

Train fare hike in the name of VAT triggers protest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Exchange of hot words and scuffle between passengers and staff of private railway operators has become a regular affair following unauthorised increase of fare in different routes of the northern region.

The private operators are putting all efforts to realise 20 percent additional price in the name of VAT, said passengers, adding that in some cases, they are forced to pay around double the ticket price.

Meanwhile, a staggering 19 times rise has been imposed on the yearly ticket for different rail routes ranging from 25 to 35 kilometres.

Price of the yearly ticket, which was Tk 75 earlier, leapt to Tk 1440 in June this year as the private operators did not bother about the concern of the stakeholders.

On April 21 this year, chief commercial manager of Western Zone of Bangladesh Railway, Rajshahi, arranged lease of 18 broad gauge and meter gauge trains in different sections for commercial run

under private organisations, railway sources said.

The leaseholder private railway organisations are M/s M G M Traders, Hope Agro Limited, Santa Enterprise and L R Enterprise.

On April 28, the chief commercial manager in a letter warned the private organisations not to charge any money other than the stipulated rate of fare on tickets as the lease agreement does not keep any provision for increase of fare.

Demanding end to realisation of enhanced fare, people observed protest programmes but the railway authorities are yet to take any effective step in this regard.

Asked by this correspondent, Golam Mostafa, proprietor of M G M Traders, said, "In the tender schedule of lease 15 percent VAT was charged on the bid money and so, leaseholder organisations are realising VAT on railway tickets."

In June this year, the yearly ticket fare was increased from earlier Tk 75 to Tk 1440 to afford administrative expenditure, he said.

On Monday last, staff of a private railway operator beat up three students of Gaibandha Government Boys College for declining to pay the exorbitant price for yearly ticket.

Students of the college later besieged Gaibandha station demanding punishment to the accused railway men.

Protesting the fare hike of yearly ticket, students under the banner of Rail Jatree Chhatra Sangram Parishad formed a human chain at Bonarapara Railway Station on Tuesday.

They also announced forming human chain at Pirgachha station today, at Kamarpara station on August 3, Bamondanga station on August 5 and Gaibandha station on August 10.

"We are receiving allegations that private railway operators are realising Tk 10 to 12 against a Tk 5 ticket and Tk 23 to 25 against a Tk 15 ticket. Higher authorities of Western Railway have been informed of the matter," said Abdul Wahed Mastud of Gaibandha Railway Station.



Boro paddy on large areas of land in Kutkuli Beel of Manda upazila in Naogaon district goes under water due to sudden onrush of water, much to the despair of the farmers. PHOTO: STAR

Jubo League rivals clash over tender, 10 injured

UNB, Sirajganj

Two factions of Jubo League clashed on Tuesday over the submission of tender of Water Development Board, leaving at least 10 people injured on.

Tuesday was the last date for submission of tender for supplying Geotex of Water Development Board involving Tk 65 lakh.

A group of activists led by district Jubo League organising secretary Selim Ahmed, submitted tender schedule at noon.

Another group, led by district Jubo League general secretary Advocate Abdul Hakim, locked in altercation with the rival faction at that time and at one stage the two factions engaged in clash. The half an hour clash later spread to other areas.

On information, police rushed in, fired two rubber bullets and two canister shells to bring the situation under control.

Of the injured, Swetchhasebok League leader Emdadul Haque Emdad was sent to Dhaka for treatment.

Police held three people - Mamun Chowdhury, Hasan alias Mim and Mamunur-following the clash.

Meanwhile, the two groups in separate press conferences on Wednesday blamed each other for the clash.

4 fishermen missing as trawler sinks

UNB, Bhola

Four fishermen remained missing till Wednesday as a fishing trawler sank in Bay at Balir Char in Charfashon upazila early Tuesday.

Khokon, a fisherman who survived the accident, said the trawler, FB Majid, with 18 fishermen on board sank after being caught by strong current early Tuesday.

Another trawler in the area rescued 14 fishermen 19 hours after the incident and brought them to Dhal Char Ghat.

Six of the rescued fishermen - Abdul Khaleque, 50, Khokon, 26, Khokon, 20, Motahar, 48, Zakir, 35 and Salahuddin, 25, were admitted to the upazila health complex.

Four other fishermen, Jahangir, 27, Sahabuddin, 25, Salahuddin, 22, and Shahjahan, 45, remained missing till Wednesday. They are feared drowned, said sources.

The four missing fishermen, who were taking food inside cabin could not come out from the capsized trawler, said Khokon.

