

Protesters denounce Prothom Alo

FROM PAGE 16

"formally joined the RSS as a 'campaigner' after the India-Pakistan war of 1971".

Soon after this, the group announced on its facebook page that it would lay siege to the Prothom Alo office.

The daily, in a clarification after the article was published, said it had translated an article of the Indo-Asian News Service (IANS) and printed it "without any change".

Though the same news article was published by at least one other daily of the country, protesters targeted only the Prothom Alo when they raised the issue.

Around 3:30pm yesterday, about 50 people gathered before the Petrobangla office at Karwan Bazar. Heavy deployment of police was seen in the area at the time.

Carrying placards, the protesters

marched towards the Prothom Alo office chanting slogans like "Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu", "No mercy for the history distorter" and "We won't tolerate insult to martyrs" etc., in Bangla.

They held a banner blaming the Prothom Alo for "instigating communal violence", "belittling representation of women" and "misappropriation of money in the name of helping the poor". They also distributed leaflets, urging people to boycott the newspaper.

The Daily Star correspondent found at least three central and Dhaka University unit leaders and several activists of the Chhatra League, student front of the ruling Awami League, among the protesters.

The protesters left the area after around 30 minutes.

The demonstration was staged just

two days after Sajeeb Wazed Joy, the prime minister's son, posted a statement on his facebook page: "I am shocked that Prothom Alo, our largest Bengali newspaper, is referring to our War of Liberation as an India-Pakistan war."

Joy went on to say, "Let us boycott Prothom Alo and send them a message. We will oppose anyone who does not support Bangladesh."

Bangladesh achieved independence on December 16 after a nine-month war against Pakistan in 1971. Between December 3 and December 16 of that year, the war was widely referred to as the "Indo-Pak war" in the Indian media.

However, the war spanning the period between March 26, 1971, and December 16, 1971, is internationally recognised as Bangladesh's War of Liberation.



Members of Facebook group 'Crack Platoon Gang' demonstrating in front of Prothom Alo office at Karwan Bazar yesterday. They demanded the daily's publication be stopped and its editor be arrested for "belittling the country's Liberation War". PHOTO: STAR

Rejoinder, our reply

FROM PAGE 1

government selected the company for delivery of passports to the expatriates in the UAE despite its non-cooperation.

The editorial expressed surprise at the authorities' persistence on working with the Malaysian firm that breached the contract and failed to supply machine readable passport (MRP) booklets.

The IRIS rejoinder said the reports and editorial included some incorrect allegation and misleading information, which severely damaged the company's image and goodwill.

"We extended all support from our end, responded to all technical queries and provided all information/data as per the requirement of Dataedge," read the rejoinder.

The Dataedge, it added, failed to integrate their enrolment system with the central MRP system of the Department of Immigration and Passports (DIP) which the IRIS believes either the software of the Dataedge is faulty or the firm lacks competency in software integration.

About its non-cooperation with the passport authorities and delaying the integration of 33 offices, the IRIS said it submitted technical documents, deployed overseas engineers, held technical discussions and fulfilled all the requirement of the new contractor Dataedge for the integration of the offices as per contractual obligations.

Regarding the delay in the MRP project implementation in Malaysia, the IRIS said the Dataedge delayed in requesting the integration and implementation of a pilot application receiving centre beyond 30 days of signing the deal.

The IRIS claimed that it is not contractually obliged to technically support future extensions of MRP issuance centres at home and abroad. "All contracts are time bound, so is our contract with the DIP. We are not obligated to provide any support beyond the contract period," mentioned the rejoinder. It offered the DIP to use its software free of cost for integration with the central system.

The company also termed incorrect a part of the editorial, which said, "It may come as a surprise why the authorities persist in working with a foreign company that has failed to supply booklets for machine readable passport (MRP) to passport authorities."

The rejoinder said supply of MRP booklets to the passport authorities is not the responsibility of the IRIS.

The Malaysian contractor alleged that the Dataedge does not have any specialised third party software such as Automated Fingerprint Information System (AFIS), which is vital for the implementation of the project.

OUR REPLY

The IRIS's claim of extending all-out support, responding to all technical queries and providing all data to the authorities concerned strongly contradicted the statement of the MRP

project office.

In a letter titled "Nonprofessional approach of IRIS JV in implementation of government project" to the IRIS on May 16, the MRP project management detailed how the Malaysian company's integration process was causing problems to the government and suffering to Bangladeshi nationals.

