

People block road to protest OC's transfer

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Bogra*

Locals blocked Dhaka-Rangpur highway yesterday, demanding cancellation of the transfer order of the officer-in-charge of Shajahanpur Police Station.

They formed a human chain and blocked the highway in front of the upazila parishad complex from 12noon to 12:45pm, creating an 8-km long tailback on the highway. Vehicles on both sides of the road were stranded, causing sufferings to people.

They withdrew the blockade after Shajahanpur Upazila Nirbahi Officer Shafiu Islam and Assistant Superintendent of Police (A circle) Moshir Rahman assured them that they would inform the higher authorities about their demand.

Sources said around nine months ago, OC Alamgir Hossain was transferred to Shajahanpur Police Station. He fought against terrorism and showed zero tolerance to criminals, they said.

An order transferring him to the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) in the capital was issued on Wednesday, they added.

Contacted, Gaziur Rahman, senior assistant superintendent of police (media and B circle) in Bogra, said the higher authorities were informed about the demand.

Arifur Rahman Mondal, additional superintendent of police (east) in Bogra, said Alamgir was transferred for his "misbehaviour".

Extorted

FROM PAGE 1
them involved in the negotiation.

Both the relative and the leader requested anonymity fearing retribution.

The incident came to light on Wednesday after Buddhist Federation President Ashim Ranjan Barua alleged at a 14-party alliance meeting that two small traders from their community were picked up by police during the special drive.

Cops demanded Tk 1 lakh for their release and freed them after taking TK 20,000, he added.

Contacted, Sabuj Barua declined to comment.

Another leader of the community said SI Israfil loaded Tk 500 on his personal bKash account from BD Trading, owned by Manash Barua Bibhash, father of the victims.

The next day, the SI came to the shop and alleged that someone called his number saying Tk 500 was wrongly sent to his account.

He also alleged the caller asked him to send the money back, a common trick of fraudsters. The SI checked his account, and found no such money was deposited in his bKash account. He then refused to send back the money.

The caller then allegedly misbehaved with him.

Following the incident, the SI along with three other cops went to the shop and insisted that one of Manash's two sons called him with the motive of cheating.

The policemen also threatened to confiscate goods from the shop and hauled the two brothers to the CID office. A senior officer examined his voice with the recorded conversation of the caller, but found Israfil's allegation false, the leader said.

Later, the two brothers were taken to Israfil's room and forced to stay there until they gave him Tk 20,000.

Contacted, Israfil said the allegation was baseless. He also claimed he did not pick up anyone. According to him, Rampura police detained the two brothers.

Asked if any action was taken against the policemen, CID Chief Sheikh Himayet Hossain said he was not aware of the incident. "Nobody filed any complaint. If anybody files one, we will definitely investigate the incident and take action if one is found guilty."

Flash floods

FROM PAGE 2
Pachgachhi union, said, "I have cultivated pointed gourd on 1.5 acres of land. But sudden rain and upstream water inundated the field today [yesterday]."

Mojibur Rahman, another vegetable farmer in Jatrapur union, said, "I have commercially farmed vegetables, including pointed gourd and red spinach, on about two acres of land. I will not get profits from the vegetable as the vegetable may be damaged by water."

Mohammad Kamruzzaman, Kurigram Sadar upazila agricultural officer, said, the vegetables might be damaged completely. After receding of water, they would advise the affected farmers to cultivate vegetable again of the short duration varieties to recover their losses.

Lawachhara in danger

FROM PAGE 20
the forest.

The letter referred to the last year's April 21 storm which caused around 35 trees to fall on the train lines, disrupting communication.

It also cited another storm on April 7 this year when some trees collapsed and fell on the Dhaka-bound Upaban Express at Magurchhara of the forest.

The headlights of the Upaban Express broke in the incident, the letter mentioned.

Citing these incidents, the railway authorities urged the forest department to cut trees within 50 feet on both sides of the line.

They also made a similar attempt with a 9km rail line of the Rashidpur-Satgaon route that goes through the forest as well.

The railway department in the letter said that if the trees were not felled, steps would be taken under section 128 of the Railways Act, 1890, in case another accident happened.

In reply to the railway department's letter, Mihir Kumar Deb, DFO, Department of Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation, on May 12 focused on the biodiversity of the Lawachhara Forest, home to 167 species of trees, 246 species of birds, 20 rare and endangered species of animals.

"After surveying the area, we found that there are about 25,000 trees aged between five and 100 years, within 50 feet of the 5km line. Many different species of animals and birds live there," Mihir said.

"If we cut down the trees, the biodiversity and the environment of the forest will be under serious threat," he had mentioned in the letter.

