

Extortionists take

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the father organisation of bus owners, and form other committees at the city's different terminals.

The feuding factions of DSPS are MA Kader-Enayet Ullah, Monir Chowdhury, Kazi Alim Buddin and Ansa Amin-Hasim Dewan group.

Monir Chowdhury alleged that Kader-Enayet committee is collecting tolls from different bus terminals and added that some bus owners of Fulbaria bus stand at Gulistan has reported him (Monir) that Tk 300-400 is extorted against a bus per day.

But Khandkar Enayet Ullah, general secretary of DSPS, said some route committees formed during BNP-led alliance tenure are involved in realising the toll money and in some cases some ruling party men also get involved with them.

He said DSPS would fix the amount of money for service charge or maintenance charge to stop such toll collection and dissolve the committees, formed during the BNP-led alliance tenure.

Different bus owners seeking anonymity said the terminals were almost toll free in 2007 and 2008 and alleged that law enforcement agencies do not play their roles to curb the extortion in the bus terminals rather the law enforcers assist the extortionists in their illegal business.

The route committee members who have links with bus owners and workers association leaders collect Tk 260 as GB from a bus against each trip from Mohakhali terminal. Around 900 buses use the terminal in a day, sources at the terminal said.

Price of water

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supplying water on lorries "charge the consumers extra". "Those who bribe get water faster than the people who do not," said an official of Wasa wishing not to be named.

Nurul Haque said they would take stern actions against the Wasa employees or officials involved in this malpractice.

Wasa had increased the price of water (through supply pipes) by five percent on July 1.

The cost of 1,000 litres of water for Dhaka residents went up to Tk 6.05 from Tk 5.75, said a Wasa official. Industrial and commercial consumers are now paying Tk 20.11 for every 1,000 litres, which was Tk 19.15 before July 1.

A resident of Moghbazar complained that Wasa is giving too much attention to increasing water price rather than concentrating on providing good services to citizens of Dhaka and providing them with adequate water. The resident said many areas of the city are still in acute water crisis.

The Wasa chief engineer said there is almost no complaint of water crisis in the city now.

Kidnappers

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Assistant Commissioner (AC) Md Mahibul Islam Khan of Dhaka Metropolitan Police said, on Sultan's information a team of detective police conducted a drive at a river in Sujanagar, Pabna around 5:00am and rescued victim Farhad from a trawler. The kidnappers abandoned the trawler after an exchange of gunshots with the law enforcers for almost 45 minutes. Police, however, managed to arrest Bakkar from the scene, added AC Mahibul.

DB sources said Yasmin de. loped a false relationship with victim Farhad, 28, a resident of Postogola in Shyampur in the capital, over cell phone. On July 8 she asked him to meet at Aricha terminal and as he arrived Yasmin's crime partners abducted him at gunpoint.

The gang later demanded Tk 50 lakh ransom from the victim's relatives over phone, said the sources.

Quoting Yasmin AC Mahibul said Jewel gave her Farhad's number and asked her to develop intimacy with him.

In her preliminary interrogation Yasmin claimed Sultan to be the ringleader of the gang, said the AC.

DB sources said Sultan and his partners-in-crime used female associates to deceive and kidnap people. They are already accused in such case lodged with Dakkhin Khan Police Station.

Govt yet to pick

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Legal expert Shahdeen Malik, however, told The Daily Star that the trial of the BDR incident could be held under two laws.

"Trial of the mutiny part of the incident could be held under the BDR act while the carnage part under the Penal Code... I do not see any legal barriers in this regard," he said.

But if the trial is held under the army act, the credibility of the trial could be questioned and it will be damaging for the nation in the long run, he said.

In his argument Sahdeen Malik said those who are accused are not army personnel but those killed were army personnel.

Both parties have to be from the army to hold trials under the army act.

He, however, said a section of the army act states for whom the act will not be applicable. The government issuing notifications can bring trials of people concerned under the army act before the crime is committed, not afterwards.

Shafique Ahmed said, "We are scrutinising different laws, army laws, conventional laws, BDR laws, the Penal Code, so that the trial is fair and acceptable to all."

Replying to a query, the law minister said they are analysing the proposals that the BDR director general through letters on June 23 sent to the home and law secretaries.

In the letters, the BDR authorities suggested that the trials of the BDR mutineers be held under the army act.

The letters also said if the trials are held under the conventional law, it will be difficult to prove mutiny charges brought against BDR jawans outside the capital.

"Since the matter is very important, we have taken it seriously and after looking into everything we will decide," the law minister said.

State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, secretaries to the home affairs and law, director general of BDR, Chief public prosecutor of BDR Anisul Huq, chief metropolitan public prosecutor and representatives from the armed forces division attended the meeting.

