

Trade union

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The workers' associations had no legal status earlier but the amendment would give them the legal status of the Collective Bargaining Agent in factories inside of the EPZs, said Nazma Binte Alamgir, general manager, public relations of the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA), the regulating body for the EPZs.

Under the new rules, 30 percent workers would have to ask the BEPZA, filling in a form, for the formation of the Workers' Welfare Associations, Nazma Alamgir said.

Once the BEPZA verifies the applications and allows the WWAs, there would be a referendum among the workers for holding a poll to elect WWA leaders. Workers would only be allowed to hold the polls after the referendum decides that the workers want a WWA.

However, Sirajul Islam Rony, a member of the minimum wage board for garment workers, said the amendment to the law would allow partial trade unionism in factories, not the full rights due to the provision for referendum.

"But, at the same time giving the legal status to the workers' welfare association as well also allow guaranteed benefits to the workers. The workers will enjoy all benefits if any factory is shut down for any reason," he said.

"We want equal labour law for workers inside and outside of the EPZs in our country," said Nazma Akter, president of Sammito Garment Sramik Federation, a garment workers' platform. "I do not agree with many provisions in the amendment," she said.

Currently, more than 4.40 lakh workers are employed in eight EPZs across the country with 453 factories in operation. A total of 121 factories are under construction there.

There is a \$3.74 billion investment from home and abroad, Nazma Alamgir said, adding that the factories exported goods worth \$6.11 billion in 2014-15 fiscal year.

The Bangladesh EPZ Labour Law, 2016, also has a provision for forming a permanent wage board for workers, said Cabinet Secretary M Shafiqul Islam yesterday after the cabinet meeting held at the Secretariat with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Briefing reporters, he said workers would get various advantages, including retirement benefits, mandatory group insurance, compensation in case of deaths, cash payment for earned leave, full salary as festival bonus, and maternity leave for 16 weeks.

He said the family members of a worker would get Tk 2 lakh compensation if he or she dies on duty and Tk 2.25 lakh for his or her permanent disabilities caused by accidents at work.

Shafiqul said the labour organisations in EPZs would be named Sramik Kalyan Samity.

The cabinet secretary said the proposed law would ensure the right to joint wage bargaining for workers where their representatives would be able to bargain directly with the owners for fixing wages, working hours, appointments, and conditions for appointments and observing strikes.

"The law is going to be framed in light of the existing Labour Law 2006 and in line with the central bargaining agent (CBA) and trade union," the cabinet secretary told reporters.

The executive chairman of BEPZA would act as the chief of the permanent wage board for fixing the minimum wages for workers. "The wage board, if it deemed necessary, can reorganise the wages of the workers," he added.

The government had earlier formed a committee to formulate a law in line with the Bangladesh Labour Law, 2006.

The draft law has a total of 16 chapters and 202 sections.



A United Kingdom Labour Party delegation, led by British parliamentarian Sir Keir Starmer, calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her Sangsad Bhaban office yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Case spree on

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Acting on the petitions seeking to bring sedition charges against Anam in Kurigram and Tangail, the courts there ordered local police to seek permission from the government, as required by the law, and investigate the allegation.

In the 11 defamation cases, courts in Natore, Khagrachhari, Chapainawabganj and Rangpur issued summonses on Anam after taking the cases into cognisance.

In Kurigram, advocate Md Ruhul Amin Dulal, convener of district Jubo League, sought to sue Anam in a sedition case. Judge Maksudur Rahman of Additional Judicial Magistrate Court told officer-in-charge of the Sadar Police Station to probe the complaint after taking permission from the home ministry.

In Rajshahi, Abdus Salam, a public prosecutor of Metropolitan Judge's Court and president of Mohonpur upazila Awami League, submitted a plea to bring sedition charges against the editor. Rajshahi Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court ordered the OC of Boalia Police Station to investigate the allegation.

In Tangail, advocate Joaheerul Islam, general secretary of the district AL, brought sedition complaints and demanded Tk 100-crore in compensation from Anam.

