

9th Wage Board

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Obaidul's comments come a day after factions of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) protested Wednesday's Noab statement on the 9th Wage Board proposals, saying Noab's statement was unrealistic and unacceptable.

Earlier, the Noab statement had termed the new wage board award unrealistic and said implementing it would be difficult as the industry was going through a hard time. "We have heard everyone's statements for the last time. Everyone shared their opinions and the matter is nearly in its final stages," Quader told journalists after the meeting in the conference room of the Ministry of Information.

"After talking to the cabinet committee, we will take the matter to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to seek her advice before announcing the decision," the minister added.

Among others, Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud, president of Noab and also Editor and Publisher of Prothom Alo Matiur Rahman, Vice-president of Noab and also Publisher of Samakal AK Azad, The Daily Observer Editor Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, President of BFUJ Mollah Jalal, its Secretary General Saban Mahmud, and DUJ President Abu Zafar Surja and its General Secretary Sohail Haider Chowdhury were present at the meeting.

'Star trek'

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planet's surface. On ancient Mars, there were huge crescent-shaped dunes that moved over the area. At some point, an eruption meant that lava flowed around the dunes but did not reach their top.

When the lava became solid, the dunes were higher up, like islands. But the wind was still able to shift them, and it continued to blow - pushing the sand piles away.

That left behind the gaps in the lava plain that the dunes once filled. They are known as "dune castles", and set like casts made out of plaster - leaving an unchanging record of the now disappeared dunes.

Zooming out, it's possible to see that there are actually a variety of the chevrons visible on the surface. The images were taken by NASA's HiRISE camera, which is floating over the Mars surface on board the space agency's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter.

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SC scraps

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corruption case with Motijheel Police Station accusing Jasmine and 15 others on charge of misappropriating Tk 85.87 crore from Janata Bank.

On November 5, 2017, following a bail petition filed by Jasmine, the HC issued a rule asking the ACC and the government to explain why she should not be granted bail in the case.

The HC on March 19 this year granted permanent bail to Jasmine in this case.

Jasmine, also the wife of Hallmark Group Managing Director Tanvir Mahmud, was accused in the charge sheets of all 11 cases filed in October 2012 by the ACC over misappropriation of more than Tk 1,568 crore.

On July 11 last year, a Dhaka court sentenced Jasmine to three years of rigorous imprisonment in a case filed over her failure to submit her wealth statement to the ACC within a specified time.

Munsurul Hoque Chowdhury appeared for Jasmine.

Still stranded

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Gaddafi in 2011. "We'll get to learn the latest situation tomorrow," he told The Daily Star.

ASM Ashrafur Islam, labour counsellor of the Bangladesh embassy in Libya, said there were possibilities that the human traffickers involved in arranging the journeys from the Libyan coast to Europe encouraged the migrants not to return to the Libyan or Tunisian coast.

Some 40 Bangladeshis were feared dead in a boat capsized on May 9, while 14 of them, among other nationals, survived.

Apart from that, the Libyan coastguard has intercepted a number of boats heading towards Europe and detained the migrants of different nationalities. Of them, some were Bangladeshis, according to a recent statement issued by the Bangladesh embassy in Libya.

Apart from Tunisia and European countries, the Libyan coastguard too has been strongly enforcing the maritime boundary.

Under such circumstances, the embassy requested the Bangladeshis, about 20,000 in Libya, and their relatives and friends to be careful regarding such journeys.



An asphalt-mixer spews out a cloud of smoke during road repair works in Nepaltali village in Bogura's Gabtoli upazila. The use of such high polluting machines is prohibited in residential areas by the Department of Environment. Additionally, the workers appear to not have been given any protective masks, putting them at risk of contracting respiratory diseases.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

Police recover mutilated body of ex-army man

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of China Harbour Engineering Company Ltd, a Chinese construction firm, on Friday night.

Major (ret'd) Rezaul Karim, project director of Wahid Construction Ltd, told The Daily Star that they had to

go to one of their project sites using the shore adjacent to China Harbour Company Ltd.

"The staffers of China Harbour took one of our speedboats from the shore around 5:00pm on Friday. Later, their officials told us to take

back the boat at 9:00pm. Five of our men, including Nannu, went there to take back the boat. At least 25 Chinese men then attacked them with rods, sticks, and sharp weapons," Rezaul claimed.

