

# Jute mill workers take to streets

Block roads, railways to press for payment of arrears, other demands

STAR REPORT

Workers of different state-owned jute mills yesterday blocked roads and railways in Chattogram, Khulna and Jashore to press home their nine-point demand, including payment of their arrears and implementation of the National Wage Scale-2015.

The agitators said they took to the streets as the authorities of Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) did not heed to their demands despite repeated appeals.

They also enforced a 72-hour work abatement from 8:00am yesterday.

Their other demands include paying gratuities and insurance claims of retired and late workers, reinstating the workers who lost jobs during previous workers' demonstrations, regularising the jobs of temporary workers and authorising the mills authorities to recruit workers.

Talking to The Daily Star, some workers said their wages remained unpaid for different periods ranging from six to 13 weeks.

Contacted, Mamunur Rashid, BJMC

general manger (marketing), said they were communicating with the textiles and jute ministry to find out the ways of fulfilling the workers' demands.

In Chattogram, workers of nine jute mills under the BJMC blockaded roads and railways at different points in Sitakunda upazila and the port city for one and a half hours, reports a staff correspondent from there.

They started demonstrations at 8:00am and halted Dhaka-bound Subarna Express, Sylhet-bound Paharika Express; blocked the Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Sitakunda and stopped a Chittagong University-bound shuttle train in front of Amin Jute Mills near the port city as part of their 72-hour strike that began yesterday.

Around 9:30am, they lifted the blockade, considering sufferings of HSC examinees and Chittagong University students, said Mohammad Mahbub, general secretary of collective bargaining agent (CBA) at Hafiz Jute Mills.

Arifur Rahman, CBA president of Amin Jute Mills, said the BJMC officials had promised to fulfill their demands

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Jute mill workers in Khulna blockade the Notun Rastar Mor area on the Khulna-Jashore highway as their 72-hour strike began yesterday.

PHOTO: DIPANKAR ROY

## Shab-e-Meraj today

BSS, Dhaka

The holy Shab-e-Meraj will be observed tonight across the country with due respect and religious fervour.

The Muslims every year on the 27th night of the Arabic month of Rajab observe the occasion. On this night, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had embarked on a special journey to meet Allah.

In the journey, the Prophet (PBUH) travelled on the "Buraq" to Heaven where Allah gave him instructions to take back to the faithful regarding the details of prayers.

Marking the holy night, Islamic Foundation (IF) will arrange a waz and milad mahfil on the importance and significance of Shab-e-Meraj at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque in the capital after Asar prayers, an IF press release said.

Imam of the mosque Hafez Moulana Mohammad Mohiuddin Qasim will deliver a lecture at the waz mahfil with IF secretary Kazi Nurul Islam in the chair.

## 'Khaleda's condition improving'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The physical condition of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is gradually improving, said doctors at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

BSMMU Director Brig Gen AK Mahbulul Haque said, "She [Khaleda] is doing better than yesterday.

"After further evaluation, we will decide on further medical attention that she would need."

The statement came a day after the three-time former prime minister was shifted to BSMMU.

Asked about BNP's allegation that Khaleda was not properly treated at BSMMU last year, Brig Gen Mahbulul said, "I joined here [BSMMU] only two weeks ago. I cannot make a comment over it without knowing anything.

"I think she is satisfied with the service we have given her. She is fluently talking with us and receiving us in a cordial manner."

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## Ex-CJ SK Sinha intended to stage judicial coup

Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said former chief justice Surendra Kumar Sinha had intended to stage a judicial coup.

"Two to two and a half years had been wasted and many development works hindered while tackling his [Sinha's] attempt," he said at a coordination meeting with officials of the legislative and parliamentary affairs division of the law ministry at its conference room in the secretariat.

Stressing the need for provision of higher training abroad for officials of the division, the law minister said his ministry would take initiatives in this regard.

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## 2 Bangladeshis on Forbes 30 Under 30 list

FROM PAGE 1

The CEO of Pathao, a popular app based ride-sharing platform that helps passengers reach their destinations on time, which is also a very popular food delivery platform, 29-year-old Hussain M Elius practically changed the face of Dhaka and eventually Chattogram, where inter-city commuting has always been a challenge.

Not only are more and more individuals opting to use the services of Pathao to reach destinations on time or for delivery purposes, Elius has also managed to provide jobs to many.

"Unofficially, we have become one of the largest employers in the country," said Elius to Forbes. Today, Pathao has raised over \$12.8 million from four rounds of funding and is valued at over \$100 million.

"Dhaka transportation has been lagging behind its international peers," says Elius, talking about how Pathao is eventually reaching out to the whole country. "Ride-sharing services are positively contributing to the traffic situation. There is an immense potential for the platform to



Hussain M Elius Abdullah Al Morshed

grow and reach a significant portion of the population.

"There is still a lot that can be done and we want to collaborate with the government and city corporations in designing a better transportation infrastructure. We need to work together to create long-lasting change and make people's lives better," he said.

In December 2017, the initiative had also won The Daily Star ICT Award in the category of ICT Startup.

