



Devotees, in their thousands, heading towards the Biswa Ijtema ground on the Turag yesterday. The photo was taken at Tongi. The second phase of the Ijtema ends today with Akheri Munajat.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Teachers with MPO go for token class boycott

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Teachers and employees of the MPO-enlisted schools and colleges on hunger strike are going to take any classes today.

Besarkari Shikha Jatiyakaran Liaison Forum, a platform of six organisations of teachers and employees leading the movement, took the decision on Friday as they did not get response to their demand from the prime minister.

They would also refrain from taking part in any official activities in their respective institutions, said Abdul Khalek, convener of the forum.

"It is a symbolic boycott for a day. We do not want to cause disruption in the classes. We expect to recover the classes in the upcoming days,"

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Woman on her way to comfort the grieving dies under bus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A housewife lost her life yesterday after a bus ran her over in city's Malibagh area. She was on her way with her husband to the home of a deceased family friend and pay her last respect.

Runa Akhter, 32, wife of autorickshaw driver Bachchu Miah, on receiving the news of their friend Mosaddek's death went out around 9:00am from their Rampura home.

Runa's son Raihan Rahman told The Daily Star, "After getting down from the rickshaw, my father was paying the fare when my mother started to cross the street."

A bus at speed hit her and she died on the spot, he said.

Proloy Kumar, officer-in-charge (OC) of Rampura Police Station, said police seized the bus but the driver and his assistant have fled.

The family lived in a rented house in West Rampura. They have two children.

Two hurt in CU factional clash

CU CORRESPONDENT

Two Chhatra League activists were injured in a factional clash of the student organisation on Chittagong University campus last night.

The injured were identified as Shafiqul Islam Miraz, a second-year student of human resource department, and Litan Roy, a third-year student of statistics department, said Mostafa Kamal, on-duty doctor at the university medical centre.

Tension had been running high on campus since the afternoon following an attack on a BCL man by members of a rival group.

Police said several chases and counter-chases took place around 9:30pm between the two groups. They hurled brick chunks at each other, leaving the two BCL activists injured.

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More support needed

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registered and makeshift camps and spoke with Rohingyas and locals. She also visited registration centres, health and food distribution centres, children centres and women-friendly spaces.

While these efforts are helping the Rohingyas cope, they will need more support to rebuild their lives, according to the WB statement.

The people and the government of Bangladesh have shown great generosity to the Rohingyas in their hour of need. As soon as the crisis broke, with the government, the local and international Non-Governmental Organisations [NGOs] and development partners extended support. This helped save thousands of lives.

"But the needs are much greater. If the government seeks help, we can mobilise more resources to address the needs of both the host communities and the Rohingyas in a way that will continue to benefit the locals after the Rohingyas leave," she said.

The WB official concluded her five-day visit to Bangladesh yesterday.

REFUSING TO RETURN HOME

Rohingya refugees at the Kutupalong camp in Cox's Bazar are balking at going back until Myanmar can guarantee their safety, among other demands listed in a petition drawn up by camp leaders and shown to Reuters.

Even as Myanmar gets ready to start receiving the Rohingya next week, more of them are fleeing continued military operations in Rakhine, newly arrived refugees said.

More than 100 Rohingyas from Rakhine fled into Bangladesh and scores more were waiting to cross the Naf river, they said.

'CONCENTRATION CAMPS'

Rohingyas insurgents yesterday said the repatriation plan was "not acceptable" and "the Burmese [Myanmarese] terrorist government was deceitfully and crookedly offering Rohingya to settle down in so-called temporary camps".

"Repatriated Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh will never be able to settle down in their own ancestral land and villages, rather than spend-

ing not only the rest of their lives but also the lives of their next generations to come in those concentration camps," the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) said in a statement on Twitter.

Myanmar has said it would build a transit camp that can house 30,000 returnees before they are allowed to return to their "place of origin" or "nearest to their place of origin."

Paul Vrieze, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) spokesman in Myanmar, cautioned that the returnees must not be rushed out of Bangladesh "without the informed consent of refugees or the basic elements of lasting solutions in place".

"Further measures are also required to ensure safe, voluntary and sustainable repatriation of refugees to their places of origin and to address the underlying root causes of the crisis," he said.

The UNHCR, which is helping to administer the refugee camps, is not involved in the repatriation exercise between Bangladesh and Myanmar.