Millions of people in 33 districts have been suffering, while a lot of pilgrims and workers are not getting passports on time, regretted the letter, accusing the IRIS of not engaging efficient engineers to the integration process. It said IRIS' lone manager does not have adequate knowledge on the IRIS software system.

The letter explained how the IRIS kept the system locked with validation rules and took long time to remove those.

"Besides the current integration issue, the overall project performance is being hindered due to continuous nonprofessional attitude by the IRIS... Some of the issues are to some extent clear violation of contractual agreement, which demands legal action," read the letter.

The IRIS blamed Dataedge-PWPW for failure to implement a pilot application receiving centre within 30 days after signing of the deal. But the Dataedge-PWPW readied a centre in Malaysia in less than a month and informed the government through a letter that it was ready for the pilot test.

The rejoinder said the Dataedge-PWPW required specialised third party software such as the Automated Fingerprint Information System (AFIS). As per the contract with the DIP, the Dataedge does not need AFIS. It has installed Neurotech, a finger image capturing machine, at 33 centres and also tested the software's compatibility with the central system owned by the IRIS. The Dataedge's Polish partner PWPW has been using the software in different countries.

According to the contract, the DIP has the full authority of the IRIS software system installed in the country. The DIP bought the system and pays the IRIS for its maintenance. So, the passport authority can use it whenever necessary for integration or other purposes.

The IRIS said it was not obliged to provide any support beyond the contract period. But its contract with the government has not expired yet and thus it is obliged to extend required support.

The claim that the IRIS offered free software to the government in March is misleading as the company is contractually obliged to provide the government with software support.

During preparation of our reports, we tried to incorporate the version of the IRIS. But when contacted, IRIS senior project manager Lee Soo Mei denied making any comment.

We stand by our reports and editorial.

Cops capture another gang of 'abductors'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The newly-formed Anti-Kidnapping Squad of Dhaka Metropolitan Police arrested another gang of alleged abductors, which has a female member, in the capital's Badda and Mirpur on Tuesday night.

The arrestees, Masuma, Rajib alias Sajeeb, Nikul, Abul Kashem, Iqbal Hossain Kabir and Emdadur Rahman, are active members of an organised gang of kidnappers, said DMP spokesperson Monirul Islam at a press briefing at the DMP media centre yesterday. Detectives are trying to arrest the gang leader, Jahangir, who is on the run, he added.

The squad carried out drives following a complaint lodged by Ataur Rahman Manik, chairman of Goalbazar union parishad of Malaganj upazila of Sylhet, who had been abducted from in front of Suvastu Nazar Valley in Badda on May 11, DMP Joint Commissioner Monirul said.

One of the gang members called Manik to that place on the day and when he reached there, they took away Tk 40,000 from his possession, he quoted the arrestees as telling the detectives.

The abductors then threatened Manik with taking indecent pictures of him with Masuma, the DMP

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

DHANMONDI PLAYGROUND Main gate locked again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a surprise move, Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club locked the gate at the main entrance to the Dhanmondi-8 playground yesterday, just 26 days after the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) opened the field to the public.

The club authorities, however, kept the pocket gate at the main entrance open.

Only a few people went to the field yesterday, but faced inquiry from plainclothes security guards of the club, green activist architect Mobassher Hossain told The Daily Star.

Following protests by green platforms against the club's illegal occupation of the playground, the DSCC on April 24 opened the field to the public.

A private company, Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club has been illegally

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

TINTED GLASS IN CARS HC orders status quo on cop drive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ten days after the government started a drive against tinted glass on vehicles, the High Court yesterday asked the authorities to maintain status quo for two weeks on its action.

In response to a writ petition filed by two Supreme Court lawyers, the HC also sought an explanation in four weeks as to why the government move should not be declared illegal.

The home secretary, the inspector general of police, the commissioner and the joint commissioner (traffic) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police and a deputy secretary of the home ministry have been made respondents to the rule issued by the HC bench of Justice Mirza Hussain Haider and Justice Muhammad Khurshid Alam Sarkar.

If the private car owners want to use tinted glass, they have to apply to

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

Finger pointed at another Hazari

FROM PAGE 1

the chest and then set fire to his car around 11:00am on Tuesday in Feni. He died on the spot.

Four other people, including a local journalist and Ekram's driver, were injured as the attackers, some of whom were "hired professional killers," beat and stabbed them with sharp weapons inside the car.

Police are yet to identify the attackers or ascertain the motive, but some locals pointed the finger at Nizam Hazari, also general secretary of the district AL.