Aminul, Dulu

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58 and 46 persons respectively with the Judicial Court-3 in Rajshahi city.

After the filing of the cases, Judge Asafuddoula asked Bagmara thana police to take "legal actions."

In his complaint Mozaffar alleged that the accused looted his house and took him to JMB torture cell forcibly on April 28, 2004 when militancy was at its height in the upazila under the leadership of Siddiqui Islam Bangla Bhai.

Bhai was later executed along with JMB chief Shaikh Abdur Rahman and four other kinsmen of the outfit.

"I was taken to the local JMB camp and tortured as I refused to give the money," Mozaffar stated in the case.

Later, he was released after his family members paid them Tk 30000.

Mozaffar had to be admitted to the hospital due to the inhuman torture meted out to him.

Ibrahim, the plaintiff of the other case, said that the accused also took him to JMB torture cell and demanded Tk 50000 as ransom. He was tortured for refusing to pay the money. Later, family members found Ibrahim lying on a road and got him admitted to local hospital.

On Tuesday, a case was filed against 35 such suspects, including former deputy minister Dulu and ex-PM Nadim, on the same charges.

Private medical

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The clash erupted when the staffers of the college tried to resist the angry students. Both the groups equipped with sticks and brickbats chased each other, witnesses said.

The injured were admitted to different local hospitals and clinics.

Sub-inspector Iliasur Rahman of Ashulia Police Station told The Daily Star, "College Chairman Asaduzzaman Chowdhury on Tuesday assured the students of meeting their demands."

The chairman also asked the students to hold a meeting with them on Thursday (today) in this regard," the SI said.

"But the authorities filed a general diary with the Ashulia Police Station in the morning against the students and closed the college leading to the clash between staffers and student," he added.

Child labourers

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"Children should not be allowed to work with dangerous acid solution. Eyeglasses, hand gloves and masks are a must while working with such solution," says Dr Samanta Lal Sen, project director, burn unit, Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

If acid comes in contact with the body it can cause perforation of the eyes, he explains. If someone mistakenly drinks acid or its solution, it might cause infection in the kidneys, stomach and oesophagus in the long run.

It is, however, less dangerous blowing the nozzles without any precaution for these working children who even used to make acid solution wearing only hand gloves.

Chemists fear explosion might occur anytime during production of the solution in unsafe condition at these factories.

"The more the acid would be concentrated the more it would be damaging. And there is also a process for making sulphuric acid solution. It would be dangerous if anyone tries to make it by putting water into acid. One has to pour acid into water to make the solution," says Prof Dr M Muhibur Rahman, president of Bangladesh Chemical Society.

"Even if sulphuric acid is diluted, it might cause harm to the children. Concentration is an important matter to be considered for making acid solution," he adds.

The people engaged in making the solution don't have any idea about concentration of acid.

Moreover, the workers may come into contact with acid anytime as they put the deadly substance in the middle of the congested teen-roofed factory where there is hardly enough space to move.

Labour and Employment Minister Khandker Mosharraf Hossain said, "The condition in which children are found working is undoubtedly hazardous and risky."

"I did not know about the situation and matter," the ministers said.

"We should not shut down the factories before generating alternative employment or income source for these children. I will ask the directorate

of labour and inspector of factory to take immediate measures in this regard," he added.

"It would be life threatening if we do any mistake while making the solution. It would burn the entire body. But nothing would happen as I have been working in these factories for about a decade without any accidents. I do not need any training," says Mohammad Halim, who makes sulphuric acid solution at a factory.

He adds the solution is made in a ratio of one mug of acid against five mugs of water. However, they don't have any idea about concentration of the acid they are working with.

"Acid generates heat when it is mixed with water. If more acid is mixed with comparatively less water, it would generate more heat and may cause explosion," says Prof Nilufar Nahar.

Back at Khokon's factory, they make acid solution after producing 300-400 burners to have those washed and cleaned.

It takes a fortnight to make such production. Khokon produces 1,000-1,200 burners every month and uses 10kg acid he buys from Armanitola for the cleaning purpose.

Once the burners are dipped into sulphuric acid solution, those are thrown into the Buriganga, contributing to the river pollution. After that Tauhid starts blowing brazen pipes of the burners to have those properly cleaned.

"It tastes a bit sour. I do not feel anything bad in my body. I am okay," says Tauhid, a class six student who left school about six months ago.

But sores on his swollen lips were clearly seen during the conversation.

Deep sea port

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following a letter issued by the Prime Minister's Office. An inter-ministerial committee later decided to carry out a techno-economic feasibility study in 2005.

Pacific Consultation International, Japan in association with four other firms conducted the feasibility study, and finally selected Sonadia Island as the most preferred site for the deep-sea port.