Judge Md Aminul Islam of Senior Judicial Magistrate Court told the OC of Tangail Model Police Station to investigate the case after taking permission from the government and report back to it.

In Rangpur, organising secretary of district AL Motahar Hossain Molla filed a Tk 100-crore defamation case against Anam. Rangpur Senior Judicial Magistrate Shafiqul Alam summoned Anam to appear before it on March 1.

In Chapainawabganj, Ejabul Haque Buli, treasurer of Sadar unit AL, filed a libel suit against Anam. Senior Judicial Magistrate Nur Nabi issued a summons for Anam to appear before it on April 28.

In Khagrachhari, Teko Chakma, district unit president of pro-AL student body Chhatra League, sued Anam in a Tk 10-crore libel suit. Chief Judicial Magistrate Abu Sufian Md Noman summoned Anam on March

16, said plaintiff's lawyer Nazrul Islam.

In Sylhet, district Swechhasebak League President Afsar Aziz Khan filed a Tk 150-crore defamation case. Judge Kudrati Khuda of Sylhet Judicial Magistrate Court-4 ordered an executive magistrate to probe the allegation and submit a report to it in 15 days.

In Sunamganj, Syed Abdul Kashem, organising secretary of the Awami League's United Kingdom unit, filed a defamation case seeking Tk 100-crore in compensation. Judge Shahidul Islam took the suit into cognisance.

In Cox's Bazar, ex-Moheshkhali municipality mayor Sarwar Azom filed a Tk 100-crore defamation suit. Senior Judicial Magistrate Arun Pal ordered the senior assistant superintendent of police to probe the allegation and report back immediately.

In Natore, Alek Uddin Sheikh, joint secretary of the ruling party's Sadar upazila unit, filed a Tk 50-crore defamation suit. After primary hearing, acting judicial magistrate Shamsul Alam in ordered Anam to appear before it on March 30.

In Thakurgaon, Sadek Kuraishi, district unit general secretary of the ruling AL, appealed to Senior Judicial Magistrate Saiful Islam of Cognizance Court-Ka to a sedition case against The Daily Star editor.

The court later ordered the officer-in-charge of Thakurgaon Police Station to take necessary steps upon government permission for investigating the charge as per section 196 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

The court scheduled March 2 for next hearing.

In Panchagarh, Nazrul Islam, general secretary of Panchagarh Lawyers' Association, also the law affairs secretary of Debiganj upazila AL, filed a petition to sue Aman for sedition before Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate BM Tariqul Kabir.

The court ordered the OC of Panchagarh Police Station to take necessary steps in this connection.

In Pabna, Rejaur Rahim Lal, vice-president of the district AL, filed a defamation suit against Anam. The court fixed today for the hearing.

In Laxmipur, Nurul Amin Raju, general secretary of Kamalnagar upazila AL, filed a defamation petition of Tk 100-crore.

Judge Monir Hossain of the Senior Judicial Magistrate Court asked the petitioner to submit necessary documents before it for next course of action.

In Kushtia, Asadul Haq Soleman, district president of Amra Mujib Sena, petitioned before the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court to bring sedition charge against Mahfuz Anam.

In the plea, the plaintiff also brought a Tk 50,000 crore defamation charge against him.

Judge Mostafizur Rahman accepted the petition and fixed today for hearing.

In Rangamati, advocate Biplob Chakma, on behalf of Kazi Mohammad Jalwar who is president of district Jatiya Sramik League, filed a Tk 50-lakh defamation suit with a Rangamati court.

Without taking the case into cognisance, Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Sabrina Ali asked the petitioner to submit names and identities of the witnesses of the case.

In Comilla, Jadab Chandra Roy, Bangladesh Chhatra League's education affairs secretary there, filed a defamation case demanding six-month imprisonment of Anam.

Taking the case into cognisance, Judge Tareque Aziz of the Chief Magistrate's Court, ordered the district information officer to submit a report before it by March 21.

