

Ctg BCL men 'kidnap, free' 3 BNP leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Three leaders of Chittagong BNP and Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal were allegedly kidnapped and later released by Chhatra League activists in Raozan last night.

The three are Abu Sufian, senior vice-president of Chittagong city BNP, and Anwar Hossain and Mohammad Arif, leaders of Jubo Dal city unit.

Sufian told The Daily Star over the phone that they were returning to the port city after attending a function at a friend's house in Raozan upazila. As their car reached Noapara around 8:00pm, some activists of Chhatra League, the student body associated with the ruling Awami League, waylaid them and forced them into a three-wheeler.

"They took us to a bridge around two kilometers from the place and released us when some people of the house where we were followed us on a motorcycle," he added.

Bakhtiar Sayeed, president of Chhatra League Chittagong city [north] unit, refuted the allegation that his party men were involved in the incident. He said BNP's internal feud might have something to do with the incident.

Police said they had heard about the incident.

Tallest tower

FROM PAGE 20 But those hoping for spectacular views from the observation deck 350 metres up were thwarted by the rainy weather.

The Tokyo Skytree is the world's second-tallest man-made structure, topped only by the 828-metre Burj Khalifa in Dubai.

It stands taller than the 600-metre Canton Tower in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou and the 553-metre CN Tower in the Canadian city of Toronto.

Amid safety concerns, the tower's operator said Tokyo Skytree was equipped with state-of-art technology to counter the earth tremors that regularly shake Japan, one of the world's most seismically active nations.

Japan's hard-hit tourism sector is hoping the tower will boost the number of visitors from abroad after figures plummeted in the wake of Japan's quake-tsunami disaster last year.

Muggers

FROM PAGE 20 Meanwhile, in Narayanganj, an official of an export-oriented garments factory was mugged in front of a Rab office by three persons claiming to be personnel of the elite force.

Julhas Miah, an employee of Denison Garments, said he had been on his way to the bank with Tk 32,000 when three persons claiming to be Rab personnel detained him in front of Rab 11 office on Old Court Shayesta Khan Road, reports our Narayanganj correspondent.

They took Julhas inside a post office nearby and took the cash and his mobile phone after brandishing a knife and sharp weapons.

Shamim Khan, manager of Denison Garments, lodged a written complaint in this regard.

Arrestees

FROM PAGE 1 companies to which Padma Oil Company Limited had issued the delivery order and the officials of Padma Oil who handled the sale.

The arrestees are: Sher Ali, driver Ahsan Ullah, driver Mohammad Abul Kashem, driver Rakib Hossain, driver Ali Akbar, driver Belaet Hossain, driver Shahidul Islam, helper Altaf Hossain, Nurul Haq, Yasin Mia, Ashraf Hossain, Milon Hossain, Khalil Mia, Mojmammel Hossain, Mohammad Ershad, Mohammad Yakub, Javed Mia, Aiyub Ali, Jahangir Alam, Mohammad Babul, Jonny Ahmad, Nur Alam, and Joydeb.

Rapid Action Battalion on Sunday night seized more than 3 lakh litres of furnace oil when it was being hauled for black market.

Officials of Rab-7 said 15 tank-lorries got out of the Padma Oil depot at Patenga from 4.00pm to 6.00pm on Sunday. Of them, 11 lorries reached Anu Majhir Ghat area at Sadarghat and began unloading the fuel.

Muzaffer Ahmad

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He died on the way to the city's Labaid Hospital, family sources told The Daily Star.

Born in Kolkata on March 27, 1936, Muzaffer Ahmad, a professor emeritus at Dhaka University, leaves behind his wife, two sons and a daughter.

His Namaz-e-Janaza will be held at Dhanmondi Eidgah Mosque after Zohr prayers today. Muzaffer will be buried at Azimpur Graveyard beside his mother.

His wife Prof Rowshan Jahan told The Daily Star, "After dinner, we went to our bedroom and I was sitting beside him while he was taking medicine through nebuliser. I heard some sound from the nebuliser machine when I went to bring water. I rushed at once and grabbed him before he collapsed on the bed."

Immediately, he was taken to Labaid Hospital by a car.

Rowshan Jahan also said Muzaffer had been feeling weak physically for the last two to three days.