Receiving the reply, railway officials again sent a letter on May 18 to the forest department, saying that if the forest department did not cut the trees within the next seven days, the railway authorities would take actions according to the Railway Act.

The railway department has not taken any attempt to cut down the trees yet, but environmentalist expressed concern over felling of trees and illegal logging of the forest.

"I would be surprised if there are 25,000 trees in the entire Lawachhara forest. So the railway's demand for cutting down these many trees cannot

be accepted at all," said Sharif Jamil, joint secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa).

Terming Lawachhara a precious asset of the country, Sharif said, "We should protect it through legal measures and proper management." Laws are there but those are not being properly implemented, he said.

"Railway should divert the route to plain land which would in fact make the service faster," he said, adding that Dhaka-Sylhet highway passed through the forest but later a by-pass was built outside the forest area.

Regarding felling of trees during storm, Sharif, mentioning newspaper reports, said the trees were probably sawed off at the trunk beforehand. As a result, they could not withstand the storm and fell on the rail lines.

"No public transportation is allowed through declared reserve forests in most countries," he said. Special rules regarding speed and sound are enforced at the places where such transportation is allowed, he added.

Confirming the railway department's letter, Arman Hossain, divisional engineer of Bangladesh Railway, said rail service is being hampered because of collapsing trees.

He said the forest department was asked to cut trees on both sides of the rail line to ensure passengers' safety.

DFO Mihir, however, said, "There will always be some risks for rail tracks going through the forest."

"To avoid the risk, the lines should be moved outside the forest area," he suggested.

"Cutting such a large number of trees would threaten the biodiversity of the forest," he added.

Contacted, Environment and Forests Minister Anwar Hossain Manju said both the forest and railway departments would not take any action until the matter is resolved at ministerial level.

"I have not formally received any report on the matter and I am guessing the railway minister too has not been formally informed about it yet," he said.

The minister said he assumes no ministry would take any steps regarding this without taking the matter to the cabinet.

Tragic death of a journalist

FROM PAGE 20

footages of the starving people. Not even in his wildest dream had he thought he would be infected with malaria in Bandarban, one of the malaria endemic hilly districts in the country.

But Ripon, 34, indeed got cerebral malaria and died of it at a city hospital early hours yesterday, the private TV said.

He had been under treatment at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University since Tuesday. He was first admitted to the Coronary Care Unit and then shifted to the Intensive Care Unit when his condition worsened.

He is survived by his mother and three brothers.

His colleagues said he was planning his marriage after the Eid-ul-Fitr.

They said that after returning to Dhaka early this month, Ripon got a fever. Still he continued to work till June 16.

He then took treatment at Rafiza Hospital in Keraniganj, where he was from.

Contacted, Dr Wahiduzzaman, who runs the hospital, said Ripon went to the outdoor section on June 18 with a complaint of fever and told him that he was taking suppository.

"I measured his fever, but did not find it to be high," he claimed.

Upon questioning, Ripon told him that he recently visited Bandarban.

"I asked him to do a test and he did it. The report was negative and I prescribed him Paracetamol and Losextil. I also told him to take an antibiotic course if he still felt fever," said Wahiduzzaman.

New Zealand man jailed for spreading images of IS violence

REUTERS, Wellington

A New Zealand man was yesterday jailed for spreading images of Islamic State (IS) violence, the first person sentenced to prison for circulating and possessing objectionable material linked to extreme violence, local media reported.

Imran Patel, 26, was jailed for three years and nine months by an Auckland court after he admitted to making, distributing and possessing videos depicting cruel violence perpetrated by IS, according to news website stuff.co.nz.

The prison sentence was the first for someone on an objectionable material charge related to violence. To date, all such charges in New Zealand had

related to indecent child images, said Auckland District Court Judge Russell Collins, according to the news site said.

Patel had sent text messages with a link to an IS beheading video to 52 people last year, after which police discovered a laptop containing 62 objectionable videos showing extreme violence or cruelty, stuff.co.nz reported.

Patel told police he wanted to provide information on what was happening in the Middle East, because he believed western media wasn't showing a balanced view, the news website said.

A court official was not able to offer any information on the proceedings to Reuters and Patel's lawyer did not return a call requesting comment.

Army giving

FROM PAGE 1

Like all the others living inside the cantonment, Tonu's family was given all sorts of privilege, and no obstruction was made in the movement of the family members.

Following Tonu's murder, guards were deployed in the area where her family lives, and it was done for the sake of security and probe. Later, the guards were withdrawn as the situation improved.

