

# Islamabad violated Geneva convention

Dhaka alleges in protest note over picking up of its mission staffer in Pakistan

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has accused Islamabad of violating the Geneva convention by picking up an official of Bangladesh High Commission in Pakistan and detaining him for around seven hours on Monday.

The Pakistani plainclothesmen had forcibly picked up and detained Jahangir Hossain, a personal officer of the Bangladesh mission's Press Wing, the Bangladesh foreign ministry said in its protest note, handed over to Pakistan High Commissioner to Bangladesh Shuja Alam on Tuesday.

Citing the protest note, official sources said the Pakistani law enforcers, instead of giving security and protection to the High Commission official, "dangerously" harassed Jahangir, and they did not reveal their identity while detaining him.

They way the Pakistani plainclothesmen detained Jahangir Hossain is "very alarming and matter of grave concern", it said.

In contrast, the Bangladeshi law enforcers were in uniforms and jackets marked "DB" when they picked up

Pakistan High Commission staffer Abrar Ahmed Khan in Dhaka. They also handed him over to the High Commission, unlike the Pakistani plainclothesmen who dropped Jahangir off at an unknown place, the protest note stated.

The foreign ministry also strongly condemned the Pakistan mission for issuing a press release even after Abrar Khan's release, and for bringing "gross allegations" against the Detective Branch (DB) personnel.

The allegation that the DB men had asked for Tk 5 crore from Abrar and threatened to kill him otherwise was a blatant lie and went beyond any decency, the protest note says.

It also criticised the Pakistan foreign ministry and other authorities for "failing" to give any clue when Jahangir went missing.

The Bangladesh foreign ministry is yet to issue any press statement on how the High Commission staffer was picked up and what the Pakistan government had said about the incident.



Visitors checking out books on display at a stall of the month-long Amar Ekushey Boi Mela in Suhrawardy Udyan in the capital yesterday. The book fair is being held on the Bangla Academy premises and the park.

PHOTO: STAR

## PAY SCALE DEMAND University teachers sit today for review

They returned to classes from work stoppage on Jan 20 after PM assured them of addressing their grievances

DU CORRESPONDENT

The Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers Association (FBUTA) will hold a general meeting today at Dhaka University Teacher's Club to review the "government's progress" in fulfilling their demands over the 8th national pay scale.

After observing work stoppage for seven days over "discriminations" in the new pay scale, public university teachers returned to classes on January 20 as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina assured them of a "quick solution".

After reviewing the government's progress in meeting our demands, we will fix our next course of action at the meeting," Prof Farid Uddin Ahmed told The Daily Star.

Asked if there is any visible progress, he said, "Some secretaries are trying to foil the fulfilment of our demands though the government is sincere about it."

ASM Maksud Kamal, secretary

general of FBUTA, said they met several times with authorities concerned, including the ministries of finance, education ministry and University Grand Commission after January 19.

Hopefully, he said, there will be a solution within a month.

FBUTA earlier placed a package proposal to the education ministry, suggesting that 25 percent professors should be given grade-I status while 5 percent distinguished professors whose salaries and status would be equivalent to senior secretaries.

Public university teachers have been pressing for a four-point charter of demand, including removal of the "discrepancies" in the pay scale. Things turned worse after the government issued a gazette on the pay scale on December 15. Frustrated with the pay scale for not having time scale and selection grade, teachers of all 37 public universities began an indefinite strike on January 11.

## Challenges conquered

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recitation. The books include novels by Rabindranath Tagore, Manik B a n d o p a d h y a y, N a r a y a n Bangopadhyay, Shibram Chakraborty, Sunil Gangopadhyay, Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay, Syed Shamsul Haque, Humayun Ahmed, Muhammad Zafar Iqbal and Anisul Haque.

Work to upload more books is on. "Our motto is to gather knowledge regarding various books, mobile and computer applications and disseminate it among visually impaired people. We are here to make all the books and software accessible and available for those people who are really deprived of this opportunity" -- reads a paragraph under the link "About us".

At some point, though, he had to take assistance from his family members and others, especially in matters of selecting colours and designing.

To get the books recited, he outsourced people through upwork, a freelance marketplace. He himself did the editing part.

To think his website offers nothing more than audio books, however, is to miss the whole point. He was prescient enough to know only audio books would leave vast swathes of readers out. So he created quite a rich online library of Bangla books under categories as diverse as history, novels, children's literature, Liberation War, biographies, poetry, science fiction, horror, tin goyenda and travel so that the site can be of use to all.

All of these books are available in PDF format and can be read online or downloaded for free.

Looking at the design and browsing through the contents, anyone would be left wondering how a visually impaired person has done it almost on his own.

What makes it all the more special is that he himself bore all the expenses of building the site.

Asked about what motivated him to take this initiative, he said, "Like my sighted friends, I cannot start reading a book after buying it. I have to convert it into braille text, which is not only time consuming but costly as well."

