

BRTC facing fund crisis

Seeks special allocation as expenditure doubles due to full implementation of new pay scale

PANKAG KARMAKAR

Financial crisis is looming in the state-run Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) following implementation of the new pay scale that may cause a chaotic situation in delivering its services.

The BRTC authorities have already sought the government's special monetary allocation to overcome the crisis for continuing its services smoothly.

Currently, the BRTC has to annually spend on average Tk 3.75 crore for paying salary and allowances to its around 2,800-strong staff.

But that annual expenditure is going to rise at Tk 6.76 crore because of full implementation of the new pay scale, according to officials of the finance and accounts department of the BRTC.

It is not possible for the organisation to bear the additional expenditure by its own fund, said BRTC Chairman

Mizanur Rahman.

The corporation is run by its own resources and earnings. The government only buys buses and trucks for BRTC but does not allocate fund to run the organisation, he added.

Selling passenger tickets is the main source of earning for the corporation. Besides, it also earns by renting its trucks, renting space to different offices in the BRTC building and training up drivers.

Currently, the corporation owns 1,539 buses, 108 trucks, 21 bus and truck depots and 17 training centres across the country, according to insiders.

Salary and allowances of the government employees have almost doubled because of full implementation of the new pay scale from July 1 this year.

For example, a deputy general manager (DGM) previously got Tk 39,000 per month but now would get Tk 68,000 from July this year.

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In the wake of beefed up security measures taken after Gulshan and Sholakia terror attacks, cops search people visiting the Lalbagh Fort in the capital on the weekend yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Tributes paid to Shirin Banu

Laid to rest in Comilla

BSS, Dhaka

Hundreds of people paid rich tributes to freedom fighter Shirin Banu yesterday, a day after she passed away at a city hospital.

A pall of gloom descended over the Central Shaheed Minar where the body of the 65-year-old was brought in the morning to allow common people to have their last glimpses of the war heroine.

A police contingent gave a guard of honour to Banu as admirers and fans stood in solemn silence at the altar of the Shaheed Minar. They remembered her contributions to the Liberation War.

Politicians, professionals, cultural activists and students placed wreaths on the coffin. The ceremony was organised by leftist student body Bangladesh Chhatra Union.

Communist Party of Bangladesh President Mujahidul Islam Selim said Banu fought for the emancipation of the mass people until her death. She was an iconic woman whose life and works should be followed by the new generation, Selim added.

Later, her body was taken to Dhaka University Central Mosque for namaz-e-janaza. She was laid to rest at her village home in Comilla.

Banu died of cardiac arrest at the

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Child dies

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into the canal immediately. They also mounted a frantic search in the area.

But Junaid was nowhere.

Around 11:00am yesterday, his uncle, Heera Manik, found his body floating in the canal about a kilometre away from their home, said the family members and fire service sources.

The open sewer canal that runs



Junaid when he was two.

through the slum is several feet deep and about 5-15 feet wide.

This correspondent visited the slum behind Dhaka Commerce College and saw neighbours crowding into Junaid's house to console his mother.

"My son had asked for candies from me. I could not even give him some candies," Jui Begum, the mother who works at a garment factory, said as she wept.

Her husband Amir Hossain is a truck driver.

Meanwhile, the victim's family alleged that the local fire service office was late to respond to their call.

The fire service, however, denied the allegation.

On being informed, several fire service units rushed to the spot and scoured the canal till 9:30pm Thursday. Anwar Hossain, deputy assistant director of the Fire Service and Civil Defence, told The Daily Star.

"We were also there when the uncle [Heera Manik] spotted the body," he said.

Junaid was buried at a local graveyard yesterday afternoon.

Divers of fire service had recovered the body of six-year-old Sanjida on July 14, around 17 hours after she fell into a canal near Mohakhali bus terminal in the capital.

27 anti-terror cases stuck

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Chawk Bazar, Karnaphuli, Double Mooring and Bakalia police stations. Among them is the high-profile case filed in connection with the busting of a JMB den at Karnaphuli last year, said the sources.

