



Students and interns of MH Samorita Medical College and Hospital sit in protest on the street in front of the college in Tejgaon Industrial area yesterday. The interns demand a raise in their honourarium while the students are protesting fee hike every year, among other issues. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Menacing Mockbul

FROM PAGE 1

and hospital, intimidated the demonstrators on the street in front of the college protesting fee hike every year, according to witnesses and as seen in video clips.

He was seen pointing fingers at the students and saying, "The government has expressed solidarity with me ... they said 'blow off the heads of those who behave badly'. Police are here, they will blow your heads off."

About 100 interns and students took to the street in front of the college in Tejgaon Industrial area around 9:30am, chanting slogans against the college authorities for not meeting their demands.

Mockbul went there several times yesterday but the demonstrators

ignored his threats and vowed to continue their protest. He repeatedly misbehaved with them and hurled abuse. He even tore up a leaflet with the demands of the students.

At one stage, he cited the recent closure of Comilla and Pabna medical colleges and used a slang word to say that nothing happened to the principals of the colleges.

"You'll lose an academic year. You'll be expelled," he said, singling out one of the demonstrators.

His remarks only made the students and interns shout and express their determination to keep going.

Mockbul, also known as Alhaj Mockbul, then called a female student by name and threatened her.

"Will you not go to hostel? You have

to stay here?" he was telling the student as seen in the footage.

The students and interns left the place around 1:45pm after the college authorities said their demands would be met.

Their demands include: minimum allowance of Tk 15,000 for MBBS interns and Tk 10,000 for BDS interns, highest Tk 20 fine for being absent for one day, ensuring free treatment of the students, 60 percent discount for their parents, and fixing the 10th of every month as the last date for paying fees, and not taking Tk 78,000 "extra fee" from those who fail their final exams.

The Daily Star called Mockbul several times but none received the calls. There was no response to texts sent to him.

## They will get MPO

FROM PAGE 16

He further said, "We have stalled the MPO-inclusion because it is beneficial only for the teachers; it's not beneficial to the system. I want to make it beneficial to the system and that is why I will attach some conditions so that the school system can benefit."

There is no scope of bringing any new educational institution under MPO facilities in the existing policy, he added.

Coming down hard on the MPO system, Muhith said it is the salary that the government gives to the teachers, but they were not sure how many of the institutions had adequate classrooms.

Citing an example, he said during a visit to a primary school, he found five teachers teaching students of many classes in a single room.

The finance minister said it is important for the country's education sector to make sure that students of different grades sit in separate classes even if it means taking classes "under trees".

The MPO is the government's share in the payroll of non-government educational institutions. Under the scheme, the government gives 100 percent basic salaries to the teachers of non-government schools. The teachers also get a small amount a month as allowances through the MPO.

After a suspension by the then BNP-led alliance government for around six years, the MPO facility was revived by the Awami League-led government in 2010, as it was one of the party's electoral pledges. A total of 1,624 secondary and higher secondary private schools and colleges were also included in the MPO.

According to leaders of Non-MPO Shikhya Pratishthan Shikhyak Karmachari Federation, there are 5,242 non-MPO educational institutions, where around 80,000 teachers are working without any pay, some for more than a decade.

After staging a sit-in for five consecutive days in front of the Jatiya Press Club, the agitating teachers and employees of government-recognised educational institutions started the hunger strike on December 31. They withdrew the strike on January 5 upon the PM's assurance.

The education ministry and its directorate have already started working on the MPO-enlistment. They are already preparing a list of non-MPO institutions after analysing their current status -- infrastructure, number of students and teachers, and their academic performance, said sources.

They will sit with the finance minis-

try soon over the issue and will start bringing the new institutions under MPO on the basis of the fund they get, they added.

"ABSURD" AND "BOGUS" DEMAND Under the banner of "Besharkari Shikhkha Jatiyakaran Liaison Forum", a platform of five teacher's organisations, teachers of MPO-enlisted institutions started a demonstration on January 10 in front of Jatiya Press Club demanding nationalisation of private education.

