

Three contracts signed for Dhaka metro

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Authorities of Dhaka's maiden metro rail project yesterday signed three contracts with two companies for the civil construction work at the Uttara depot and building elevated rail viaducts from north Uttara to Agargaon.

With these, four contracts have been inked for as many packages of work, out of a total eight.

According to one of the contracts signed yesterday, a joint venture of Italian-Thai Development Public Company and Sinohydro Corporation is going to do the Tk 1,595 crore civil constructions at the metro rail depot, said Project Director Mofazzel Hossain.

With a deadline of June 2024, they would build a stabling yard for 40 train sets, a workshop, head office of the metro rail company (Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd), training centre, and operations and control centre.

The contractor would get three or four months to mobilise equipment before formally starting work. The work period would be calculated from the formal start of work, he said.



Officials of metro rail project and Italian-Thai Development Public Company and Sinohydro Corporation sign contracts at Sonargaon Hotel in the capital yesterday as Transport Minister Obaidul Quader and lawmaker Sahara Khatun look on.

The metro authorities signed the other two contracts (package-3 and -4) with Ital-Thai. The contracts worth Tk 4,230 crore were for the construction of 10km-long elevated viaducts and nine stations between north Uttara to Agargaon.

Both Ital-Thai and Sinohydro had received flak for their poor performance in Dhaka Elevated Expressway, Dhaka-Chittagong four-lane project and river training work for the Padma Multipurpose Bridge project.

"Ital-Thai and Sinohydro proved competent in the case of metro rail project as per rules," said Mofazzel, adding, "Other projects are not comparable with metro rail."

Humiliated

FROM PAGE 1

Quoting Mousumi, Sumi, who works at a shoe factory in Hazaribagh area, said their neighbour Azim, 22, driver of a human hauler locally known as leguna, went to Mousumi's room to borrow a mobile charger on Saturday night.

Sumi was not in the capital at that time as she had gone to their village home.

When Mousumi was looking for the charger, caretaker's wife Rokhsana locked the door from outside and alleged that she had seen Mousumi and Azim together, Sumi said.

Hearing this, locals thronged the house and insulted Mousumi, Sumi added.

Rokhsana then asked Mousumi to leave the house and threatened to tell her father of the incident, Sumi said.

Sumi alleged that Rokhsana said she would "solve" the matter if Mousumi gave her Tk 50,000.

When Sumi returned to the capital from her village on Monday, she came to know about the incident from Mousumi.

However, Mousumi told her sister that she had no affair with Azim.

Asked, neighbours said they only heard about the incident, but did not know details.

Sumi added that Mousumi went to her workplace on Tuesday and returned home in the afternoon.

After finding her room locked from inside, she along with locals broke into the room and saw Mousumi's body hanging from a ceiling fan with a scarf.

Mousumi, who got separated from her husband last year, left behind a four-year-old son who is now with her parents in Boalmari.

Earlier, Mousumi and Sumi used to live in a house at Balurmath in Hazaribagh.

Mir Alimuzzaman, officer-in-charge of Hazaribagh Police Station, said police were interrogating the four detainees.

A case was filed against eight people, including the four, in connection with provoking the girl to commit suicide, the police official said.

BCL men

FROM PAGE 16

demanding the VC employs them.

Intiaz Basunia, president of Shahid Mukhtar Ilahi Hall, and his supporters Titas Chandra and Foyzal Azam Fain, among others, took part in the procession.

Leaders of BCL, a pro-Awami League student front, claimed the VC had assured them of jobs at the university, but he didn't keep his promise.

Chhatra League men also threatened to launch tougher agitation if their demand was not met.

However, Tusher Kibria, president of the BRU BCL, said they were not with the agitating students.

Talking to The Daily Star over the phone, VC Prof Nurun Nabi said BCL men confined him to his office soon after he returned there after wrapping up a meeting with university officials and teachers.

He said he could not employ anyone violating the employment rules of the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh.

ABM Zahidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Rangpur Sadar Police Station, said a police team was deployed on the campus to avoid any law and order problems.

Treats or infects?

FROM PAGE 16

"Toilets are sodden and unclean...they are not cleaned regularly. We have to cover our noses [with something] whenever we use them," Jyotsna Begum, a patient's attendant, told The Daily Star correspondents when they visited the hospital in the capital's Mohakhali recently.

Sheikh Shah Alam, father of a boy who was admitted there with chickenpox, said both patients and attendants had to use the same toilets. Another attendant said there was no separate toilet for male and female patients and their relatives.