On October 5, detectives arrested five members of the banned militant group from a flat at Khowajinagar and recovered handmade grenades, bomb-making materials and ammunition. The case was lodged the next day.

One arrestee, Javed, was killed in a grenade explosion during a police raid to capture more suspects.

Another detainee, Fardin, was killed in a so-called gunfight between police and suspected militants.

This case is sensitive and its trial should start as soon as possible, said prosecution lawyers.

"We wrote to the home ministry several times about the cases, as government's sanction is mandatory to start the trial," said Fakhruddin Chowdhury, public prosecutor (PP) at the Chittagong Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court.

Because of the delay, some accused are getting bail from the High Court, he added.

AKM Sirajul Islam Chowdhury, PP at the Chittagong District Sessions Judge's Court, said they sent the list of the 10 cases filed in the district to the home ministry.

"We are still waiting for the

approval," he said on Wednesday.

"During hearing, we need to produce the evidence before the court to prove the case," said Chittagong District Bar Association General Secretary SM Zahed Biru.

But if it takes this long to start the trial, certain evidence may be destroyed or even lost and the accused will be benefitted from this, he added.

Due to such delay, some witnesses lose interest in appearing before the court to give deposition, he said. "The home ministry has a law section to look into the matter. If they take an initiative, the problem would be solved."

On Wednesday, one official at the

law section said they were yet to receive the files of the cases.

"We will approve those as soon as we get them," he said, asking not to be named.

Yesterday, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said they recently approved several cases.

"The files involving some other cases were sent back to the courts because there were some flaws in those," he told The Daily Star by phone.

Contacted last night, a source in the PP office of the Chittagong Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court said they received approval of four cases and that the trial proceedings of two cases already began.

Single tenants in trouble

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Raunak, who is now staying at his friends' mess as a guest, has been looking for a mess for the last two months.

Last week, police arrested North South University professor Gias Uddin Ahsan and one Nurul Islam of Mirpur on charges of renting out their flats to Gulshan café attackers and withholding tenants' information from police.

After the arrests, many landlords have become more cautious about letting their flats to single people. They are unwilling to rent out their flats to unknown people or without filling up the tenant information form prescribed by the local police stations.

Around 15 million people live in the capital and a major portion of them live in rented houses.

A good number of students, working bachelors and labourers live in messes in the capital.

Students and employees mostly live near their universities, colleges and workplaces so that they can commute easily.

Our correspondents visited Badda, Shajidpur, Moghbazar,

Mohammadpur, Jatrabari and Farmgate areas, and talked to landlords and tenants there.

Akram Ali Bablu, a house owner in Badda, said, "We are maintaining strict security after the Gulshan attack. We feel a little bit safer now."

However, Rawshan Ara, a tenant of the building, said they do not feel completely safe.

"After the Gulshan attack, we're feeling uncomfortable to live with bachelor tenants in the building," she said.

The landlord should not allow bachelors, she observed.

Another house owner in Badda Abdur Rashid Mia said, "We've been living here for around 18 years. I personally don't prefer to allow bachelors unless they are known to me. But from now on we won't allow any bachelors."

The situation will aggravate the accommodation crisis of students coming from outside the capital.

"Some of my friends have come to Dhaka recently for higher studies but they're facing difficulties in getting a mess," said Faisal Ahmed, a private

university student.

"House owners ask so many personal questions that often embarrass us," said Soyebur Rahman, a student of Dhaka College.

"Most of the private universities and colleges don't have accommodation facilities. If the landlords continue to say no to bachelors, thousands of students like me will be in trouble," he said.

Al Jabir, who recently graduated from a private marine academy, said bachelor tenants face harassment as the police often conduct raids in the messes.

"I paid a visit to one of my friend's mess last month at Mohammadpur Housing Society where police raided. Luckily, they [police] did not find anything..." he said.