The leaders of the platform said they will go for a hunger strike today if they did not get any assurance from the government about meeting their demand.

"We are going on an indefinite hunger strike tomorrow [today] as per our earlier announcement," Golam Mostofa Shaon, one of the leaders of the platform, told The Daily Star last night.

Terming the demand "absurd", the finance minister said the government does not have the capacity and the teachers will have to understand that.

"It's just bogus," he said.

"There is a policy on nationalisation and on the basis of the policy, the government has been nationalising new schools every year. We will follow the policy while nationalising the institutions. We will not accept their demand," he added.

## Akheri Munajat offered in Bangla

FROM PAGE 1

surrounding areas ahead of the munajat.

THE PRAYERS

Mawlana Zobayer conducted the prayers in Bangla in addition to Arabic and Urdu. In previous years, Mawlana Zobayer had been translating sermons into Bangla for the devotees.

Mawlana Saad had been conducting the munajat since 2015 after the demise of Mawlana Zobayerul Hasan, another Indian Islamic scholar and top leader of Tabligh Jamaat. Mawlana Saad went back to New Delhi on Saturday in the face of protests by a section of Tabligh followers who claimed that he had made "controversial comments about the Quran, and Sunnah" to audiences in India.

Devotees started to throng the Ijtima venue from early morning. They walked, took trains and other means of transportations to reach the venue.

Sultan Uddin, a fruit vendor at Mirer Bazar of Gazipur, said he walked

three kilometers to reach Tongi after Fazr prayers. Later, he took part in the munajat sitting on the road, he said.

Devotees, including foreigners, attended the Akheri Munajat braving the bitter cold. A serene silence dawned upon the congregation as the final prayers began, which was made available for all to hear through loudspeakers.

People living in the vicinity joined in. Some joined the prayers through via mobile phones and electronic media.

Tens of thousands of devotees also participated in the Munajat from nearby places, including Abdullahpur, Tongi Railway Station and Airport Railway Station.

Many were happy that the final prayer was delivered in Bangla this year.

Abdul Aziz, a resident of Manda, said he had taken part in the Akheri Munajat on a number of occasions "but this was the first time I could fully understand the meaning of the munajat".

Shariful Islam, another devotee from Gazipur, said prayers in Bangla

helped him understand the deeper meaning of forgiveness sought by Mawlana Zobayer.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina took part in the prayers with her family members and relatives from the Gono Bhaban.

Ministers, state ministers, Awami League leaders, and top officials of the Prime Ministers' Office and the Gono Bhaban also joined.

PRAYERS BEYOND TURAG

Tens of thousands of devotees joined the prayers from across the country. People took part in the final prayer on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway from the terraces of their houses, footbridges, alleys and lanes, factories, markets, from their cars, and from boats on the Turag.

Thousands dropped whatever they were doing, and joined in from wherever they were.

Most educational institutions, factories and offices near the venue remained closed yesterday.

Those who used to criticise Bangladesh as a "bottomless basket" now identify the country as a model of development, he added.

Asked, CPD Distinguished Fellow Mustafizur Rahman said the think tank does not publish its report with any specific time in mind.

"We have been publishing the Independent Review of Bangladesh's Development [IRBD] periodically since 1995." And the achievements and challenges of the country are presented objectively in the IRBD reports, he said.

"By analysing the government data, we also provide constructive suggestions for the country's advancement," Mustafizur said.

## Rab identifies

FROM PAGE 1

with the Election Commission database and confirmed his identity, Lt Col Emranul Hasan, commanding officer-of Rab-3, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Mezba had been missing for the last two months, and his father filed a general diary in this connection, Nazrul Islam, inspector (investigation) of Monohorganj Police Station, told our Comilla correspondent.

Mezba had been living in Dhaka for at least 10 years. He used to visit his family in every two or three months in Bhadua village in Monohorganj upazila, said locals.