The Daily Star correspondents saw no soaps, let alone any toilet paper inside the toilets.

Although signboards on each floor of the hospital request people not to spit, there were betel leaf spit and dry cough at numerous places.

Just outside the building, some children and teenagers were playing cricket near the compound adjacent to the drain, oblivious to the risk of getting infected from the water there.

A man was urinating into the drain.

The cricket ball was frequently falling into the drain water and those young boys were playing with the same ball.

"We play cricket here almost every day. The drain is always dirty. Whenever the ball goes there, we collect it using a paper or a piece of cloth and then start playing again after cleaning the ball," said one of the boys, Saiful Islam, who studies in class-IV in a local school.

Another boy, present there, echoed Saiful's statement.

Asked about the hygiene issue, both the boys looked confused.

There was ankle-deep mud at the entrance to the hospital. The road to the building was also in a poor shape.

Contacted, health experts said such negligence over hygiene on the part of the authorities might put the health of patients, their attendants and those who live near the hospital at risk.

When Prof Mahmudur Rahman, former director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research, was briefed about the condition of the IDH, he said such an unhealthy environment was not acceptable in any hospital, especially in a hospital dealing with infectious diseases.

"Such an unhealthy environment helps various diseases to spread," he said, adding that, "If a general hospital is cleaned twice a day, the hospital [IDH] in Mohakhali should be cleaned

four times every day."

The hospital authorities should take immediate steps to keep the environment of the hospital and the surrounding areas clean and hygienic, he said.

Contacted, Prof Shah Alam Talukder, who joined as the hospital superintendent in February, acknowledged the problem.

"The entire hospital is facing problem. We [doctors and staffers] are also facing the risk of getting infected. But we have nothing to do because we have a huge crisis of manpower, mainly cleaners," he told The Daily Star on April 30.

As his attention was drawn to the patients and their attendants using the same toilets, he said the practice could be dangerous.

"But what can we do now? This is the system of this hospital. We have to change this system. We are trying our best to keep the hospital clean," he said.

Shah Alam also said he had already written to his higher authorities for recruiting 48 new doctors and staffers and that he would be writing to them soon again about the poor condition of hygiene at the hospital.

He emphasised on constructing a separate building for outdoor patients to avoid infection. He then claimed almost all of the hospital land had been grabbed by local influential people over the years.

Currently, there is no ambulance service at the hospital, said sources there.

Initially, it had three ambulances. One of them, however, went out of order about 15 years ago. The other two suffered the same fate around six to 10 years ago, a hospital source said.

A few months ago, the government handed over a new ambulance to the hospital authorities. But the vehicle remains out of operation due to lack of driver and fuel allocation, the source added.

Asked, Shah Alam claimed they did not get adequate allocation for the driver and fuel.

The government established the 100-bed hospital in Mohakhali in 1972 for treating tetanus, measles, diphtheria, viral hepatitis, chickenpox and hydrophobia diseases. Later, the hospital began providing care to HIV patients.

The seven-storey building is the country's lone hospital where beds are available for patients round the clock with a bed occupancy rate of around 62 to 72 percent, IDH sources said.

Indian HC judge

FROM PAGE 16

direction given by a seven-judge bench to undergo medical check-up regarding his mental health in the contempt case.

"I do not know whether the gentleman, who was asked yesterday, would submit to the order of the seven-judge bench of this court," he said.

The seven-judge bench, headed by Chief Justice JS Khehar, had taken note of the "tenor" of Justice Karnan's orders and press briefings and directed his medical check-up by doctors with police support, as the Calcutta High Court Judge did not appear before it.

Reacting to the order, a belligerent Justice Karnan had on Tuesday said in Kolkata that he will not appear before such a medical board as directed by the Supreme Court.

Taking note of the fact that Justice Karnan has been passing orders despite being restrained and holding press briefings, the top court had said that "the tenor of press briefings as also purported orders passed by him indicate that he may not be in a position to defend himself."

"Therefore, we consider it in the fitness of the matter to require him to be medically examined. We hereby direct the Calcutta Hospital to constitute a board of doctors to examine Shri Justice C S Karnan and submit a report," the bench had said.

Talking to mediapersons in Kolkata on Tuesday, Justice Karnan had said he will not appear before a medical board

Govt to root out

FOR EXAMINING HIS HEALTH AS DIRECTED BY THE TOP COURT.