"Therefore, I thought of making audio versions of the texts and uploading those on a website. If any visually impaired person visits this website and listens to the audio, it would be my success," he said.

These correspondents engaged him in a talk when he came to Dhaka to receive training on digital content development at the capital's Teachers' Training College (TTC) on January 4 this year. There he proved himself to be the quickest learner as he finished a task much ahead of others. A total of 25 visually impaired teachers received the two-week training there.

Born in Comilla, he lost his vision in both eyes when he was a student of Class V. After completing his HSC, Azad, third among five children, enrolled at the premier institution of the country -- Dhaka University -- in English in 2002.

He completed his honours and master's in English Literature.

Referring to one of his teachers, Prof Fakrul Alam, he said the teacher helped him immensely to realise his goals.

During a tutorial class, Prof Fakrul noticed that Azad was not responding as quickly as others.

"After the class, Sir asked me if I needed anything. I told him a computer might be of great help. Sir bought me a new computer in a week," he said.

Contacted, Prof Fakrul said Azad was always "intellectually brilliant" and a man of "advance thinking".

"He was capable of taking independent initiatives. That's why I always provided him with direct support. He influenced other visually impaired students of the department who also started doing well," said the DU professor, who is also a writer, editor, translator and researcher.

One of his seniors from Masterda Surya Sen Hall taught him basic computing. The rest he learned with his own effort and hard work.

Whenever he faced any problem, he sought help from Google with the help of screen reader software, and kept on practising.

After finishing his studies in 2010, Azad joined the school in Laxmipur in September 2011. His parents live with him in Laxmipur and he is the lone earner in his family.

Soon he became a popular teacher thanks to his unique style of teaching.

It was then he decided to develop a n o t h e r w e b s i t e - - www.englishgrammar24.com -- for imparting English grammar lessons. The site, launched in June last year, offers many easy techniques to learn English and many exercises to develop skills in the language.

"I love to do this. I don't know how

long I will live, but I want to leave something behind for people, especially for those who cannot see," Azad told The Daily Star.

He had other accomplishments as a teacher.

He always gave classes in an interactive way, incorporating contemporary issues in class lessons. He regularly uses laptop for incorporating multimedia materials in his class.

Md Abdul Wahab, head teacher of the school, said he was often impressed with the way Azad taught students.

"I've observed his classes for a few days out of curiosity. I found students engrossed in his lecture," Wahab, who joined the school a year ago, told The Daily Star.

Azad, despite loss of his eyesight, is a book lover. He encourages his students to borrow books from him. In his Laxmipur house, he has a small library with around 2,000 books.

"My students borrow books from me and return those in a week. I maintain a registry book and cards to lend the books," he said.

As the talk turned to his future plans, Azad said he wanted to build gyanbikash.com into a big institution where books would be printed in braille with audio formats so that visually impaired people could get those whenever they wanted.

To develop his work further, he wants to do an overseas training.

"If I get training, I would be able to do something more for visually impaired people. I believe I will be able to do it," he hoped.

## Return extra fees

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"We welcome the government's intervention. But we do not know how or when the schools will return the money," he added.

However, school authorities were clearly not happy with the decision.

Some of them said they would discuss the matter with the school managing committees before making a decision.

"We will have to return money if the education ministry asks us. But it will not be possible to run the institution further if the government takes decisions hearing one side only," Abul Hossain, principal of the Willes school, told The Daily Star.

The school increased tuition fees by 45 percent for Bangla medium students and 61 percent for those studying in English version this year.

"If we do not hike the fees, we will not be able to give the teachers, who are not under the MPO coverage, the facilities like those who get the MPO," the principal said, justifying the fee hike.

"It will create a chaotic situation and many bright teachers will leave this profession," said the principal.

Umme Salma Khatun, principal of Udayan Higher Secondary School and College, said they were respectful to the government decision. "We will have a meeting of the school managing committee to decide on it."

Her school increased tuition fees by 100 percent for Class-I students and 50 percent for the other classes. "To ensure quality education, we had no alternative to increasing the tuition fees," she argued.

A number of other renowned private schools in Dhaka and Chittagong suddenly hiked the monthly tuition and admission fees at the beginning of this year, citing teachers' demand for a pay increase after the government approved the

new pay scale for the public servants.

The fee hikes outraged guardians, who staged demonstrations for two weeks. Following this, the education ministry asked the school authorities to stop collecting the increased fees until further notice.

The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) in an investigation found seven renowned non-government schools had collected tuition fees hiked by 11 percent to as high as 100 percent.

According to the admission policy, the capital-based Bangla medium schools, which enjoy MPO facilities partially, can charge a student highest Tk 8,000 in monthly fees, session charge and development fees during the admission. Tk 10,000 is the ceiling for the English version schools.