Interestingly, local BNP leader Mahtab Uddin Chowdhury was named as the prime suspect in the case filed by Ekram's family.

Mahtab had contested in the March upazila polls from Phulgazi but lost to Ekram.

Ekram's brother Ziaul Haq Selim said he did not even know what was in the case against Mahtab and 35 other unnamed people. "My younger brother filed the case. And it was nothing but a formality. We don't know whose name was mentioned in it."

Contacted, his younger brother Rezaul Haq said Mahtab was named as per the decision of the district AL. "It was not our decision."

Ekramul was once a close aide of Nizam. But he became the lawmaker's archrival when he sought to run in the January 5 national election from Feni-1, which is next to Feni-2 from where Nizam got elected.

Ekram had to quit the polls race in the face of pressure from Nizam, locals and district AL leaders say.

The conflict between the two centred mainly on controlling tenders of various development projects in the district and extortion from different sectors.

Early this month, Nizam got furious with Ekram, who allegedly supplied to journalists documents that show Nizam had come out of jail through producing fake papers before the High Court.

According to reports published in Bangla dailies Prothom Alo and Manabzamin on May 10, Nizam was given 10 years' jail sentence in an arms case in August 2000. But he came out of a Chittagong jail in December 2005 through forgery.

Several top AL leaders in the town said Nizam blamed Ekramul for the leak.

Their relations turned so sour over the leak that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina summoned them to Gono Bhaban to discuss the matter on May 17. But things did not improve, sources said.

But Ekram made more than one rival. Jahid, one of the alleged attackers, wanted to contest in the upazila polls, but failed due to strong opposition from Ekram.

Ekram, who was president of the upazila AL, even suspended him from the party. Lawmaker Nizam later withdrew the suspension.

Sohel, another attacker identified

by the locals, used to work at a restaurant. He emerged as a notorious cadre under the wings of ward councillor Shibliu.

The Bilashi cinema hall area where the killing took place is controlled by Shibliu who, according to locals, monitored the killing mission.

And Ziaul, the fourth assailant identified by eyewitnesses, attacked Ekram during the Upazila polls in Feni.

The Daily Star could not contact any of them for their comments.

Attempts were made also to contact Nizam Hazari over the phone, but he did not pick up the calls.

His family members gave conflicting information on his whereabouts.

After Ekram's namaz-e-janaza in Phulgazi, locals yesterday chanted slogans against Nizam, saying he was the mastermind behind the killing.

The upazila AL will enforce a daylong hartal today protesting the brutal murder.

Meanwhile, police on Tuesday night detained 15 people in connection with the case and seized a private car and two motorbikes from Feni sadar, suspecting they were used in the killing.

Most of the detainees are street vendors, hawkers, rickshaw pullers and hotel staff. Their families claimed they had no links to the murder.

Asked why they had been arrested, Mahbub Morshed, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station, said the police were interrogating them.

Chinese company to build

FROM PAGE 1

than the revised estimated cost.

In 2009, the government had estimated the cost at \$1.06 billion (Tk 8,361 crore).

The bridge project hit a snag as the WB in 2012 cancelled its \$1.2 billion credit, saying it had proof of a corruption conspiracy involving Bangladeshi officials, executives of a Canadian firm and individuals.

The Bridges Division, which formed the evaluation committee headed by Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, now seeks the cabinet committee's approval for the bid.

It has sent the cabinet committee a proposal along with the evaluation report prepared by the eight-member body.

According to the Bridges Division proposal, the government will pay the Chinese company 26 percent of the cost in local currency and the rest in foreign currency.

On April 25, only one Chinese firm submitted by the deadline a financial bid for the construction of the main bridge.

Two other companies -- Samsung

C&T Corp and Daelim-L&T JV -- appealed again for extending the deadline by another 10 to 11 weeks.

Evaluating the financial proposal, the eight-member committee said, "Although only one bid was ultimately received, the other two bidders, who had submitted first stage bid and had been invited to submit second stage bids, did not announce their intention to withdraw from the bid process."

"The fact that they both requested a significant extension of the bid submission date with less than three days to go before bids closed was indicative of their intention, and slightly unusual, but not definitive. It is therefore unlikely that CMBC were aware that they would be the only bidder," it added.

Referring to the WB's guidelines on public procurement rules, the committee said, "All of these criteria were met in the bidding process for the main bridge and therefore, despite the fact that only one bid was received, we consider the bid competitive and in accordance with World Bank guidelines."