Muzaffer was twice president of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon and was an adviser of the leading environmental organisation until yesterday. Only four days ago, he spoke at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity office, where he stressed the need for formulating a land use policy by the government.

Prof Muzaffer served as director of Institute of Business Administration at Dhaka University, which he joined in 1974. Besides teaching ethics in business and banking at IBA, he worked on education and sociology.

The renowned economist had remained active in different movements aimed at curbing corruption and preventing a degradation of the environment. He penned a number of books and articles at home and abroad.

He also worked with different international organisations, including UNESCO. He was awarded Ekushey Padak in 2008 by the then caretaker government.

Muzaffer completed matriculation from Noakhali Zilla School in 1950, intermediate from Dhaka College in 1952, honours in economics in 1955 and master's in the same subject in 1956 from Dhaka University.

He began his career at Govt Haranganja College, Munshiganj, as economics lecturer after completing his master's. Before proceeding to the University of Chicago for a PhD, he joined the economics department at Dhaka University.

He could not, however, continue teaching at DU as he had to leave the university for political reasons.

In 1967, he joined United Bank of the then Pakistan as senior vice-president. A year later, he joined the East Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation. After liberation, he joined the Planning Commission and got involved in preparing the first five-year plan document of independent Bangladesh. Later, he joined IBA of the University of Dhaka. Ahmad was also a member of the Council of Advisers, with responsibility for the Jute Ministry, under late president Ziaur Rahman.

Ahmad was also involved in establishing a number of institutions that include Bangladesh Institute of Strategic Studies and Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management. He was also involved with Suján. Besides writing several hundred essays, Ahmad wrote nearly 20 books.

The opposition BNP and Dhaka University last night expressed deep condolences at the death of its former professor.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in the early hours of today expressed her deep shock at the death of Prof Muzaffer Ahmad.

In a condolence message, the leader of the opposition remembered Prof Muzaffer Ahmad's contributions as an adviser of late president Ziaur Rahman.

"The country has lost a brilliant citizen by his death. The gap will not be filled so easily," Khaleda said.

"We are deeply shocked at the death of Prof Muzaffer Ahmad," DU Vice-chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique said.

The former professor of IBA made significant contributions to the academic affairs of Dhaka University and played a leading role in civil society, said the VC.

Brutal hijack

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adding, "The criminals threw us into the Old Airport thinking that we were dead."

Narrating the carjacking, the driver said, "It was 5:34am. I slowed down my truck to let a bus pass by at Hemayetpur. The bus sped away, but in the meantime a truck overtook me and suddenly stopped obstructing my way."

"Within a moment, 12 to 15 men got down from the truck. They then got on our truck and swooped on us and took control over my truck before we could understand anything."

He said they begged for their lives but the hijackers took them on their truck.

Sayeed added they were thrown off the truck about half an hour later. After freeing himself, he jumped over the Old Airport wall and found a police van patrolling.

Police then took them to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared Nazrul dead.

According to police record, 70 incidents of robbery on bus and truck happened in and around the capital last year.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Auto Re-Rolling and Steel Mills Association leaders yesterday expressed deep concern over the growing trend of such incidents.

Talking to The Daily Star, Abul Kashem Majumder, secretary general of the association, said incidents of hijacking of trucks loaded with rods or other goods are increasing day by day.

"Owners and traders reported to me at least 22 such incidents in the last six months in and around the capital," Kashem said and added, "Criminals are getting desperate taking advantage of police reluctance in checking the menace."

He said the association leaders met the home minister, the inspector general of police, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner and other police personnel concerned. "But there is no respite from it."

A syndicate with strong links is involved in such hijacking, he alleged.

Rustum Ali, general secretary of Bangladesh Truck and

Road damage costs Tk 300cr more a year

Reveals master plan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has to spend an additional Tk 300 crore every year on repair and maintenance of roads and highways across the country due to overloading of vehicles, reveals a 20-year Road Master Plan.

Overloaded trucks and buses damage road surfaces and reduce the life of roads, said the master plan released yesterday by the communications ministry.

It suggested immediate adoption of a mechanism to stop overloading to check further damage to roads and loss of government funds.

A UK firm prepared the master plan, financed by Asian Development Bank, under the supervision of Road Network Improvement and Maintenance Project II.