US government shuts down

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is reached to reopen the US government.

"Democrats are far more concerned with Illegal Immigrants than they are with our great Military or Safety at our dangerous Southern Border," Trump wrote in an early morning tweet.

"They could have easily made a deal but decided to play Shutdown politics instead. #WeNeedMore RepublicansIn18 in order to power through mess!"

"This is the One Year Anniversary of my Presidency and the Democrats wanted to give me a nice present," he added.

A deal had appeared likely on Friday afternoon, when Trump seemed to be close to an agreement with Democratic Senate minority leader Chuck Schumer on a measure to prevent the expulsion of undocumented migrants who arrived in the US as children -- from deportation.

The president shelved plans to fly to Florida to celebrate at his Mar-a-Lago estate the first anniversary of his inauguration to remain in Washington to ride out the storm.

Republicans have a tenuous one-seat majority in the Senate but would have needed to lure some Democrats to their side to get a 60 vote supermajority to bring the motion forward. They fell ten votes short.

The measure brought to Congress would have extended federal funding until February 16 and reauthorised for six years a health insurance program for poor children -- a long-time Democratic objective.

But it would have cut the Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals program, known as DACA, that affects Dreamers.

White House officials insisted

there was no urgency to fix DACA, which expires March 5.

There have been four government shutdowns since 1990. In the last one in 2013, more than 800,000 government workers were put on temporary leave.

International ratings agency Fitch said a partial shutdown was unlikely to affect America's AAA/stable rating for US sovereign debt.

Negotiations with the White House on a bipartisan compromise on DACA blew up last week after Trump reportedly referred to African nations and Haiti as "shithole countries."

The Senate was set to reconvene at noon yesterday, with McConnell seeking a new stop-gap measure to fund the government till February 8.

The following is a rundown of who is and isn't affected in a government shutdown:

DEFENSE, SECURITY AND BORDERS

The 1.5 million uniformed members of the US military, mostly in the Defense Department but also 40,000

with the Department of Homeland Security, will remain at work.

But a large number of civilians in both departments, including about three-fourths of the roughly 740,000 civilians who work for the Pentagon, will stay home.

Officials of the Customs and Border Patrol, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and US Citizenship and Immigration Services will remain on the job checking and processing people entering the country by land, sea and air.

KEY GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

The White House, Congress, federal courts and the Veterans Administration will all continue to operate. The US Postal Service will continue to deliver the mail.

TRAVEL

The Federal Aviation Administration, which oversees air traffic control, will remain at work, and airports will remain open for travellers.

PARKS AND MUSEUMS

According to tentative plans, national parks and museums will remain open, but some public employees at the parks could be furloughed while private contractors, who supply food and other services, will maintain operations.

HEALTH SERVICES

Disease monitoring and prevention will slow. About 61 percent of the staff of the Centers for Disease Control will be furloughed, according to The Washington Post, and much of the research-focused National Institutes of Health will be shuttered.

OTHER PUBLIC SERVICES

Other agencies will largely shut down, including the Internal Revenue Service, the Social Security Administration, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Education, the Commerce Department, the Labor Department, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

That means people and businesses will not get documents and permissions processed, contractors will have difficulty moving ahead on their projects, and disaster relief will slow.

Of a strange eviction

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Dhaka University campus residence on December 28.

The man caught her by the hand and started dragging her and said 'I have something to discuss with you', she said.

She asked him to be gentle, who he was and why he entered the house through the backdoor? The intruder did not answer.

"Within a few minutes, four or five women entered the house the same way and they together crammed me and my personal aides into one of the four bedrooms," said a distraught Habiba.

"I felt suffocated and thirsty and I don't know how I survived the shock."

Meanwhile, some more men, including a bearded one, entered the house and they beat up driver Sohel and gardener Delwar, who were confined to the bedroom with her, she said.

"While still in confinement, I heard noises of demolition all around my house," said Habiba.

After some time, the intruders took her and her aides out and shoved her into her car.

While getting out of the house, she saw a number of the men taking her almirahs and cabinets, containing family's valuables, like gold ornaments, cash and appliances, worth over Tk 1.5 crore and various original documents out of the house, she said.

"A construction equipment and over two dozen people were seen frantically demolishing the house," said Habiba, adding, "The entire house crumbled ... and it was all finished just over half an hour."