For the sake of the cantonment's security, everyone is quizzed during entry and exit from the cantonment for confirming his or her identity. This military practice is not meant for demeaning anyone or curbing anybody's personal liberty, noted the ISPR.

Tonu's father Yaar Hossain is a staff member of the Comilla Cantonment Board, and like others, he is also given security inside the cantonment, it said.

The claim of attempts to kill him by crushing under a bus or a motor-bike is a matter stemming from perception, and Tonu's family has not yet informed anyone about this, said the statement.

When a cantonment executive officer of the rank of a class-I government officer asked Tonu's father about it, he failed to give any reliable information, it said.

Tonu's father also didn't lodge any complaint with the army authorities or the investigators till date, which appears inconsistent given the seriousness of the matter, said the ISPR.

Like the other army families, Tonu's family is living inside the cantonment, and the army authorities are determined to provide all sorts of cooperation to the bereaved family, it added.

Tonu, a theatre activist and student of Comilla Victoria College, was found murdered in a bush in the Comilla Cantonment area on March 20.

Gunman killed

FROM PAGE 20

the man or established his motive, spokesman Bernd Hochstaedter said, adding that nothing immediately pointed to him having a militant background.

German television showed pictures of heavily-armed police, wearing helmets and body armour, storming the Kinopolis complex in Viernheim, south of Frankfurt, and a couple fleeing the building.

Cinema employee Guri Blakaj told Reuters the gunman, who appeared to be aged between 18 and 25 and was about 1.7 metres tall, entered the cinema at around 3:00pm and told workers to get into an office.

He then went into a cinema theatre. Blakaj, who said there were about six workers and 30 cinemagoers in the building, then heard shots fired.

Police special forces stormed the building and shot him.

There was still a heavy police presence at the scene into the late afternoon, and a helicopter circled overhead.

JP MP seeks

FROM PAGE 5

Participating in a budget discussion, Bablu, a senior lawmaker of the main opposition, lambasted Muhith, stating that corruption and irregularities were rampant in the financial sector, especially banks.

Millions of taka remains in loan default but the finance minister is not doing anything to address it, he said.

Pointing to February's cyber heist when Bangladesh Bank lost \$101 million, Bablu said the governor had to resign on moral grounds. "But do you (Muhith) not have any moral and ethical responsibility as minister of the finance ministry?" he said.

Devote yourself

FROM PAGE 2

Hasina claimed that her party has elevated Bangladesh to a dignified position in the global arena as the AL has given everything -- from achieving the dignity for mother language to the country's independence -- to the nation.

"We're pledge-bound to fulfill the expectations of the country's people," she added.

Taking a swipe at her archrival Khaleda Zia, she alleged that nowadays, the BNP chief has been telling blatant lies in iftar parties.

Conflict among US allies in Syria clouds war on IS

REUTERS, Gaziantep

A smouldering confrontation between Syrian armed groups backed by the United States but hostile to each other is escalating, complicating the fight against Islamic State in the war-torn country.

Syrian Arab rebels under the Free Syrian Army (FSA) banner say they are in a growing struggle against the Kurdish YPG militia that are helping the United States wage its campaign against IS in Syria.

Stay or go?

FROM PAGE 1

vote to stay yesterday, with world stocks surging and the pound hitting its highest level this year.

London's benchmark FTSE 100 share index closed up 1.2 percent at 6,338.1 points, while key eurozone indices in Frankfurt and Paris forged even higher, at around two percent up.

In currency trading, the pound hit a 2016 high against the dollar at \$1.4947.

An Ipsos MORI opinion poll for the London Evening Standard newspaper put "Remain" on 52 percent and "Leave" on 48 percent.

Experts predict a high turnout across the kingdom.

Jenny Watson, who chairs the Electoral Commission referendum overseers and will announce the official result, said recounts would not take place "simply because the vote was close".

"If it's a dead heat then it's a dead heat. There is no casting vote," she told the BBC.

While early indications of results could come from around 0200 GMT today, the final declaration is not likely until around 0800 GMT.

Leave figurehead Boris Johnson, the former London mayor, said the race was "very close", as he returned to the British capital from Edinburgh, but added: "From what I have heard... turnout is good in areas where we need it to be."

In London and southeast England, many voters braved torrential rains and thunderstorms to have their say.

Several polling stations had to be relocated due to flooding and one was being run on a generator due to a power outage.

The referendum asks: "Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?"

Commentators suggest Brexit could trigger a constitutional crisis in Britain, prompting another Scottish independence referendum.

There are also fears it could prompt other EU countries, disillusioned with how Brussels has handed the eurozone and migrant crises, to try to break away.

Polling stations have been set up at locations including churches, schools and even a launderette and a windmill.