Hasina

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"I believe climate change remains as one of the most daunting global challenges of our times. It has far-reaching effects on all nations of the world, particularly on the LDCs," she told the leaders from the developing and economically emerging countries.

She pointed out that Bangladesh, situated in a low-lying delta, is deeply concerned with climate change and global warming.

"A perceptible rise in sea level would submerge a third of the country, burgeoning its already thick population and limited resources," the prime minister told the summit meet.

She noted that although the LDCs have little responsibility for this universal dilemma of climate change, they remain highly vulnerable to its diverse impacts.

"Yet, unfortunately, their particular needs are often bypassed in formulating global policy solutions," she told the forum.

On the global economic slowdown, Hasina said the world is now experiencing an intractable economic recession.

She said the most vulnerable countries, which are not responsible for this situation, however, stand to suffer the most.

The PM said the developed countries must accept that the financial crisis would further aggravate in the event of negligence of the current needs of developing countries, especially those of LDCs.

She observed that years of negligence to equity and justice, including basically an unfair international financial structure, has to a large extent contributed to this setback.

"Immediate restructuring of the global financial and economic system is the call of the day for overcoming the current crisis, and avoidance of similar recurrence in future," she said before the big gathering of global leaders.

The PM said in the global trade, adoption of policies with narrow outlook would result in slowdown from which all would lose in the long run. Instead, she said, the developed countries should offer key development deliverables such as duty-free and quota-free market access, trade-capacity building and so on as stimulus package especially to Least Developed Countries (LDC).

Also, she noted, recovery measures should be designed so that employment opportunities of immigrant workers from developing countries are not adversely affected.

On Food, Hasina said the food crisis of the early 2008 still exists, and it is necessary for the international community to make long-term investment in food production, fertiliser, irrigation and agriculture technologies.

About terrorism, the prime minister said in today's world terrorism demands more attention and resources than any other issue.

She said Bangladesh denounces terrorism in all its forms and also mentioned brutal assassinations of the Father of the Nation and her father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members.

"All acts of terror are fundamentally flawed and unequivocally criminal. Therefore, Bangladesh fully supports the Movement's principled position on terrorism, and other measures recommended to deal with it," she told the meet.

The PM said Bangladesh also recognises the value of regional anti-terrorism arrangements and instruments for combating terrorism and her government has proposed establishment of a South Asian Task Force on counter-terrorism and is now working with regional partners on its scope, dimension and modalities.

JMB men

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on jihad.

The arrestees are Ehsar members (full timers) Kurri Mohammad Saidur Rahman, 28, and Mohammad Akkas Ali 28, Akash, 25, of Muktagachha in Mymensingh, Gayeri Ehsar member (part timer) Mohammad Rakanuzzaman, 24, of Jamalpur and member Mohammad Saidur Miah, 32, of Jamalpur.

Rab-1 acting Director Maj Suman Ahmed said they arrested Saidur Rahman at a house in Kanchpur of Narayanganj Tuesday and following his confessions they arrested Akash at a house in Rupnagar of Mirpur in the capital.

Following their confessions, Rab arrested Rakanuzzaman and Saidur Miah at a house in Jamalpur Sadar upazila yesterday morning, Maj Suman said.

According to Rab officials, they recovered the shells of grenades and books on jihad from the house of Azizul Huq of Chitalia in Jamalpur Sadar upazila. He could not be arrested.

Replying to a query, Rab officials said the JMB men were preparing to launch grenade attacks.

168 people killed

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"It seemed the pilot was trying to land and moments later the plane hit the ground and broke into pieces that were scattered far and wide."

Iran's English-language Press TV quoted a witness from the site near the village of Janat Abad saying that "the aircraft all of a sudden fell out of the sky and exploded on impact, where you see the crater."

Armenian television reported that the crash was caused by an engine fire.

About 30 relatives and friends of passengers gathered at Yerevan airport, many of them in tears, where teams were on hand to give assistance and information.

Iran's civil aviation spokesman Reza Jafarzadeh said the plane took off from Imam Khomeini international airport at 11:33 am (0703 GMT) but "16 minutes later it disappeared off the radar and then it crashed."

State television's website quoted Ahmad Momeni, managing director of Iran's airport authority, as saying that the last conversation between the pilot and the ground was "normal and did not indicate any technical glitch."

Ahmad Mousavi, secretary general of the Iranian Red Crescent, said: "The massive explosion caused severe burns. We were unable to do anything."

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has ordered a transport ministry probe into the disaster, the latest major air crash in six weeks.

Two weeks ago a Yemenia Airbus crashed in the Indian Ocean off the Comoros, killing 152 people, while on June 1 an Air France Airbus plunged into the Atlantic coast off Brazil killing 228.

Iran, which has been under years of international sanctions, has suffered a number of aviation disasters over the past decade but Wednesday's crash is the worst for many years.