A Rab team from Dhaka brought his family members from the village to Dhaka to identify the deceased whose body was kept at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College after an autopsy, said Kamal Hossain, chairman of Hasnabad Union Parishad.

Mezba, introducing himself as Jahid, rented a room of a flat on the fourth floor of six-storey "Ruby Villa" in Nakhla para, several hundred yards from the Prime Minister's Office.

Mezba and his two accomplices were shot dead during an exchange of fire with Rapid Action Battalion men. Mezba alias Jahid started staying in the flat on January 4 and his two accomplices joined him four days later.

The identities of the two others are yet to be known.

According to Rab, the three "militants" holing up in the flat were planning to carry out attacks on key establishments in the capital.

After the raid on Friday, Rab Director General Benazir Ahmed said the "militants" tried to blow up the flat by exploding a grenade on a gas burner.

A case was filed against the three and some unknown people with Tejgaon Police Station on Saturday night under the anti-terrorism act.

## Ancient cult

FROM PAGE 16

the impression of the temple's superstructure.

A light display in the recess of the temple depicts the cult statue of Mithras slaying a bull, an image that was the central icon of the cult.

It is believed that soldiers and merchants gathered in these secret temples drinking, feasting and performing rituals that may have involved simulating death and rebirth, and even some nakedness.

"It was a mystery cult, you were initiated into it and you had to keep your knowledge secret," Sophie Jackson, lead archaeological consultant from the Museum of London Archaeology, tells CNN.

"They were very effective at keeping their knowledge a secret, so we really don't know a lot about what went on in the Mithraeum [temple], apart from the archaeological artifacts."

The little that is known about the fraternity can be gleaned from the remains of the 400-odd mithraic temples -- or mithraea -- spanning Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

Pinecones, incense and evidence of hallucinogens found in various temples paint a picture of some of the mystical rites that may have been practiced in these clandestine temples.

"Most mithraea were windowless," explains Jackson. "They're meant to represent the cave in which Mithras killed the primordial bull, perhaps bringing life to the world and fertility."

Variations of the bull-slaying cult statue -- known as the Tauroctony -- feature a scorpion on the bull's testicles, a dog and snake licking the blood, and various zodiac signs and allusions to Sol the sun god.

The London Mithraeum was built in 250 AD but discovered by accident in 1954, during excavations of the rubble on Victoria Street in the aftermath of the Second World War.

## A puzzling

FROM PAGE 16

officials, including Lohagara Police Station Officer-in-charge Md Shahajahan and its sub-inspectors Helal Khan and Wasim, why they should not be ordered to give the victim Tk 20 lakh in compensation.

The home secretary is also a respondent, said Manzill.

Belal is now on bail.

Talking to The Daily Star, Manzill said mobile courts can punish people only after finding them guilty on the spot, meaning the executive magistrate must be present when the crime is committed.

But Belal was sentenced through a "concocted mobile court" when he was already in police custody after his arrest in another case, he added.

"This is clearly against the constitution and the law," he noted.

Contacted, UNO Mahub said he sentenced Belal after police and locals caught him while smoking cannabis, and brought him to his office on October 14.

Belal confessed to the offence, he claimed, adding that neither police nor Belal informed him about his arrest the previous day.

Asked why and exactly when Belal was taken before the mobile court, OC Shahajahan said he could not reply to that question without going through the papers.

## Tigers take on Zim

FROM PAGE 1

On paper, Zimbabwe are the underdogs in this series and the hosts should be favourites for this match as they have strung a streak of 11 wins out of 12 at home against the Zimbabweans with one game washed out. Zimbabwe's last win in Bangladesh against the hosts had come way back in 2010.

However the visitors' first-ever ODI series win over the Lankans in July last year and the return of experienced wicket-keeper batsman Brendon Taylor and pacer Kyle Jarvis in the side will certainly boost their confidence.