Moshirur Rahman, another private university student, lives in a mess with other students and bachelors at Farmgate. He said their landlord asked them to carry identity cards with them all the time to avert police harassment.

"We welcome the government's move but also request the law enforce-

ment agencies not to harass innocent people," he added.

Many homeowners in Jatrabari, where a good number of labourers and madrasa students reside, have become aware and begun collecting information of tenants.

"About 80 percent of my tenants are from Barisal region and I know almost all of them. If I find anyone suspicious, I keep a close watch on him or ask him to leave," said Nesar Uddin, a caretaker who oversees eight houses in Mirhajirbagh.

Mostaq, a small businessman, lives in a mess in the same area. He said a total of 27 people live there. "I myself keep a copy of NID of my roommates for security purpose," he said.

Subhan Mia, a caretaker of an apartment in Nikunja where mostly students and single people live, said, "Renting out rooms to single people is a bit profitable. They consume less water and electricity. Besides, they are less complaining."

(Belal Hossain Bipro, Abdullah Al Nayeem, Chiran Mathews and Mahdi Al Muhtasim contributed to this report)

SP Babul may join office soon

Says father-in-law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Superintendent of Police Babul Akter, who has been remaining absent from office since the murder of his wife on June 5, may join office anytime soon.

"I have talked to Babul about his joining job. Through the talks, it seems that he will join his office soon," Babul's father-in-law Mosharraf Hossain, a former police official, told The Daily Star over the phone yesterday.

On Thursday, Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Hoque in Chittagong said Babul was still in his job, but not coming to office.

If he continued to do so, the police headquarters would take departmental action against him, added the IGP.

Both Babul and Mosharraf watched the news on TV and then Mosharraf discussed the issue with Babul.

Babul has been busy taking care of his two children, who are still in trauma, since the killing of his wife, Mahmuda Khanam Mitu, in Chittagong, said Mosharraf.

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Indian air force

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"A search operation is on. The plane was airborne at 8:30am and was supposed to land at Port Blair at 11:30," Wing Commander Anupam Banerjee said.

The AN-32, equipped with navigational aids, are the IAF's workhorse aircraft and capable of flying for up to four hours without refuelling.

An IAF source told AFP the radar data from the missing aircraft showed it making a sharp left turn before rapidly losing altitude.

"We are keeping our fingers crossed. Let's hope and pray for the best," he said, requesting anonymity.

Retired Air Marshal Anil Chopra said searching for an aircraft in an ocean was complex and that knowledge of the last known position of the plane would be critical for any breakthrough.

"Unfortunately the radar cover in Indian east coast does not cover full area... As time elapses uncertainty and risk increases," he posted on Twitter.

"Searching an aircraft in an ocean is as complex as finding a ping pong ball on Siachen glacier," he tweeted, referring to the Himalayan glacier.

The Indian Air Force, which relies heavily on Russian-made equipment and has around 100 AN-32s in its fleet, has been blighted by a poor safety record.

In one of the worst disasters involving an AN-32 in India, 20 people on board died while three civilians were burnt to death when the plane crashed near a New Delhi airport in 1999.

And in 2013, all 20 people on board a military helicopter were killed when it crashed in northern India.

The Indian air force has gradually been getting rid of some of its older planes, some of which date back to the 1960s.

Experts have warned India's delay in revamping its outdated military aircraft threatens national security, with some of the fleet virtually on their last legs.

New deals have been mired in bureaucratic wrangles, most notably the agreement to buy 36 Rafale fighter jets from France's Dassault Aviation, which has been pending since 2012.

India is the world's largest arms importer, with the US its number one supplier.

The South Asian nation has been trying to develop its own warplanes but delays and technical shortcomings have marred progress.

Trump promises safety for fearful Americans

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email scandal yet propelled by ardent fundraisers.

A CNN straw poll suggested that 75 percent of respondents found Trump's speech positive and 56 percent were more likely to vote for him -- balanced out by 42 percent either less likely or unmoved.