In another incident, another trawler, Allahu, with 14 fishermen on board, which sailed from Kalkini Ghat in Monpura upazila sank in the Bay at the Balir Char Sunday morning.

ASSAULT ON DASHMINA UZ VICE-CHARMAN

50 hurt as AL men attack protest procession, rally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least 50 people were injured as Jubo League and BCL activists led by Dashmina AL organising Secretary Iqbal Mahmud Liton attacked a rally and procession of Nagorik Committee at the upazila headquarters yesterday.

Nagorik Committee is comprised of some leaders and members from upazila units of AL, Krishak Federation and local elite. It took out a procession at the upazila headquarters at around 11:00am demanding arrest of and exemplary punishment to Iqbal Mahmud Liton who allegedly attacked upazila Vice-Chairman

Shahsunna Dolly on July 26.

BCL and Jubo League men led by Iqbal Mahmud Liton also brought out a procession at the upazila town demanding speedy trial of the war criminals. They also formed a human chain in front of the UNO's office.

Witnesses said when Nagorik Committee was holding a rally in front of the local land office at around 11:30am, over 100 Jubo League and BCL men led by Liton attacked the rally, leaving at least 50 people, including upazila Krishak Federation President Liar Hossain, injured. Police charged batons and brought the situation under control.

Liar Hossain, 50, brother of Shahmsunnahar Dolly, was taken to Patuakhali Sadar Hospital, while the rest were admitted to Dashmina Upazila Health Complex.

The Jubo League and BCL men also attacked two boats which were carrying the supporters of the Nagorik Committee to its rally from char areas. Over 25 people escaped attack by jumping into Dashmina canal.

Nagorik Committee claimed that three of its supporters--Sohag, 19, Bakul Bibi, 35 and Saleha Begum, 40, went missing as they jumped into the canal during the attack.

Iqbal Mahmud Liton told local journalists that criminals

attacked their procession that was brought out demanding speedy trial of the war criminals. Addressing a press conference at local AL office at around 2:00pm, Liton and his supporters called a half-day hartal at the upazila headquarters on Sunday protesting attack on their procession.

Iqbal Mahmud Liton, Joint Secretary of upazila AL Abdul Malek, Advocate Md Selim, upazila Jubo League President Md Zakir Hossain, addressed the press conference.

Upazila AL President Amir Hossain, also the convener of Nagorik Committee, told newsmen that Liton and his men swooped on them while they were protesting attack on Shahsunna Dolly on July 26 in a meeting at upazila parishad auditorium.

Dolly at press conference at Patuakhali Pree Club on Tuesday alleged that she was physically assaulted by Liton at a meeting of the upazila coordination committee on July 26.

Dolly said Iqbal Mahmud entered the auditorium and swooped on her soon after she placed a proposal in the meeting to form a committee to probe collapse of an under-construction building of Abdur Rashid Talukder Degree College on July 22 and misuse of 30 tonnes rice allotted to the college for development of its playground.

Iqbal hurled abuse at me and physically assaulted me in presence of the upazila nirbahi officer and upazila parishad chairman, the woman vice-chairman said in her written statement at the conference.

She said the UNO, at one stage, called police who brought the situation under control and rescued me from there.

No case was filed with Dashmina Police Station in connection with yesterday's incident as of filing of this report at 5:30 pm.



Unruly Awami League activists vandalise a rickshaw on the road yesterday as they attack a rally protesting assault on the woman vice chairman of Dashmina upazila in Patuakhali district on July 26. PHOTO: STAR

Kushtia BNP leader murdered

Seen as sequel to long-standing feud

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Criminals jumped to death a local BNP leader in broad daylight at Amdah field in Meherpur Sadar upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Afaz Uddin, 45, of Paranpur village in Mujibnagar upazila in Meherpur, was president of Mahajanpur union unit of BNP and former member of Mahajanpur union parishad (UP) in Mujibnagar upazila.

Afaz, accompanied by his friend Ahsan Habib Miraz, was going to Meherpur town from his Paranpur house on a motorcycle when Emadul Islam and Rafiqul Islam, son of Hafizul Islam, and Ziarul Islam, son of Chatatkar Ali of Paranpur village, waylaid them with a speedy motorcycle in front of Amdah UP complex at about 10:45am, police quoted witnesses as saying.

The criminals dragged Afaz and started stabbing him on the street. As Afaz

jumped to a roadside ditch, the gang rushed there and chopped him to death.

The killers fled away through Amdah field, leaving their motorbike on the spot. On information, police from Meherpur Sadar and Mujibnagar police stations rushed to the spot, recovered the body and sent it to Meherpur General Hospital.