Apart from these two cricketers, the likes of Sikandar Raza, skipper Graeme Cremer and opening batsman Hamilton Masakadza, who has been lethal against the Tigers on most occasions, will likely play crucial roles for the visitors.

Although Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and his troops will be playing at the comfort of their home where they have been all but unbeatable over the last two-and-a-half years, the chilly weather may give them a tough time.

Considering the overhead conditions and the pitch, which is expected to assist the spinners while offering runs for the batsmen, the home side would be hoping to bank on their strengths, but according to skipper Mashrafe a decision on whether to bat or bowl should they win the toss might be dictated by the elements.

With regular opener Imrul Kayes ruled out of the first game due to a thumb injury, wicket-keeper batsman Anamul Haque is all set to partner Tamim Iqbal in the opening stand after having scored heavily in domestic circuit recently.

## Bangladesh among 83

FROM PAGE 16

the scale of this operation: more than 12 million boxes are affected," he said, adding that distributors would no longer have to sort through the produce to find the contaminated powder.

"They know that everything has to be removed from the shelves," Besnier said.

Besnier, who was summoned to the French finance ministry on Friday, promised compensation for all the families affected.

He said that the consequences of this health crisis for consumers, including babies under six months, were at the forefront of his mind. "It is for us, for me, a great concern," he told the Journal du Dimanche.

Hundreds of lawsuits have been filed against the group by families who say their children got salmonella poisoning after drinking powdered milk made by the company.

So far French officials have reported 35 cases of infants getting salmonella from the powder, while one case has been reported in Spain and another is being investigated in Greece.

An association representing victims says the authorities are underestimating the number of cases.

"There are complaints and there will be an investigation with which we will fully collaborate. We never thought to act otherwise," Besnier said.

Created in 1933 by Besnier's grandfather, Lactalis has become an industry behemoth with annual sales of some 17 billion euros (\$20.6 billion), with products including Galbani ricotta and mozzarella in Italy.

With 246 production sites in 47 countries, its list of products also features household names like President butter and Societe roquefort.

Two of those brands, Picot and Milumel baby milk, were the subject of

## White House pushes back over Trump North Korea quote

AFP, Washington

The White House on Saturday denied and corrected a quote attributed to President Donald Trump that suggested he had a good relationship with North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un.

"I probably have a very good relationship with Kim Jong-Un," Trump was quoted as telling The Wall Street Journal in an interview on Thursday.

But Press Secretary Sarah Sanders insisted that Trump said "I'd," not "I" as the newspaper reported.

Both The Wall Street Journal and the White House posted audio recordings of Trump's remarks on Twitter. These, while not completely clear, appeared to support Sanders' account.

Sanders had earlier tweeted a written message disputing the newspaper's article.

"President Trump said, I'd probably have a very good relationship with Kim Jong Un of North Korea. I'D -- I'D -- I'D. NOT I!" the message read, with "I'D" in red ink, under a red banner reading "FAKE NEWS."

Mockingly mimicking the newspaper's front page, it then reads "THE WALL STREET JOURNAL -- FAKE NEWS IS AT IT AGAIN! -- FALSELY QUOTING PRESIDENT TRUMP."

Washington and Pyongyang are in a standoff over North Korea's missile and nuclear programs, which could be used to target the United States and its allies.

According to the Tigers' technical director Khaled Mahmud, the team management wants ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan to bat at the number three position due to his aggressive style of play, with Mushfiqur Rahim likely to bat at number four and Mahmudullah at the number five position. Sabbir Rahman will play the role of a finisher alongside Nasir Hossain in the lower-middle order.

The team management may opt for three pacers in the eleven in order to strengthen the batting line-up, with left-arm seamer Mustafizur Rahman certain to make a comeback after missing out on the ODI series in South Africa due to an ankle injury while pacer Rubel Hossain is expected to retain his place in the eleven alongside Mashrafe.

But it will be a test of mental strength for the Tigers to stage a dominating start in the post-Hathurusingha era.