Outside a polling station in suburban Biggin Hill, south of London, 55-year-old Steve Annett, who works in publishing, said: "We're stronger together working with our European neighbours.

"Obviously the economy is a major

concern," he told AFP.

Meanwhile pensioner Wendie said older people were "fed up of being taken over, our laws being taken over by the EU. Why can't we rule our own country?"

Thousands of people queued to vote in the British overseas territory of Gibraltar, which borders Spain.

The often acrimonious campaign has exposed a wide gulf between Britons on the country's often troubled four-decade membership of the European club.

EU leaders have warned Britain -- the world's fifth-largest economy -- that there would be no turning back from a vote to quit.

"Out is out," European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker said Wednesday, dismissing any talk of a post-vote renegotiation of Britain's membership terms.

In many European countries newspapers pleaded "Please don't go" while several monuments were lit up with the British flag.

Prime Minister David Cameron, who faces calls to resign in the event of a "Leave" victory, voted early without making any comment.

At his final rally on Wednesday, the Conservative leader implored people to stay in the bloc, invoking Britain's cigar-chomping wartime prime minister Winston Churchill.

"Churchill didn't give up on European democracy... and we shouldn't walk away," he said.

Nigel Farage, leader of the anti-EU UK Independence Party, said as he voted that "Leave" had "a really good, strong chance".

A British withdrawal from the EU would trigger a lengthy exit negotiation, leading to the loss of unfettered access to its partners in the EU's single market and forcing the country to strike its own trade accords across the world.

The referendum battle was shaken by the brutal murder of Jo Cox, a pro-"Remain" Labour lawmaker and mother of two who was stabbed and shot in the street one week before the vote.

Thomas Mair, 52, has been charged with her murder and had a provisional trial date set for November at a court hearing yesterday.

EU leaders will begin a two-day summit Tuesday to deal with the outcome and decide how to cope with the risk of similar referendums on the continent.

BB will not extend

FROM PAGE 20

The US firm has been charging the BB \$400 an hour to probe the heist after it was appointed a week after the February 4 theft.

The BB had earlier said FireEye investigators would monitor the computers for 600 hours from Washington.

Mandiant has said it needs 570 hours of more work to complete its investigations, reported Reuters on Wednesday.

The bank has already paid about \$280,000 to the company.

After the appointment of Mandiant, its tenure has been extended twice. The Reuters report, quoting an unnamed BB official, said the initial purpose of hiring Mandiant had been achieved: identifying and addressing lapses in the bank's computer security.

Now, the central bank would strengthen its security system, a BB official told The Daily Star yesterday.

FireEye installed a software programme on all computers at the BB a week after the heist. The software is being used to find out the path the hackers used to plant the malware in the BB network.

BB officials said the malware was still hiding in the system and did not move. Its movement would allow investigators to find out the origin of the malware.

"But the BB can't keep the appointed foreign investigators for an indefinite period," said an official, seeking anonymity.

RECALL REFERENDUM Venezuela opposition says has sufficient signatures

REUTERS, Caracas

Venezuela's political opposition said on Wednesday it had collected the required number of valid signatures to begin a recall referendum against President Nicolas Maduro, amid the country's economic crisis.

The painstaking process of validating the signatures began earlier this week. The electoral council has required that those who signed for a recall vote against the 53-year-old president return to polling stations to verify their signatures through fingerprint detection.

"We've achieved the goal," said Carlos Ocariz, the opposition governor of a Caracas district. "We have more than 236,000 valid signatures."

The electoral council had rejected more than a quarter of the nearly 2 million signatures collected by the opposition. It requires 200,000 signatures to begin the process. Once validated, the opposition must obtain 3.9 million signatures in just three days.

If the electoral council considers the signatures valid, it must call a referendum within 90 days. In order to push Maduro out,

more than 7.5 million must vote against him - the number that voted for him in 2013, after the death of his predecessor Hugo Chavez.

Critics say the government is stalling the process at the behest of Maduro himself, who has said that the referendum will not take place this year.

The timing is important because if Maduro loses a referendum this year, the electoral council would call a new election which polls indicate he would likely lose. Losing a referendum after January, however, would mean Maduro would be replaced by his vice president, effectively leaving the Socialist Party in power.

The OPEC country is undergoing a severe economic and social crisis. Food riots and looting are taking place daily amid shortages of basic foods and triple-digit inflation.

Maduro has struggled to maintain popularity amid the trouble caused by tight currency and price controls as well as Venezuela's heavy dependence on oil.

The government blames the problems on an "economic war" waged by the opposition with a helping hand from Washington.