The detailed plan proposed the installation of 27 weighbridges throughout the country to reduce overloading and save the bridges, culverts and ferry ghats from further damage.

Though weighbridges have been installed on both sides of Bangabandhu Bridge, Meghna Bridge and some other bridges, they do not function properly.

The blueprint, prepared in line with the National Land Transport Policy, 2004, recommended upgrading all major two-lane highways in the country into four-lane ones to accommodate the growing number of vehicles.

It has set priority targets for the maintenance and development of 21,272 kilometre roads and highways under the Roads and Highway Department (RHD) in phases over the next 20 years.

Besides, the detailed plan has identified 328 kilometres of national highways as accident-prone.

"When donors come with an intention to invest in the road sector, they first ask about any plan or vision for our roads. We have had nothing say to say," said ABM Sertajur Rahman, an engineer at Road Network Improvement and Maintenance Project II.

The master plan is a guiding document for investment in the road sector. It was compiled after a thorough analysis of existing problems of the RHD road network and the future challenges to be faced, he added.

Limit kids

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benign neglect".

Brain scans have shown differences between the brains of gamers and non-gamers. However, it is not known if playing games change the brain or if people with certain brain structures are driven to play games.

Sigman told the BBC that "there are concerns that it alters the reward circuitry in the brain" which may lead to "dependence".

"Whether children or adults are formally 'addicted' to screen technology or not, many of them overuse technology and have developed an unhealthy dependency on it."

He is arguing that children up to the age of three should have little or no screen time. Then a maximum of an hour-and-a-half up to the age of seven, and a maximum of two hours up to the age of 18.

Sigman will speak at the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health's annual conference in Glasgow later.

He will argue that the amount of time spent in front of screens is at an all-time high -- with children having access to an average of five screens in the home and often using more than one at once, such as a smartphone and the television.

This is linked to a sedentary lifestyle, Type 2 diabetes and heart disease, he will say.

He will also raise concerns that it might be changing children's brains as they develop.

Railway whistleblower

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Faruq, Yusuf Ali Mridha, the then railway general manager (east), and Enamul Huq, the then security commandant of railway's Dhaka division, were in the microbus at the time. The BGB detained the four that night and freed them the next morning.

Although Azam is considered crucial to unravelling the mystery, the railway probe body headed by Director General Abu Taher completed its investigation without taking his statement.

Abu Taher earlier told reporters, "The driver's statement is not that important for our probe since we have taken statements from others. I don't believe our probe is incomplete without his statement."

The probe body found no link of Suranjit with the scandal whereas according to the terms of reference it had no jurisdiction to investigate his involvement.

After it submitted the report, the senior Awami League leader, who had to step down as railway minister in the face of strong criticism, claimed himself innocent last week and declared his return to politics.

However, ACC Secretary Foyzur Rahman Chowdhury yesterday said the anti-graft body could not certify Suranjit, now a minister without portfolio, as innocent unless it had completed its investigation.

The investigation will be complete only if the anti-graft body finds Azam and gets his statement, he added while speaking at a monthly press briefing at the commission's office.

The haul of Tk 70 lakh cash in the microbus of Suranjit's APS drew huge flak that led to the minister's resignation, but no case was filed in this regard. Police too did not take up the issue.

Both the probe committees dispatched letters to Azam's address and published notices in newspapers, asking the driver to appear before them, but did not try to locate him.

Inspector General of Police Hasan Mahmud Khandker earlier told The Daily Star that police would assist the railway probe body and the ACC in tracing the driver if they sought police help.

"Azam is the whistleblower of the incident. The probe will not be complete if

we don't get his statement," Foyzur told reporters at the briefing yesterday.

Queried what attempts the ACC had made to find Azam, he asked the journalists to bring the missing driver before the commission.

He declined to elaborate any further and said the matter was under investigation.

About the progress in the investigation, Foyzur said the investigation was going on and, if necessary, they would grill Suranjit.

The ACC on April 17 formed a three-member committee headed by its Director Tahidul Islam to investigate how Faruk, Mridha and Enamul had been involved in the cash haul.

After the April 9 incident, allegations arose that there had been many irregularities in recruitment in the railway sector and that the cash found in the microbus was part of the bribe taken for the jobs.

Replying to queries on the issue, the ACC secretary said the watchdog body was investigating the roles of Mridha, Enamul and Omar Faruq in the irregularities.