ABC Real Estates Ltd and MM Ispahani Ltd have in partnership undertaken a property development scheme to build nine 14-storey residential towers on five acres in the colony. The construction work began mid last year barring the house (house-12), the place where two towers are to be built.

This correspondent visited the colony and talked to the family members, MM Ispahani and ABC Real Estates officials time and again to find out what actually happened.

During a visit to the colony on January 10, it was seen that the house was just rubble with music records and a book still strewn in the debris.

Maruf Hossain Sorder, deputy commissioner of Ramna division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said a police team visited the site on the day of the incident.

On January 18, he said, "The investigation is still going on and we cannot say anything on the findings until the report is placed before a court."

When pointed out that police have not yet contacted the complainants, he said, "It is up to the investigating officer, he would do it as per his convenience."

Gardener of the family, Delwar Hossain, whom The Daily Star talked to on January 9, said it was a man with a cap and sunglasses, who oversaw the entire incident on December 16.

"An excavator and a number of labourers, both deployed at the colony's construction site, were used for demolishing the house and six pick-up trucks were used for taking the family belongings away," said Delwar.

He said he had identified a gardener and a driver of Ispahani company taking away two TV sets, said Delwar.

Another witness, Huq family driver Sohel, was ambiguous and tight-lipped.

Habiba in a case filed with Ramna police on December 17 said the attackers forced her to sign a number of blank stamped papers at gunpoint and took away important documents.

She was allowed to go to her daughter's home on Dhaka University campus with the car but the pick-up trucks full of household goods disappeared.

The case statement mentioned that the attackers took away the goods in four to five trucks and then broke the house down and damaging goods worth around Tk 30 lakh.

Syed Mujibul Huq's family, including four daughters and a son, have lived in the house for over four decades since 1974 as he was a shareholder director of MM Ispahani Ltd.

Talking to The Daily Star, Yasmin Huq, one of Mujibul Huq's daughters, who lives in Paris and is now in Dhaka, said the Victory-Day incident occurred while an eviction case filed by Free School Properties Ltd, a sister concern of MM Ispahani Ltd, was pending with a Dhaka court since 2013.

"The way they evicted our family, threw my mother out of the house and plundered all our generations-old family belongings was barbaric."

The house contained belongings of three generations, including 300-year-old gold and silver heirlooms, rare books, paintings, musical instruments, collection of rare music records and wedding trousseaus, she said.

"All my academic certificates, teaching materials and priceless mementos are all gone," said another heartbroken daughter Nazmeen Huq, an associate professor of English at Dhaka University.

Nazmeen had been living with her mother in the house.

Even though the construction site is guarded by security personnel of both

the companies, top officials of both the companies expressed their ignorance of the incident.

Habiba in the case accused Salman Ispahani, chairman of MM Ispahani Ltd, and two directors, Imad Ispahani and Sajid Ispahani, and unnamed chairman, managing director and a director of ABC Real Estates for the attack.

In a text conversation, Salman Ispahani, said, "All I can say is that neither we nor ABC are in the business of looting property and throwing people out using musclemen."

Asked, whether he was aware of the incident of eviction within the residential colony of his company, he said he was only aware of an eviction case pending with a court.

"We do not know who trespassed and demolished the house, as we have no staffers at the site," said Omar Hannan, a general manager of MM Ispahani Ltd, adding, "It is the business of ABC to look after the construction site with none from Ispahani."

Subhash Chandra Ghosh, director of ABC Real Estates Ltd, said they have no reason to plot the eviction of the family as they would not get any benefits from it. Because they have a couple of years' time to finish constructing seven other towers.

As to how the people got access to the house through a well-manned gate, he said day labourers of three subcontractors randomly enter and exit the premises day and night and security personnel did not suspect those who demolished the house.

When asked what the security guards did during the vandalism, looting and demolition of the house, Ghosh said, "They thought the occupants were vacating the house on their own."

About the excavator and labourers used for the demolition, Ghosh said those belonged to the sub-contractor.

"It is undeniable that a security lapse occurred in this regard," said Rashed Chowdhury, a director of ABC Real Estates Ltd.

The company could not provide any acceptable answer to why it has not taken actions against the security guards concerned even though a month had passed.

This correspondent visited the site around noon on December 30 as well and saw security personnel from both companies guarding the site.

An ABC security guard on duty said on the day of the incident, at least four security personnel, two each from ABC and Ispahani, were on duty at the gate of the colony, where ground excavation was going on.