

On-duty journo attacked

Two AL activists arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Four journalists came under attack from a group of Awami League (AL) activists when they were collecting news on a construction work at Kuthibari of Rabindranath Tagore in Kushtia yesterday.

The ruling party men beat them up and smashed their cameras. They also held the journalists hostage for an hour after tying them to a tree.

The injured are Touhidi Hasan of Bangla daily Prothom Alo, Hasan Belal, local correspondent of channel Rtv, Zohurul Islam of Ekushey Television (ETV), and cameraman Sajib Ahmed of ETV.

Police arrested AL activists Nizam Uddin and Labu from Kumarkhali bazaar in this connection.

Police said four journalists went to Kuthibari to collect news on the progress of the construction work of a replica of Tagore's boat around 11:30 am.

Soon a group of 8-10 men led by cultural secretary of AL Kushtia town unit Mohammad Ali, also the contractor of the replica, barred them from taking photographs, locals said.

As the journalists protested the incident, AL men started beating them up and later held them hostage after tying them to a tree, they said.

On information, Kumarkhali police rushed in and rescued the journalists with the help of local people.

"We went to the spot following information that the construction work of a replica of Tagore's boat was not being carried out according to the work order," said Rtv correspondent Belal.

"The criminals smashed our three cameras," he added.

Zohurul and Sajib were rushed to Kumarkhali Upazila Health Complex while Touhidi was taken to Kushtia General Hospital, police said.

Asgor Ali, general secretary of Kushtia district unit AL, admitted that the incident had happened. He said stern action will be taken against those involved in the incident.

Atiar Rahman, OC of the police station, said a case has been filed against 15 people in this connection.



Construction materials of Jatrabari flyover piled up on Dhupkhola playground at Gendaria in the city. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Stranded sailors get out of ship

PORIMOL PALMA

The Malaysian authorities yesterday got the 13 stranded seamen out of a Bangladeshi ship remaining seized in Port Klang in Malaysia for over a year and took the ship under their custody after the ship's owner company failed to repatriate the sailors.

"We have got them out on humanitarian grounds.... their living conditions turned very bad and all of them have had emotional or health problems," Malaysian Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) Commissioner James Nayagam told The Daily Star over phone yesterday.

Suhakam intervened in the issue following reports by The Star, a Malaysian daily, in late May.

The port authorities seized the 1,690-tonne Bangladeshi ship named MV Banga Biraj with 13 seamen on May 4 last year following a case filed against the ship's owner company HRC Shipping on charges that Banga Biraj damaged a crane in 2008.

The 13 seamen, however, had not been working in the ship last year when the incident occurred.

On May 27, Suhakam initiated a meeting with the port authorities, officials of HRC Shipping, and the seamen when HRC Shipping was asked to repatriate the seamen immediately. Kazi Nurul Alam, an official of HRC

Shipping, said the repatriation would be done by June 3, but it failed.

Against this backdrop, James Nayagam, its lawyers, port officials and police went to the ship and got the seamen out of it and sheltered them in a house.

The issue will be taken to the labour court which will decide on their repatriation, said Nayagam hoping that it would be done in two weeks. A Malaysian individual came forward to finance their repatriation, he added.

Earlier, HRC Shipping was informed that the seamen would be provided with their nine months' of pending salaries by selling the ship if the company does not arrange for it.

"The ship is now under the custody of Port Klang authority. It will sell the ship and pay salaries to the seamen if the court orders so," Nayagam said.

Musleh Uddin Ahmed, chief officer of the ship, said HRC Shipping had assured them of replacing them by Myanmar seamen, but that has not happened until now.

"The company is cheating with us and our families who are suffering a lot," he said.

Contacted, HRC Shipping General Manager Captain Shahjahan Siraj from Chittagong said he was unaware of the updates as he has been on leave, though he said the company was supposed to recruit Myanmar seamen and repatriate the Bangladeshis.

Rafiqul Haque for caretaker system

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Noted Jurist Barrister Rafiqul Haque yesterday opined to hold national election under a neutral caretaker government because both major political parties do not trust each other.

The country's political situation will be more volatile if the caretaker government system is dropped from the constitution, he said.

Rafiqul was speaking at a discussion titled "Thoughts on caretaker government to resolve ongoing constitutional crisis" organised by Bangladesh Manabdhikar Bastobayan Sangstha at a city hotel.

He said, "Neither the Awami League chief nor the BNP chairperson read the verdict properly. If they had, they would be laughing with happiness and not be frustrated because the verdict will be beneficial for both."

BNP leader Barrister Nazmul Huda proposed formation of a constituent assembly to amend the constitution.

He also recommended forming a five-member committee comprising of the speaker, parliament leader, opposition leader and chief whips of both ruling and opposition parties to nominate caretaker government high-ups.

The sangstha former president Dr Mizanur Rahman Shelley; Secretary General Sigma Huda; and Democracy Watch Executive Director Taleha Rahman also spoke.

R&H engr confined for 'secret' tender

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narail

A large number of Roads and Highway (R&H) contractors confined Narail R&H Executive Engineer Shofikul Islam in his Durgapur office on Thursday noon for allegedly holding a tender secretly.

The contractors alleged that a few contractors bribed the office staff Tk 50 lakh for the tender to be granted to them.

On information, Narail police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

However, R&H Jessore and Narail office denied the allegation.

The contractors submitted a written allegation to Khulna Divisional Additional Executive Engineer of R&H demanding investigation.

The allegation says a tender to construct a 9-km Lohagara-Nohata-Kalisankarpur-Mohamadpur road, estimated to cost around Tk 4 crore, under Narail R&H was floated from Jessore circle office on May 25. But neither tender schedule forms nor any notice were available anywhere.

Updated law soon to cut riverine accidents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has taken initiatives to modernise the existing riverine law to reduce riverine accident, said Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan.

He told a view exchange meeting organised by Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) at Jatiya Press Club in the city on Thursday.

BLAST Vice President Justice Awlad Ali chaired the event while Nijera Kori Coordinator Khushi Kabir moderated it.

Department of Shipping DG Jobair Ahmad stressed the need for restoration of navigability to prevent accidents.

BIWTA Chairman Abdul Malek said three new dredgers will start operation by this month to restore navigability.

Jibanananda Jayanta, general secretary of Protect and Progress Foundation, in his paper suggested creating mass awareness, increasing of marine courts and keeping safety equipment in all the vessels to cut riverine accidents.



Supply water continues to leak from a broken Wasa pipe under Abul Hasnat road in Old Dhaka. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMAN

Stalker fined

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A mobile court on Thursday convicted a teenage boy to one month in prison, in default of a Tk 20,000 fine slapped on him, on charge of sexually harassing a girl student in the town.

The convicted stalker is Rashedul Islam Abir, 19, a student of Gaibandha Government College and son of Rostum Ali of the village Chandpara in Gobindaganj upazila.

Abir along with two other boys stalked the girl, who is a second year student Uttarbanga Engineering Institute, near the Zila parishad building.

Police arrested Abir and took him to custody after the victim ran to the nearby police station. Two other stalkers, however, managed to flee.

Executive Magistrate Abul Kashem Md Shaheen, who led the mobile court, awarded the sentence to Abir after he was produced before the court.

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