But eyes will now pivot to Clinton. She is expected to unveil her pick for vice president by today, then accept the Democratic nomination at her party's convention in Philadelphia next week.

Between chants of "U-S-A" and "Trump, Trump, Trump," the Republican's candidate cast himself as the "law and order candidate" who would champion "people who work hard but no longer have a voice."

"I am your voice," he declared after accepting the Republican presidential nomination, promising better times with "millions of new jobs and trillions in new wealth."

Exploiting angst over racially-tinged shootings and seemingly indiscriminate attacks, Trump offered a tough-on-crime message that was reminiscent of Richard Nixon's election-winning strategy in 1968.

The "crime and violence that today afflicts our nation will soon, and I mean very soon, come to an end," he said.

"Beginning on January 20, of 2017, safety will be restored."

Dayna Dent, 69, a retiree and alternate

delegate from Washington state told AFP she was "thrilled" by the speech. "I think Donald is very real, and I like that about him," she said.

But speaking for over an hour, he also stuck to many of the hard right themes from a bruising primary campaign, showing why he is one of the most controversial US politicians in living memory.

PRESIDENT OR DICTATOR?

Foreigners from terror-linked countries would be banned, a wall built on the Mexican border and trade deals ripped up and renegotiated.

"I alone can fix it," he claimed, not impressing Democrats.

"We are better than this," tweeted Clinton.

Her former presidential rival Bernie Sanders, who galvanized young people with his call for free college education and universal healthcare, also took umbrage.

"Is this guy running for president or dictator?" he tweeted.

But the Republican party rank-and-file lapped it up, rising to their feet in standing ovation after standing ovation and displaying none of the divisions that have plagued the four-day convention.

This, a Trump top aide remarked, is now the "party of Trump." Many of the Republican old guard had stayed away, including both former presidents Bush.

Daniel Carter, an Ohio delegate and lawyer who originally wanted Ohio

Governor John Kasich to win the nomination, said he would now be working to get Trump into the White House.

"For the most part everyone's, 'Come on lets get this guy elected,'" he said. "We certainly don't want Hillary Clinton."

VICE PRESIDENT

When the former first lady formally accepts the Democratic nomination next week, it will be the highlight of her more than three-decade career in public service.

Trump painted her as corrupt, incompetent and hopelessly out of touch. "Death, destruction, terrorism and weakness," he said of her legacy.

While Trump went with experience, steadiness, and rock-solid conservative credentials in picking Mike Pence to join his ticket, the deeply experienced Clinton needs other skills in a vice president.

Tim Kaine, senator from Virginia, comes from a battleground state, speaks Spanish and is a southern white man who might put independent male voters at ease.

Tom Vilsack, from Pittsburgh and known to the Clintons for years, could help in the crucial swing state of Pennsylvania. As a former two-term governor of Iowa, can woo rural American voters.

Tom Perez, labor secretary and a liberal, could heal the rift with left-leaning supporters of Sanders and as a Latin, cement the increasingly important

Hispanic vote.

Two outside choices are James Stavridis, a retired four-star US Navy admiral and liberal superstar Elizabeth Warren, the Massachusetts senator who could also help attract Sanders supporters.

It remains unclear if antipathy towards Clinton will be enough to unite a Republican Party riven with doubts over his candidature.

Warming up the crowd before Trump took to the stage, his daughter Ivanka tried to soften her father's image.

"My father not only has the strength and ability necessary to be the next president, but also the kindness and compassion," she said.

4 of a family

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There were seven people on board.

When the trawler reached deep into the river around 2:30pm, it capsized after being hit by a strong current caused by a sudden storm. Three of the passengers managed to swim ashore, while the others drowned in the river.

On information, a rescue team of Lakhai fire service and civil defence rushed to the spot and recovered the bodies from the river.

Contacted, Muzammel Haque, officer-in-charge of Lakhai Police Station, said the bodies were handed over to the victim's family.