He had also threatened to "pass suo motu suspension order against the Director General of Police (DGP) of West Bengal, if the DGP functions against my wish."

Justice Karnan had on March 31 appeared before the top court which granted him four weeks' time to respond to the contempt notice while rejecting the submission that his administrative and judicial powers be restored.

Refusing to appear before the top court again, Justice Karnan had on April 13 issued an order asking the seven judges to appear before him on April 28 and then extended the date of appearance to May 1.

SSC results

FROM PAGE 2

one needs to type the word SSC, then the first three letters of the respective board (for example DHA for the Dhaka Board), leave a space and type the roll number, another space and year in 4 digits (e.g. 2017) and then send the message to 16222.

Around 17.86 lakh students under 10 education boards appeared for this year's SSC and equivalent exams which began on February 2.

The theoretical exams ended on March 2 while practical exams were held from March 4 to 11.

NOTICE BY JS

Only 4 out of 47 MPs vacate NAM flats

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Only four out of 47 lawmakers including a minister have responded to a notice issued by the Jatiya Sangsad secretariat to the lawmakers to vacate their NAM flats as they are not staying there, a parliamentary committee said yesterday.

Expressing dissatisfaction with the MPs, the House Committee of the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday at a meeting decided to cancel allotment of all 47 MPs as they are not residing at their respective flats on Manik Mia Avenue.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on April 15 asked the lawmakers to remain careful about the use of NAM flats and warned that the allocation of flats would be cancelled if MPs do not reside there.

"The name of those MPs, who have taken allocations but aren't staying in their NAM flats, would be deleted... Instead of residing in the flats themselves, they would keep personal staff, drivers or domestic help in the flats -- it isn't right," she said.

Following the warning from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on April 15, the JS committee issued the notice on April 23, sources at the parliament secretariat said.

Chief Whip ASM Feroz, who is also chief of the House Committee of Jatiya Sangsad, told reporters after the meeting that that only four have so far responded to the notice served by the parliament secretariat.

"In the meeting we have called upon all the relevant MPs to vacate their flats in line with the prime minister's directive," he added.

The meeting recommended taking additional security measures at Parliament Members residences on Manik Mia Avenue and Nakhhalpara. The meeting asked authorities concerned that no unwanted person can enter or reside at these residences.

Opposition Chief Whip Tajul Islam Chowdhury, committee members Abdus Shahid, Nur-e-Alam Chowdhury, Whip Mahubub Ara Gini, Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, Aslamul Haque and Talukder Md Younus also attended the meeting yesterday.

Govt to root out

FROM PAGE 16

The programme was organised to demonstrate the government's firm stance against terrorism and militancy, and highlight its various development initiatives.

The videoconference brought people of 1,000 unions together as it connected 6,116 points of 13 districts.

Hasina said militancy and terrorism emerged as a global problem, not a problem for Bangladesh alone.

She regretted that bright students and children from well-off families were getting involved in militancy and terrorism.

Terming Islam a religion of peace, she said the religion never believes in terrorism.

The PM said Bangladesh has been able to avert many big terror attacks due to timely and effective steps taken by the law enforcement agencies.

Hasina urged all to stay alert to militancy and terrorism, and help the government and law enforcers tackle the menaces.

She called upon the teachers and guardians to take proper care of their students and children so that they don't take the path of militancy and terrorism.

She said if militancy and terrorism raise their ugly heads here again, it would earn a bad name for the country.

No deals signed with India against country's interest

Prime minister tells parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday in parliament said none of the agreements or memorandums of understanding (MoU) signed with India during her recent visit to New Delhi went against the country's interest.

In reply to lawmakers' queries, she said the agreements and MoUs had already come out in the media.

"The statement of a vested quarter terming the instruments as against the country's interest is untrue, imaginative and out of ignorance to mislead the country's people," she said in a written reply.

"...the Awami League cannot sign anything going against the country's interests," she said.

Hasina said the Teesta water sharing

agreement was very important for the Awami League government, which was sincerely working for it to be signed.

"Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi also assured that the Teesta deal would be signed during the tenure of the incumbent governments," she said.

Hasina said the 35 agreements and MoUs signed would play a very positive role in improving people's living standards.

Replying to a supplementary question, she said Bangladesh has defence agreements with countries such as China, Russia, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

The defence agreement with China was signed when BNP was in power, keeping people completely in the dark and without any discussion in parliament, she said.

'Man behind' the suicide

FROM PAGE 16

Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Sreepur Police Station, said Shaheed was released around 9:00pm.

