in a Kadiani mosque at Bakshi Bazar.

In each case, army was called in to defuse the explosives. But the case of the 'powerful bombs' in Mohammadpur thana seems to be an exception for reasons best known to the authorities concerned.

The Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Mohammadpur thana Mohsinuzzaman Khan told The Daily Star yesterday that the army experts could not help as they have been very busy ever since the bombs were recovered.

Initially police officials concerned suspected the bombs to be 'very sophisticated explosives made only by experts'. When asked how they