"We want to implement the policy completely," the education minister said during yesterday's briefing.

He mentioned the DSHE had been asked to come up with a complete list of schools that collected extra fees, violating the government's admission policy, and the amount of money they had collected this way.

"For the schools, I suggest they return the money and save their honour."

The government has already prepared a list of institutions that collected SSC exam registration fees much higher than the amount fixed by the education boards, Nahid said.

"The boards will inform us whether these institutions will return the additional money within seven working days."

The minister also urged guardians to complain to the education ministry or the education boards whenever the schools increase fees illegally.

The government would soon hold a review meeting to discuss whether it was necessary to increase the fees, Nahid added.

## Down in dumps

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told The Daily Star at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

After the chunk of the wall was removed by three men, Mannan saw his son lying in a pool of blood.

"I could sense that Saif was no more, yet I didn't waste a moment. I immediately took him to Moghbazar Community Hospital, but it could not treat him. Soon I rushed my son to Dhaka Medical College Hospital," the grieving father said.

Doctors at the DMCH said the kid was brought dead around 2:00pm.

Saif used to follow his father

almost everywhere and loved to dance to the beats of songs played from cellphone.

"My son would oversleep in winter mornings and take breakfast around noon. After breakfast, we would go to the front yard to hang out," said Mannan.

The front yard of the house is a five-foot wide corridor between two rows of tin-shed rooms, in one of which lives the father of five with his wife and children. He pays a rent of Tk 3,500 a month for the room.

No case was filed in this regard till 8:00pm yesterday, said the OC of Ramna Police Station.

## Punish errant policemen

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future, as it is seriously tarnishing the image of the whole police department," Swapan, also a ruling Awami League MP, said.

"The committee observed that though the police department has achieved success in combating militancy and violence, some police personnel have made the achievements controversial," said Fakhrul Imam, another member of the committee.

"We have asked the police chief to carry out security checks cautiously so that the commoners are not harassed," Fakhrul, also a Jatiya Party MP, said.

Several members of the committee lambasted top police officials, who were present at the meeting, for the recent brutality of police on a Bangladesh Bank official, a Dhaka South City Corporation official, and a female student.

The committee asked the home ministry to take steps so that no police official accused of torturing people escapes punishment.

## Tangail MP Amanur

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Amanur tried to persuade Faruk to quit the race but failed. The MP and his brothers then ordered their accomplices to kill him, it said.

Faruk was shot dead on January 18 night in 2013.

Three days after the killing, Faruk's wife Nahar Ahmed filed a case with Tangail Model Police Station against unidentified criminals.

Police initially investigated the case, which was later shifted to Tangail DB police.

Law enforcers arrested Anisur in March 2014. During interrogation, he disclosed the names of Amanur and his three brothers.

## North Korea plans rocket launch

Japan military on alert; Beijing joins chorus of int'l condemnation

AFP, Seoul

China yesterday joined the global chorus of anger and concern over a planned rocket launch by North Korea, while Japan vowed to shoot down any missile that threatened its territory.

The reactions followed Tuesday's confirmation by Pyongyang that it would launch a rocket sometime between February 8-25 in what amounts to another major violation of UN resolutions just weeks after its fourth nuclear test.

"We express serious concerns about that," foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said in Beijing, calling on Pyongyang to abide by UN strictures forbidding its use of ballistic missile technology -- even for ostensibly peaceful purposes.

In South Korea the government echoed US warnings that the North would pay a "heavy price" if it went ahead, and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe condemned what he called a "serious provocation".

Abe's defence minister issued an order to "destroy" the rocket with surface-to-air missiles if it violated Japanese airspace.

North Korea said the sole objective was to place an Earth observation satellite into orbit, but analysts saw the launch announcement as doubling down against an international community already struggling to agree a united response to Pyongyang's

January 6 nuclear test.

"It's a classic move," said John Delury, an associate professor at Yonsei University in Seoul.

"While waiting for a full response for the nuclear test, you might as well sneak in a rocket launch. The North tends to do these things in pairs," Delury said.

The window dates suggest a launch around the time of the birthday on February 16 of late leader Kim Jong-II, father of current leader Kim Jong-Un.

The United States, which has been spearheading a diplomatic drive for harsher and more effective sanctions on Pyongyang, was quick to condemn the plan.

Daniel Russel, the assistant US secretary of state for Asia-Pacific affairs, slammed what he called "yet another egregious violation" of UN resolutions and said it should be met with "tough additional sanctions".

UN sanctions were tightened after North Korea successfully placed a satellite in orbit on a three-stage Unha-3 rocket in December 2012.

A fresh launch poses a dilemma for the international community, which is already divided on how to punish the North for its nuclear test.

North Korea's chief diplomatic ally, China, has been resisting the US push for tougher sanctions, but a rocket launch would bolster calls for Beijing to bring its maverick neighbour into line.