Plan long term

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physically challenged population who need it most.

The observations came at a roundtable styled "Disability Inclusive National Budget 2012-13" held at the conference room of The Daily Star in Dhaka.

ADD International, a UK-based development agency, and The Daily Star jointly organised the programme in association with Manusher Jonno Foundation and Shiree.

This was the second consecutive time the duo organised a roundtable to draw attention of the policymakers to the plights of the country's more than 1.45 crore physically challenged people.

During his keynote presentation, Mosharraf Hossain, country director of ADD International, said the social welfare ministry took up a number of projects in the last few years targeting some special needs of the challenged people.

"Budgetary allocation for them has also increased, but development of them is still not the mainstream development," he said.

Over 9 percent of the population is physically challenged, according to the 2010 Household Expenditure Survey. However, less than 0.5 percent of the development budget has been allocated for them in the last three fiscal years.

In the upcoming budget for 2012-13, grassroots organisations for the physically challenged people have demanded an increase in the allowances for the economically insolvent ones and rise in the number of the beneficiaries.

Hossain said they also urged the government to ensure ramp in all government buildings, introduce rationing for the insolvent challenged people and pass law for their rights and also ensure its implementation.

Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, chairman of Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation, said the government should

pass the law without any delay. "If we want to do something for them, we need laws."

He said the ministries of education and primary and mass education should take the responsibility of educating the challenged people.

"Mere projects will not be able to bring any changes to their lives. We need comprehensive planning. They should be given priority, and there should also be monitoring."

Sadeka Halim, information commissioner, said the issue of the challenged population has so far been seen from welfare approach. "As long as we see them as beneficiaries and in passive role, there won't be any major changes."

"We have to regard these people as the active agent of the social change. Project-based activities will not yield the expected results," she observed.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, observed that 40 percent of the country's annual development programme remains unutilised. "Is there any problem if the government diverts unutilised funds to the challenged population?" she asked.

Nawazish Ali Khan, adviser of ATN Bangla, said: "We have to engage the private sector so that they create jobs for them."

Farida Yesmin, executive director of Disabled Rehabilitation and Research Association, Bangladesh, said the issue of the physically challenged in Bangladesh is seen as relief-based approach, not as empowerment approach.

"If it continues, the physically challenged will never have their dignity in the society,"

In his welcome speech, Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said his newspaper is committed to highlighting both problems and achievements of the physically challenged

people and how their dignity in the society can be ensured.

Anila Hossain, a wheelchair-bound student of Standard V who came to the programme with her father, described how she is treated at school. "Parents say if I go to the school other students will face problem. Don't I have a right to education?" she asked.

Speaking as the chief guest, Social Welfare Minister Enamul Hoque Mostofa Shaheed said mobile banking could be used to take the allowance to the people and help them avoid harassment.

He said the government is spending heavily for the education sector through the budgetary allocation. "Still we do not see ramp in the buildings."

Ruling Awami League lawmaker Zunaid Ahmed Palak said the challenged people face harassment in getting allowance from the government. "They even have to give bribe to get the allowances."

He said the challenged people should be given identification cards so that they can receive allowances directly from the government.

Rashed Khan Menon, president of parliamentary standing committee on education, agreed to the suggestion that education of the physically challenged population has to be brought under the authority of the education ministry.

Rasheda K Chowdhury, former adviser to a caretaker government, said increasing budgetary allocation for the disabled is not the only solution. "There has to be proper monitoring so that the budget is spent for the intended purpose and benefits reach the real beneficiaries."

Ranjit Kumar Biswas, secretary of the social welfare ministry, Brig Gen (ret'd) Shahedul Anam Khan, editor, defence and strategic affairs of The Daily Star, and Dr MA Muhi, pro-vice-chancellor of University of South Asia, also spoke.

Youth joblessness

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number to soar.

The picture is more gloomy if the millions who have put off or given up looking for a job are included: this would put the 2011 figure at 13.6 percent.

Youths opting to prolong their education will meanwhile enter the labour market in the coming years, putting continued pressure on the jobless rate.

"By 2016, the youth unemployment rate is projected to remain at the same high level," said the ILO.

In its Global Employment Trends for Youth report, the body suggests offering tax and other incentives to businesses hiring young people and more entrepreneurship

programmes to help youths kick-start a career.