Hazrat along with Ayesha committed suicide near Sreepur Railway Station on April 29, as the 55-year-old man got extremely depressed for not getting any response from the authorities to his repeated complaints about attempts to violate the minor girl.

Later, Halima filed a case against seven people, including Faruk and his brother Shahid, for provoking her husband to commit suicide.

Talking to this correspondent yesterday, she said, "Police arrested the wrong person."

She said Shahid, son of Momtaz Uddin from Karnapur village, is one of the seven accused in the case, not the detained Shaheed, son of Nasir Uddin.

Shaheed works as an electrician in Shreepur Bazar.

Earlier, police arrested Abul Hossain, member of Goshinga Union Parishad, who was accused of not taking any steps despite getting complaints from the couple against Faruk. Abul was placed on a two-day remand on Tuesday.

Halima alleged that four months ago, Faruk took her daughter on his bicycle for a ride to her house. But he instead took her to a jungle and tried to violate her. As Ayesha screamed, Faruk ran away leaving the bicycle that fell on one of her legs, injuring her.

Meanwhile, a four-member committee led by Additional Deputy Inspector General (Dhaka range) of police Mohammad Ali was formed yesterday to investigate the matter.

The probe committee talked to Halima for around two hours and recorded her statement.

"We have been asked to submit a report within seven working days," said Mohammad Ali.

Policemen were deployed at Halima's house for ensuring her security, he added.

Shankar Saran Saha, deputy director of Social Welfare Department, told this newspaper yesterday that Halima

was given three months' widow allowance in advance.

Visiting Halima's house on Monday, National Human Rights Commission Chairman Kazi Rezaul Hoque said frustration, resentment and shame had pushed Hazrat into committing suicide along with his daughter.

[Our Gazipur correspondent contributed to this report]

Trump, Putin discuss

FROM PAGE 16

Trump ordered 59 cruise missiles launched in retaliation for a chemical weapons attack that the United States blamed on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, reported Reuters.

The attacked prompted protests from Assad ally Russia, which blamed Syrian rebels for the use of outlawed nerve gas and said Assad was not at fault.

The White House said the two leaders agreed that "all parties must do all they can to end the violence" in Syria.

"The conversation was a very good one, and included the discussion of safe, or de-escalation, zones to achieve lasting peace for humanitarian and many other reasons," a White House statement said.

Trump during his presidential campaign last year frequently said he wanted safe zones established for Syrian refugees, paid for by Gulf states, to alleviate any need for the refugees to move elsewhere, including to the United States.

Candidate Trump had also expressed a desire for a US alliance with Russia to fight Islamist militants, a goal that has been elusive since he took office on Jan 20.

With a ceasefire ever elusive in Syria, the White House said Washington would send a representative to ceasefire talks in Astana, Kazakhstan, today.

The State Department said acting Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs Stuart Jones will attend as an observer.

Meanwhile, Syrian rebels yesterday said they were suspending their participation as a latest round of peace talks began in Kazakhstan, with the warring sides set to discuss a plan to create safe zones.

"The rebel delegation is suspending the meetings because of the violent air strikes on civilians. The suspension will continue until shelling stops

across all Syria," a rebel source in the Kazakh capital Astana told AFP.

Syrian government and rebel delegations gathered yesterday for the start of a fourth round of talks sponsored by regime backers Russia and Iran and opposition supporter Turkey.

The latest round of negotiations began with a series of bilateral meetings and was set to focus on a Russian plan to establish "de-escalation zones" around the war-torn country.

A source close to the opposition provided AFP with an Arabic-language version of a proposal drafted by Russia, which an opposition official confirmed was being discussed yesterday.

It calls for the creation of "de-escalation zones" in rebel-held territory in the northwestern province of Idlib, in parts of Homs province in the centre, in the south, and in the opposition enclave of Eastern Ghouta near Damascus.

The aim is to "put an immediate end to the violence" and "provide the conditions for the safe, voluntary return of refugees".

The designated zones would also see the immediate delivery of relief supplies and medical assistance.

Some officials

FROM PAGE 1

Chowdhury and Munir Ahmed Chowdhury, a prosecutor of Joypurhat court, also spoke at the occasion.

The speakers told the chief justice that the proceedings of the Joypurhat court were getting lengthier for a shortage of judges and that was causing lawyers to suffer every day.

Nripendranath said posts of five judges had long remained vacant in Joypurhat court.

Chief Justice SK Sinha in response said the vacant posts could not be filled for various reasons.