In December 2005, a total of 108 people were killed when a Lockheed transport plane crashed into a foot of a high-rise housing block outside

Tehran. Twenty-nine people were killed in September 2006 when an airliner came off the runway after landing in the eastern city of Mashhad and burst into flames.

In November that year, a military plane crashed on takeoff at Tehran's Mehrabad airport, killing all 39 people on board, including 30 members of the elite Revolutionary Guards.

Iran's civil and military fleet is made up of ancient aircraft in very poor condition due to their age and lack of maintenance. The Iranian regime is barred by sanctions from buying American Boeing planes or European Airbus aircraft when they include a significant number of US parts.

Caspian Airlines was established in 1992. Its website said it operates more than 50 regular and numerous charter flights each week between Iranian cities and several Middle Eastern and Eastern European destinations.

Emajuddin

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Mohammad Momtazuddin Ahmed passed the order in line with a prayer moved by defence lawyer Abdullah Al Mamun seeking apology for Emajuddin's contemptuous comment.

Prof Emajuddin was present in the court during the hearing yesterday.

Md Abdus Salam filed the contempt of court petition with the High Court against the ex-VC of DU on June 24.

The petition contained charges of making "derogatory" statement against the HC judges who delivered the June 21 verdict on proclamation of independence.

The same HC bench on June 24 issued a rule upon Emajuddin to explain why the contempt proceedings should not be brought against him for making contemptuous statement about the HC judges.

Manzill Murshid, the petitioner's solicitor, didn't oppose the apology prayer.

Reckless force

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"We were told soldiers were to be secured by fire-power. The soldiers were made to understand that their lives were the most important, and that there was no way our soldiers would get killed for the sake of leaving civilians the benefit of the doubt," said one soldier in the report.

Until now, Israel always had a ready answer to allegations of war crimes in Gaza. Claims were, they said, Palestinian propaganda. Now the accusations of abuse are being made by Israeli soldiers.

The common thread in the testimonies is that orders were given to prevent Israeli casualties whatever the cost in Palestinian lives.

The Israeli military says past allegations of wrongdoing in Gaza were the result of soldiers recycling rumours.

But Breaking the Silence has a long - and to many, credible - record in getting soldiers to talk about experiences which might not reflect well on the army.

In one of the new testimonies, a soldier said his unit used Palestinian civilians as human shields - a practice outlawed by Israel's Supreme Court - forcing them to enter buildings suspected of housing militants and to break down walls using sledgehammers.

"Sometimes the force would enter while placing rifle barrels on a civilian's shoulder, advancing into a house and using him as a human shield. Commanders said these were the instructions and we had to do it," the soldier said.

Another said the regulations on when to shoot were vague.

"My impression about rules of engagement was that, at least at our level, they were not clear. There were no clear red lines," he said.

"This report reflects the crimes committed in Gaza," said Ismail Haniyeh, the leader of the Hamas government in Gaza. He called on "human rights bodies and international groups" to put Israel's leaders on trial.

A small number of other soldiers have come forward with similar testimony since the operation. But overall, Israelis support their army and believe the Gaza operation was necessary, so the long-term impact of such reports on public opinion appears limited.

Many of the testimonies are in line with claims made by

human-rights organisations that Israeli military action in Gaza was indiscriminate and disproportionate.

Amnesty International has accused both Israel and Hamas of committing war crimes during the 22-day conflict.

While confirming that Palestinian militants also violated the laws of war, human rights groups like Amnesty International have focused on Israeli violations, charging that Israel's response was disproportionate and that Israel's military used powerful weapons indiscriminately in heavily populated areas. The UN has also launched a probe into Israel's actions during the offensive.

Israel says many of those reports are politically motivated and that it is singled out for scrutiny not devoted to the Palestinians or to other global conflicts.

Israeli officials insist troops went to great lengths to protect civilians, that Hamas endangered non-combatants by firing from civilian areas and that homes and buildings were destroyed only when there was a specific military need to do so.

There have been several investigations into the conduct of Israel's operation in Gaza, and both Israel and Hamas, the Palestinian militant group that runs the territory, have faced accusations of war crimes.

An internal investigation by the Israeli military said troops fought lawfully, although errors did take place, such as the deaths of 21 people in a house that had been wrongly targeted.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has requested more than \$11m (£7m) in compensation from Israel for damage to UN property in Gaza. A limited UN inquiry blamed Israel in six out of nine attacks on UN facilities, resulting in casualties among civilians sheltering there.

Meanwhile, a fact-finding team commissioned by the Arab League concluded there was enough evidence to prosecute the Israeli military for war crimes and crimes against humanity, and that "the Israeli political leadership was also responsible for such crimes".

It also said Palestinian militants were guilty of war crimes in their use of indiscriminate rocket attacks on civilians.