On the other hand, Abdullah Al Morshed has been sketching, cartooning and producing artworks under his pen name Morshed Mishu ever since he was a child.

An assistant editor of the satirical

magazine "Unmad", the 25-year-old shot to international fame with his Global Happiness Project, where he would transform poignant and heart-breaking photographs of refugees or victims of war, to artworks where these same people would be seen happy and leading a regular life.

In the beginning of 2018, Mishu began to transform a photograph of a tearful son, in the arms of his helpless father in a warzone, to an illustration of the same father and son laughing together in a beautiful field, surrounded by flowers and sunshine.

He did not stop there. Yet another photograph of a young girl who died while trying to protect her baby sister, holding an oxygen mask on the baby's face, which had caused outrage all over the world, was transformed in to a lovely artwork of the same young girl bottle feeding her baby sister.

A photograph of a dead father and his baby son lying in the debris of their own home, turned out to be a warm bed, with the baby lying on the father's chest, napping the afternoon away,

thanks to Mishu's powerful strokes.

"Last year, many images were being shared by my friends on social media, which I could not unsee, even if I tried," says Mishu.

"I asked myself, what I really wanted to see. I wanted to see people smiling and happy. That's when I picked the photograph of the crying father, running away to safety while holding his child, most probably from Mosul, Iraq. I started to draw and turn it into a happy moment."

Morshed Mishu's artworks have been featured in exhibitions in Berlin and London. In July 2018, at the 40-year celebrations of Unmad, Mishu was honoured with an award for The Global Happiness Challenge, which garnered recognition in the media of Afghanistan, Albania, France, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kurdistan, Turkey, and Vietnam. Popular internet media and news companies such as AJ+, Bored Panda and Buzzfeed have also featured the project.

"Because of the mention in Forbes, I have been able to represent Bangladesh and I am very happy about

## Suprobhat bus conductor gives confessional statement

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The conductor of Suprobhat Paribahan yesterday confessed to a magistrate that he was driving the bus that ran over and killed university student Abrar Ahmed Chowdhury on March 19.

"I was driving the bus following the instruction of its owner as driver Mohammad Sirajul Islam was caught by passengers and handed him over to police after he had hit and injured a college girl in Banshtala area of Shahjadpur the same day," said conductor Yasin Ararat.

The college girl is Synthia Islam Mukta, 20, a student of Mirpur Ideal Girls' Laboratory Institute.

After the first accident, Yasin informed the bus owner of the matter and asked him what he would do. In reply, the owner told him to flee the spot with the bus. Following the instruction, he fled the scene to avoid mass beating

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## No compensation, no justice yet

FROM PAGE 1

On July 29, last year, two college students were run over and killed by a bus in the capital, triggering an unprecedented student agitation for safe roads.

The demonstrations forced the government to take several steps aimed at curbing road accidents. Transport owners also decided to abolish the system of daily contracts with drivers and their helpers to stop buses from competing for passengers and racing on streets to complete high number of trips.

But the situation remained almost the same. The competition, believed to be the root cause behind Rajib's death, continues.

On March 19, university student Abrar Ahmed Chowdhury was run over and killed by a bus of Suprobhat Paribahan. The bus was racing another bus. Hundreds of students took to the streets for safe roads again, and the authorities came up with almost the same promises.

**THE CASE** Police arrested the drivers of the BRTC and Sajan Paribahan buses involved in the incident that led to Rajib's death.

Edrish Ali, the investigation officer of the case, said both the accused were in



jail. "I am verifying information," Edrish, a sub-inspector at Shahbagh Police Station told The Daily Star on April 1.

Asked when he would be able to complete the probe, he said, "It is not possible to give a specific date."

Asked why the probe was taking so long, he said, "I won't answer for the sake of the investigation."

The case filed over the deaths of the two college students in July last year had made better progress.

A Dhaka court indicted six bus owners, drivers and helpers of the two buses of Jabal-e-Noor Paribahan on October 25 last year. Thirty-one prosecution witnesses have already testified.

**NO COMPENSATION YET** Following a writ petition, the High Court on May 8, 2018, ordered the bus companies to pay Tk 1 crore to Rajib's family.

The BRTC and Sajan Paribahan challenged the HC's order and the

Supreme Court on May 22 stayed the order and asked the HC to form an independent committee to assess the liabilities.

The committee, led by Prof Mizanur Rahman, director of Accident Research Institute at Buet, in its report submitted in September said reckless driving was the "primary cause of the accident".

It largely blamed the Sajan Paribahan bus for the accident. The report said the buses were racing and the Sajan Paribahan bus tried to drive into a gap to block the gate of the BRTC bus. The Sajan Paribahan bus side swiped the BRTC bus which resulted in Rajib being fatally injured.

The report pointed out that the heavy vehicles were illegally being driven by drivers with licences to drive light vehicles. It held the BRTC bus liable to "some extent".

Both the buses were on daily leases to drivers and helpers.

Ruhul Qudus Kazal, the writ petitioner and Supreme Court lawyer, told The Daily Star on April 1 that the SC stayed the HC's order for compensation.