Tense Indian Kashmir shuts down after civilian deaths

AFP, Srinagar

Indian Kashmir largely shut down yesterday as a general strike was called to protest at the killing of two civilians during a gunbattle between troops and suspected separatist militants.

Authorities also imposed a curfew in parts of the region's main city of Srinagar, where hundreds of police and paramilitary troops patrolled deserted streets and erected checkpoints to halt any protests.

Flight turned back to Heathrow after 'laser' incident

AFP, London

A British pilots' union yesterday demanded action after a laser beam dazzled the co-pilot on a New York-bound flight, forcing the Virgin Atlantic jet to turn back shortly following take-off from London's Heathrow Airport.

Police responded to "reports of a laser shone in the direction of a commercial flight that had taken off a Heathrow" on Sunday night, a spokesman said.

The Airbus A340 carrying 252 passengers and 15 crew from London to New York continued over Ireland before requesting to return, flight radar showed.

A crew member told air traffic control there was a "medical issue with one of the pilots after a laser incident after take-off," according to flight radio recording.

FEBRUARY 10		
DISTRICTS	TYPE OF CASE	DEFAMATION CLAIM
KHULNA	Defamation	TK ONE CRORE
LAXMIPUR	Defamation	TK 50 CRORE
FEBRUARY 11		
DHAKA	Sedition charge	
COX'S BAZAR	Defamation	TK 50 CRORE
GOPALGANJ	Defamation	TK 10 CRORE
FEBRUARY 14		
DHAKA	Defamation	TK 10,000 CRORE
JAMALPUR	Sedition charge	
SYLHET	Defamation (2 cases)	TK 200 CRORE (100 crore each)
PATUAKHALI	Defamation	TK 5 CRORE
NETRAKONA	Defamation	
RANGAMATI	Defamation	
DINAJPUR	Defamation	
KHULNA	Defamation (2 cases)	
SHARIATPUR	Defamation (3 cases)	
FEBRUARY 15		
KURIGRAM	Sedition charge	
RAJSHAHI	Sedition charge	
TANGAIL	Defamation, sedition charge	TK 100 CRORE
RANGPUR	Defamation	TK 100 CRORE
SYLHET	Defamation	TK 150 CRORE
SUNAMGANJ	Defamation	TK 100 CRORE
COX'S BAZAR	Defamation	TK 100 CRORE
NATORE	Defamation	TK 50 CRORE
CHAPAINAWABGANJ	Defamation	
KHAGRACHHARI	Defamation	TK 10 CRORE
THAKURGAON	Sedition charge	
PANCHAGARH	Sedition charge	
PABNA	Defamation	
LAXMIPUR	Defamation	TK 100 CRORE
RANGAMATI	Defamation	TK 50 LAKH
KUSHTIA	Defamation, Sedition charge	TK 50,000 CRORE
COMILLA	Defamation	
35 AND COUNTING		
TOTAL - 35 CASES DEFAMATION CASES - 27		SEDITION - 8 CHARGES DEFAMATION CLAIM - TK 61,026.50 CRORE

SQ Chy's wife



Farhat Quader Chowdhury



Humam Quader Chowdhury

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All but Mehedi, who were present at the Cyber Tribunal, pleaded not guilty and demanded justice in the case after Judge KM Shamsul Alam read out the charges to them. The court set March 28 to start trial of the case.

On October 1, 2013, soon after the pronouncement of the verdict in the war crimes case, Salauddin's wife and family members showed "a copy of the verdict" to newsmen and claimed that it was leaked.

Three days later, detectives filed the case with Shahbagh Police Station against Fakhrul, Mehedi, Faruk, Nayon

and several unnamed people under the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006.

On August 28, 2014, detectives pressed charges against Farhat, Humam and five others for their alleged involvement in the incident.