"The youth unemployment crisis can be beaten but only if job creation for young people becomes a key priority in policy-making and private sector investment picks up significantly," said executive director of the ILO's employment sector, Jose Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs.

More than a quarter (27.9 percent) of youths were unemployed in North Africa last year following the Arab spring uprisings, an increase of five percentage points from 2010.

The Middle East figure stood at 26.5 percent in the report's regional breakdown.

In central and south-eastern Europe the unemployment rate dropped slightly to 17.6 percent in 2011 and Latin America and the Caribbean also saw a small decrease to 14.3 percent.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the rate stood at 11.5 percent compared to 13.5 percent in south-east Asia and the Pacific.

"Even in East Asia, perhaps the most economically dynamic region, the unemployment rate was 2.8 times higher for young people than for adults," said the report.

The statistics showed the jobs crisis tended to have a stronger impact on women in most regions.

Rangamati blast victim dies in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A Pahari Chhattra Parishad (PCP) activist wounded in Sunday's blast succumbed to his injuries early yesterday at Chittagong Medical College and Hospital (CMCH).

The deceased Mongsa Ching Marma, 20, was the son of Kyaw Ching Marma of village Bagichhara under Kaptai upazila of the district. He was a student of Kaptai Swedish Polytechnic Institute.

He died at about 1:30am, said Triznad Chakma, newly elected president of PCP, student front of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sangahti Samity (PCJSS).

I ducked

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metres above sea level, at noon Bangladesh time yesterday. At the same time, a second Bangladeshi woman Wasfia Nazreen was already climbing towards the summit having left from the base camp in the early hours of Monday.

Wasfia expects to reach the summit sometime Friday morning, according to her last facebook update on Sunday.

Nishat and Muhi both expect to be back in Dhaka by June 1 or 2.

While talking to The Daily Star, Muhi -- the first Bangladeshi to scale Mount Everest twice -- said, "I have climbed several mountains before but this one was by far the most dangerous climb."

Both mountaineers described their ordeal as they narrowly escaped death several times during the journey.

"Despite all the hardship, I was never tempted to return without reaching the top. I was afraid but I was determined to reach the peak," Nishat said.

She described one of her worst moments being on April 27 when they were on their way from camp 1 to camp 2. She was swept nearly 30 metres away from her track by a snowstorm.

"I had just crossed a crevasse using a ladder. A strong snowstorm hit us without warning, giving us no chance to take safety measures. I just rolled away from my track," she said.

"I protected myself by holding on to the ice sheets with all my might. If the storm had pushed me by just two or three metres more, I might have fallen into the crevasse."

Nishat also mentioned that she saw blood during her way up, which likely were of other climbers or Sherpas on a similar expedition.

Nishat said they stayed on the summit for nearly one hour.

"The surroundings looked foggy with all the snow around. We took some pictures and then started our descent."

When asked how she was doing physically, Nishat said she was well but feeling weak. "I need rest," she said.

She expressed her gratitude to her parents, well-wishers and the people of the country who prayed for her.

"We begin our final descent on Tuesday or Friday next and hope to reach Kathmandu the Sunday or Monday after that. We will receive our certification of having climbed the peak from Nepal's Ministry of Tourism there," Nishat said.

"After completing those formalities, we will start for Dhaka."

Meanwhile, Nishat's mother Ashura Majumder, while talking to The Daily Star yesterday evening, urged everyone to pray that her daughter returns home safe and sound.

Enam Ul Haque, president of Bangla Mountaineering and Trekking Club (BMTK) said Nishat and Muhi's feat has earned accolades for the nation.

BMTK organised the expedition with co-sponsorship from Plan Bangladesh, a non-government organisation (NGO), under their campaign "Because I am a Girl".

Dhaka Wasa, Nishat's employer, meanwhile is all set to accord a reception to its favourite girl.

"We will hold a reception for her when she returns though we have not finalised any date yet," Dhaka Wasa Managing Director Taqsem A Khan said last night.

Thirty-one-year-old Nishat from Laxmipur scaled Mount Everest on May 19, the first Bangladeshi woman to do so.

Musa Ibrahim was the first Bangladeshi to conquer Everest on May 23, 2010. Muhi scaled the same in May the following year.