He said he would try to get a date set for the final hearing on the rule at the High Court.

**UNCERTAINTY**

Rajib's 13-year-old and 14-year-old brothers stay at a hostel of a madrasa in Mir Hazirbagh of capital's Jatrabari.

"We are concerned about their future ... If they receive the compensation, they will get a little relief from the financial problems," Jahanara Begum said.

She said after the death of Rajib, a local lawmaker promised to name a madrasa after him, an upazila chairman promised to name a road after him, and union council chairman promised to set up deep tube-well at his home.

"But none kept their promises," she said.

She said, "We want to see an end to the unhealthy competition of buses. We want justice."

At least 1,212 people were killed and 2,429 others injured in 1,168 road accidents in first three months of this year, according to National Committee to Protect Shipping, Roads and Railways (NCPSSRR).

The non-government organisation, which prepared the stats based on media reports, found competitive attitude among some drivers, reckless driving, and daily lease of vehicles to drivers or conductors, were the major

## 2 Bangladeshi

FROM PAGE 16 incidents along Masudpur frontier in the district.

According to the villagers, the dead were intruders who attempted to enter into Indian territory for collecting cattle at night.

Of the two, Milon succumbed to his injuries on the way back to his home, around five kilometres away from the border while Senarul died on the way to hospital, claimed their family members, adding both the victims breathed their last inside Bangladeshi territory.

Mohammad Selim Reza, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Shibganj Police Station, said they sent the bodies to Chapainawabganj Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsies.

Meanwhile, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) yesterday held three men with 400 bottles of phensedyl and 5000 pieces of yaba tablets.

The detainees are Shamim, 27, Sumon, 22, and Ismail, 15, read a BGB press release.

The locals, however, alleged that the detainees were relatives of Milon and BGB picked them up when they were going to recover Milon's body.

## Sanitation, water systems below global average

FROM PAGE 16

Global baseline Report 2019" conducted by the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for water supply, sanitation and hygiene indicates that wash services in healthcare facilities are sub-standard in every region.

The report focused on three aspects - water, sanitation and hygiene of the healthcare facilities but data scarcity was a major barrier for getting the actual picture of the situation.

Regarding basic water services, only 38 countries had sufficient data while Bangladesh could not provide sufficient data on sanitation services while only 18 countries have enough data. In hygiene, Bangladesh could not provide sufficient data.

"In the report we have seen that we have limitations in data. So government must have focused on data collection and should formulate policy analyzing

the data on a regular basis," Khairul Islam, country director for WaterAid, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The report represents a compilation and analysis of existing monitoring data that countries have already collected and reviewed.

The new JMP global database on WASH in healthcare facilities includes national data from 125 countries. Data was extracted from 260 nationally-representative facility assessments and mapped to a standardised set of global indicators for water, sanitation, hygiene, waste management and environmental cleaning services in healthcare facilities.

Contacted, Prof Abul Kalam Azad, Director General of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said to The Daily Star, "In Bangladesh there are around 14,000 community clinics where we set up tube wells for water supply. So the facilities of a community clinic, or Dhaka Medical Hospital or

any Upazila health complex will not be same. Is it possible to run any upazila health complex or any medical college without water service?"

He said people usually come to community clinics or health centres with minor problems and they leave the clinic soon after treatment. "I think the report compares both community clinics and other healthcare facilities together. It is not a right comparison."

The report also said an estimated 896 million people use healthcare facilities with no water and 1.5 billion lack access to sanitation services. It is likely that many more people are served by healthcare facilities lacking hand hygiene facilities and safe waste management.

The report said 79 percent of hospitals in Bangladesh had an improved water source located inside for general use, but only 59 percent had drinking water for patients and staffers from a comparable source.

It also said 70 percent healthcare

facilities had basic water service from an improved water source located on premises while it is 74 percent globally.

According to the report, seven percent healthcare facilities in Bangladesh lack toilets facilities while it is 21 percent globally.

In Bangladesh 54 percent healthcare facilities had hand hygiene materials at points of care while it is 58 percent globally.

"Bangladesh government is taking various steps to improve the water and sanitation situation in healthcare points. For example, the government has already formulated a guideline in community clinics on water and sanitation usage," Khairul said.

"But the alarming point is that the waste management system of healthcare facilities is not good. Disease outbreak from those places and in hospitals is very risky."

The report cited a 2014 national assessment in Bangladesh which

found that toilet cleanliness may vary by different types of users within a health care facility: 96 percent of toilets for doctors and 93 percent for staff were observed to be clean, while 64 percent of patient toilets was clean.

The report said it surveyed nearly 5,000 hand hygiene opportunities at health care facilities in Bangladesh and found that while 69 percent of hospitals had hand hygiene facilities at points of care, only 17 percent of health care workers washed their hands with soap after touching patients or wounds, and only 2 percent washed their hands with soap before patient contact or aseptic tasks.

"In Bangladesh any doctor has to handle a number of patients simultaneously. So it may not be possible for doctors all the time to wash their hands every time before interacting with a patient. But we are always careful about cleanliness and safety of the doctors and patients," DGHS Director Azad said.