Police also recovered the motorbike left by the criminals.

Afaz Uddin's son Amirul Islam Ripon filed a case with Sadar police station against the three alleged killers.

Men of BNP leader Afaz Uddin and Awami League leader Hafizul Islam earlier locked in several clashes to establish supremacy in the area, said Mujibnagar police station Officer-in-Charge Jalal Uddin.

According to police, Hafiz group stabbed Afaz's younger brother Milon Uddin, now a police constable in Kushtia, in 1998 while men of Afaz stabbed Hafiz's

younger son Babar Ali in 2002. Babar is now an expatriate in Malaysia.

Afaz's another brother Neksa Uddin, who is also in Malaysia, went missing five days ago.

"Afaz on Wednesday night told me that Babar killed his brother Neksa Uddin in Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia a few days ago. He also asked me about the process to bring the body to Bangladesh," OC Jalal told this correspondent over phone yesterday.

"But we are yet to get any evidence of the 'killing' in Malaysia," he said.

Local sources said after his brother went missing in Malaysia, Afaz threatened to file a case against Hafiz and his brother. This angered Hafiz's sons and led to the murder.

"We are investigating the whole matter and drive is on to arrest the killers," said Mahibuzzaman, assistant superintendent of police in Meherpur.



Sundarban Academy and Sundarban Supporters Committee bring out a colourful procession in Khulna city marking the World Tiger Day yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

Create mass awareness to save Sundarbans tigers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

World Tiger Day-2010 was observed here yesterday with a call to save tigers for conservation of biodiversity of the Sundarbans.

On the occasion, a colourful procession was brought out in the city while a discussion meeting held in the conference room of the deputy commissioner of Khulna.

The procession, led by Dr Mihir Kanti Majumder, secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, was brought out from Khulna Circuit House compound at around 9:00am.

Speaking at the discussion, Director General of the Directorate of Environment Dr Monowar Islam stressed the need for creating awareness among the people to save tigers for conserving biodiversity of the Sundarbans. He said Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh (WTB) is extending active cooperation to the government to formulate Tiger Action Plan and thus implement Sundarbans Tiger Project.

WTB will be conducting a social survey

from August to December this year in cooperation with the forest department to chalk out a national programme for creating mass awareness on how to save tigers.

It was informed at the discussion that WTB has formed 'Village Response Team (VRT)' in 27 villages adjoining Bangladesh part of the Sundarbans to save tigers when they come to human communities. Each of the team comprises community people adjoining the forest. Some members of the team have been provided with necessary training on how to use tranquiliser to catch a tiger.

Conservator of Forests Akbar Hossain said a separate team of WTB has been staying round-the-clock in Satkhira to recover body of anyone killed by tiger. He admitted that there has been a marked increase in tiger attacks on humans in the Sundarbans.

He said tigers wandered into human settlements 254 times in last five years, killing 87 people and 68 cattle. Seven tigers were killed in both east and west wings of Sundarbans Forest Division during the period, he added.

KHASIA INTRUDER SENT TO JAIL

Indians allegedly tilling Bangladesh land

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

An Indian Khasia man, held on charge of illegal intrusion through Jaintapur border, was produced in judicial magistrate court yesterday and later sent of Sylhet Central Jail.

The man was arrested as he along with others intruded into Bangladesh and attempted to take away about 40 cows Wednesday afternoon.

The arrestee identified himself as Dini Khasia, 24, of Ronghokong in Jowai district in the Indian state of Meghalaya.

Border sources said at about 1:30pm Wednesday, at least 10 Indians armed with lethal weapons intruded into Bangladesh territory through the border and caught about 30 cows grazing around 100 yards inside the zero line.

As they were about to cross the border along with the cows, locals chased them and caught hold of Dini while the others managed escape.

The locals immediately took him to the Sripur BDR camp.

The BDR on the same day asked the BSF for a flag meeting to discuss the recent incidents of cow lifting by the Indian Khasia people under BSF shelter, but to no effect, sources informed.

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Over the Jaintapur police at 5pm and a case started against him on charge of intrusion.

Armed Indians, most of them Khasia tribesmen, took away more than 50 cows from the Sripur and Jaintapur border areas during 5 to 26 July, locals alleged.

According to sources, the Indians also continued tilling about 30 acres of cropland inside Bangladesh territory on the Amswapnopol, Alubagan, and on Minatila borders in Jaintapur upazila. They enter in the morning and go back at about 5pm.