According to the charge sheet, Salauddin's wife and son "hatched conspiracy and instigated" the leak while Fakhrul "facilitated" it. Mehedi, Mahbulul, Faruk and Nayan were "directly involved" in the crime.

Salauddin was executed at Dhaka Central Jail on November 22 last year.

Foreigners in ATM fraud ring

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of the central bank, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The foreign national, who installed skimmers at three ATM booths in Gulshan and Banani areas, wore a cap to hide his face.

It appears that another foreigner set up the device at another ATM booth at Kalshi in Mirpur, according to the BB official.

Rafiqul Islam, assistant commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said an initial probe indicated the involvement of a foreigner in installing skimming devices at ATMs.

Eastern Bank Ltd, United Commercial Bank Ltd and the City Bank -- hit by ATM frauds -- have similar suspicions.

A skimmer is a small device, an illegal technology that can scan and store credit card data from magnetic stripes.

Fraudsters installed the devices at four ATMs -- two of the EBL and one each of the UCBL and the City Bank -- to filch data from debit cards used in the booths.

The gang waited for a few days to copy as many card details as it could. After three to four days, it removed the devices and cameras from the ATMs, and then loaded the details on cloned cards to make unauthorised transactions, said the banks.

In these cases, the original card details were still with the users who came to know about the fraudulence through text messages on Friday.

The BB has found that more than 200 cardholders had lost data to the fraud last week.

Of Tk 25 lakh stolen by the racket, the EBL alone lost around Tk 14 lakh. However, the total figure might go up once the central bank gets details from all banks.

In a case filed with Banani Police Station, the UCBL said video footage shows that a foreigner installed a skimmer and a camera at the bank's ATM in Banani area on February 7, telling the guard at the booth that he was there to check technical faults.

The fraudsters made unauthorised transactions from various ATMs in the capital and withdrew Tk 1.26 lakh on Thursday. The total amount could be higher, said the bank.

Similarly, skimming devices and cameras were set up at two ATMs of the EBL at Gulshan-1 and 2 on February 8, and money was withdrawn through 21 transactions on February 12.

"Our guard at the Banani ATM booth and I can identify the man if we see him again," said Mahbulul Islam Khan, head of Fraud Control and Dispute Management of the UCBL, in the first information report filed with police.

Referring to footage captured by the CCTV camera of the City Bank's Kalshi ATM booth, Mashrur Arefin, additional managing director of the City Bank, said, "Images show the fraudster is a foreigner, probably a Caucasian."

The bank said 66 transactions were made after a skimmer was installed at the ATM booth. Of the transactions, 32 were made through the City Bank cards and 34 through cards of other banks.

The City Bank has so far received claims from clients for loss of Tk 1.4 lakh, said Mashrur.

The bank filed a case with Pallabi Police Station in this regard yesterday evening.

Meanwhile, the BB issued a circular yesterday, making it mandatory to install anti-skimming and PIN shield devices at all new ATM booths.

The central bank also said the existing ATM booths must be equipped with these devices within a month.

It also instructed all the banks to examine video footage of their ATM booths every day and send reports to it on a monthly basis.

The national payments switch (NPS) is the common platform through which electronic payments originating from different channels, including ATMs, points of sales, internet and mobile devices, take place.

Of the 56 banks operating in the country, 48 are connected with the NPS, according to the BB.

It means debit cards of these 48 banks can be used in any ATM, no matter which bank issues the cards.

At present, there are 98 lakh cards that are used at ATMs and point-of-sales centres across the country.

Pakistan varsity reopens a month after deadly attack

AFP, Peshawar

A Pakistani university attacked last month by the Taliban reopened yesterday guarded by hundreds of police, highlighting a pervasive atmosphere of fear after the Islamist group vowed more strikes on schools.

Gunmen stormed Bacha Khan university in the northwestern town of Charsadda on January 20, killing teachers and students in a rampage that left 21 dead.

The attack shattered a growing sense of security in the troubled region a year after the Peshawar school massacre, in which more than 150 people -- mainly children -- were killed.