"There is always pressure when you are playing for your country. It is a good thing because the best performance comes out in a pressure situation. But I think many of our players have played under more intense pressure. We didn't get what we wanted from our last tour but I'm hopeful we will be able to execute better this time," Mashrafe told reporters ahead of their training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National stadium yesterday.

"The dressing room is mostly relaxed. We don't have the pressure we felt in the past. I don't want them to be too relaxed because sometimes nervous energy can bring out the best in a player inside the field," added the skipper.

chaotic international recalls issued in mid-December after dozens of children fell sick.

The scandal deepened this month when French investigative weekly Le Canard Enchaîné reported that state inspectors had given a clean bill of health to the Lactalis site in Craon, northwest France, in early September.

They failed to find the salmonella bacteria that had been detected by Lactalis's own tests in August and November, which were not reported to the authorities.

The company said it was not legally bound to report the contamination.

## Ebtedai madrasa

FROM PAGE 16

Around 3:00pm, the two along with the 20 teachers were invited to the ministry where the minister requested to go home.

"We will not go home. We have even requested the minister to give us an assurance that our madrasas will be nationalised in phases. But the minister did not agree with that," Ruhul said.

Meanwhile, at least 166 teachers became sick and eight of them were given intravenous saline drips. Six teachers had been hospitalised until yesterday, said the president.

There are around 48,000 teachers in about 10,000 madrasas who are not getting any pay, since the institutions got registered under the Madrasa Education Board in 1984.

In 1994, some 6,776 teachers of 1,519 madrasas started getting Tk 500 as allowances.

In 2013, the government elevated the amount to Tk 1,000. In 2016-17, the government increased the allowances of headteachers to Tk 2,500 and assistant headteachers to Tk 2,300.

But the rest of the teachers have not been paid any allowance from the government since 1984, said the teachers.

## Some teachers

FROM PAGE 16

queries, Nahid said, "There is a chance of leaking question papers from the BG Press, but some teachers are involved in the incident to embarrass the government."

In response to another question, the minister informed the House that the inclusion of non-MPO schools in the Monthly Pay Order facility was now under the government's consideration.

He said a policy for formulating the organogram of educational institutions and for MPO benefits had been prepared following the prime minister's directives. "On January 1, 2018, the policy was sent to the finance ministry for required opinions and approval."

Responding to another query, Nahid said the teacher-student ratio in the country's public universities is 1:20.

Meanwhile, Primary and Mass Education Minister Mostafizur Rahman yesterday told parliament that posts of around 20,847 headmasters lie vacant at primary schools.

Answering to a question, he said according to the Annual Primary School Census-2017, the dropout rate in the country's primary education is 18.8 percent.

Poverty, unawareness, child labour and illiteracy are among the main reasons behind the dropouts, the minister said.

The government has taken up different programmes at the field-level to prevent the dropouts, he added.

## 'CPD doesn't see dev of the country'

FROM PAGE 16

all," he mentioned.

Facing a volley of questions from journalists, a visibly annoyed Muhith termed the CPD findings "all rubbish".

In its survey published yesterday, the CPD said the economy has come under pressure due to the banking sector crisis, inflation and soaring import.

The banking sector is suffering from cronyism, the think tank said, adding that irregularities and embezzlement of public funds are taking place with influential people involved in it.

Yesterday, Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed said the CPD disappointed people of the country.

"The CPD does not see development in the country," the minister said

at a press briefing at his secretariat office after the publication of the CPD findings.

Tofail said the World Bank, noted economists, and globally renowned research organisations have all been praising the government's development activities.

Poverty rate in the country declined to 22.4 percent last year from 43 percent in 2006. At the same time, the ultra-poverty rate also dropped to 11.9 percent from 17.6 percent, he mentioned.

The CPD has eventually helped the opposition by publishing the report, Tofail said. "There is no difference between the statements of the BNP and the CPD."