The WB guidelines say, "Lack of

competition shall not be determined solely on the basis of the number of bidders. Even when only one bid is submitted, the bidding process may be considered valid if the bid was satisfactorily advertised, the qualification criteria were not unduly restrictive, and prices are reasonable in comparison to market values."

The committee also said the Chinese company offered a discount of around Tk 612 crore in their bid proposal which strongly indicates that they did not know they would be the only bidder.

In June last year, the government asked the four pre-qualified bidders to submit technical proposals by September 9.

On request from the bidders, the deadline for filing technical proposals was extended four times. The final date was January 9 this year.

The three companies submitted their technical proposals by the deadline.

In 2011, the WB raised allegations of corruption in the Padma bridge project and finally cancelled its financing for the project in 2012.

Kejriwal arrested

FROM PAGE 16

against him by senior BJP leader Nitin Gadkari.

"Take him into custody," Metropolitan Magistrate Gomati Manocha ordered after Kejriwal, former Delhi state Chief Minister, repeatedly refused to furnish a personal bail bond of Rs 10,000 and a surety of like amount.

"In these circumstances as the accused has refused to furnish bail bond or even personal bond without surety, this court is constrained to take the accused into custody."

"Let the accused be sent to judicial custody and be produced before the court on May 23," the magistrate said.

Kejriwal was summoned as an accused by the court in the defamation complaint in which Gadkari had alleged that he was defamed by the AAP leader, who had included his name in the party's list of "India's most corrupt".

After the court pronounced its order, Kejriwal, a former income tax inspector, was taken to lock up inside the court premises amid tight security and later taken to high-security Tihar Jail.

The magistrate, in her three-page order, also said the procedure of courts cannot be "thrown to the winds" at the whims and fancies of litigants.

"The court cannot act as a mute spectator when a particular litigant intentionally seeks to violate the procedure established by law."

"This case cannot be dealt with any differently than any other criminal cases where the courts insist on furnishing bail bond/personal bond to secure the presence of the accused persons."

The court, in its order, also said this was not a case where the accused is unable to furnish bail bond due to financial inability.

"The accused is just adamant to not furnish bail bond or even a personal bond for his appearance before the court," it said.

Kejriwal's party had put up a stunning performance in Delhi state legislature elections in December last year securing 28 of the 70 seats ahead of ruling Congress but a few seats behing BJP which emerged as the single largest party.

Later, with outside support from Congress, Kejriwal had formed a

government but his government lasted for 49 days before he quit.

Kejriwal yesterday apologized to the people of Delhi and the country for "resigning midway" and said the party will gear up for elections, according to Times of India.

The AAP chief said the chances of his party forming a government in Delhi were negligible in the current scenario.

"I apologize to the people of Delhi and the country for resigning midway," he told reporters.

"We had a meeting and we have decided to gear up for elections. We will go among the people, will hold various meetings in Delhi in the coming days. We will apologize to people of Delhi in meetings and gain their trust to ask them to support us with complete majority," he said.

Asked about the possibility of forming a government again, Kejriwal said, "There were possibilities but none can be seen feasible at present to form the government."

His party AAP had fared very poorly in recent parliamentary elections across the country and could manage just four seats—all of them in Punjab state.

Pre-1971 migrants

FROM PAGE 1

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party won a landslide victory in the national election. Modi, who will be sworn in as the prime minister of India on May 26, had been vocal against Bangladeshi migrants in the run-up to the election. He even had gone as far as to say, "People of Bangladesh will have to leave bag and baggage" once he becomes the premier.

The Meghalaya HC came with the judgement following a petition by over 40 people of Bangladeshi origin, whom the district administration denied enrolment in the voter list, citing their citizenship was doubtful, Press Trust of India reports.

These refugees hailing from Amjong village in Meghalaya's Ri-Bhoi district had moved the court after their citizenship certificates were seized by the deputy commissioner.

Justice SR Sen, in his May 15 order, directed Deputy Commissioner Pooja

Pandey to return the seized certificates to the petitioners and enrol them in voters' list before the next elections.

Justice Sen said there was an understanding between the two countries as to who should be allowed to stay and who should be deported back to Bangladesh.

"It is clearly understood that the forefathers of the petitioners entered India much before March 24, 1971. As such there is no question of deporting them at this stage when they have acquired the right of permanent rehabilitation in Amjong village," he said.

The court also directed the state government and the Centre not to disturb them and to ensure proper rehabilitation for them.

The state government had earlier argued that the petitioners and their forefathers were not permanent citizens and were rehabilitated temporarily by the autonomous district