"Our staffers, other than Nannu, managed to flee the spot," he said. No official of China Harbour Engineering Company Ltd could be reached for comment.

A murder case was filed late last night with Joranganj Police Station in this connection.

Turning to mango

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to spend a penny. In addition, he supervises the orchard for a monthly pay of Tk 9,000.

"A confirmed income comes without worry," Saday told The Daily Star.

Saday was one of the many farmers in Rajshahi region who are leaving paddy farming due to scarcity of irrigation water and recurring losses.

The farmers are either leasing their land out to mango growers or cultivating the fruit themselves, according to agriculturists and farmers.

Paddy cultivation is the "most uncertain" among crops in some areas of high Barind region where rainfall is low and irrigation water is difficult to get, said Deb Dulal Dhali, additional director of Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

"Only because of the water crisis, many farmers are switching to fruit cultivation."

The officer said that for being a highland, it is difficult to install deep tube-wells there. "So, rainwater becomes their only source of irrigation water."

Md Moniruzzaman, agriculture extension officer in Sapahar upazila, said, "If the farmers see a fall in paddy prices in a given year, the number of mango orchards goes up the next

year."

This was the trend in the last nine years from 2008-09 to 2017-18. In this period, the paddy cultivation area has shrunk by 2 lakh hectares in the region covering four districts - Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Naogaon and Natore. At the same time, the amount of land covering mango orchards doubled to 70,346 hectares.

Every year new mango orchards, especially of Amrapali, BARI mango-3 and 4 varieties, are rapidly increasing in the districts, said agriculturists.

Naogaon was long known for paddy cultivation, but last year it became the highest mango-producing district, surpassing the mango capital of Chapainawabganj.

Chapainawabganj still has the highest amount of land covered by mango orchards, but Naogaon saw a one-and-a-half-times increase in its mango farm acreage annually over the last 10 years, according to DAE data.

The area covered by mango orchards in Naogaon increased by 14,925 hectares in the period; while the increase was 9,520 hectares in Chapainawabganj.

In terms of production in 2017-18, Naogaon tops the list with 315,607 tonnes. It was followed by Chapainawabganj (275,000 tonnes), Rajshahi (213,426 tonnes), and

Natore (62,328 tonnes). **MANGO FARMING METHOD CHANGING**

Mango farming is not only increasing, but it is changing as well. Instead of creating mango orchards for a hundred years or more, farmers are targeting only 10 years.

Normally 10 mango trees are planted in one bigha of land, but in the new farming method, farmers can plant up to 200 trees in the same space, said Md Nuruzzaman, a mango grower of Porsha upazila of Naogaon.

"These trees will bear fruit for 10 years or less, and then we have to uproot them and replant."

The growth of mango orchards is the highest in two Naogaon upazilas - Porsha and Sapahar. They have 72 percent of the orchards of the district, says DAE.

In a recent visit, this correspondent saw most mango orchards in the two upazilas were new and bearing fruits.

Nuruzzaman began mango farming in 2001 after completing his madrasa education.

"I learned about the Indian mango variety, Amrapali, when I was studying in a madrasa in the border area of Hili," he said.

"Instead of looking for a job, I decided to cultivate eight bighas of land I inherited."

He said, "Paddy cultivation was never profitable in our area. I have an uncle, Mojadded Hossain. He is an agriculturist. He inspired me towards mango farming."

Nuruzzaman collected seven Amrapali saplings from India for Tk 120 each and planted those in his land. After three years, he began expanding his mango farm, taking lease of land from other farmers.

Now he cultivates mango on 70 bighas of land, quality varieties (Khissapat or Himsagar, Langra, and Fajli) on 15 bighas and Amrapali on 55 bighas.

Nuruzzaman said he makes a profit of Tk 20,000 every season from each bigha, while the cost per bigha is Tk 10,000. "I earn enough for my family, and I gave jobs to many villagers at my orchards."

Unlike Nuruzzaman, Saifuddin Mondol of Sapahar was relatively new in mango farming.

He used to cultivate paddy on 20 bighas of land two years ago when he decided to bring paddy acreage down to seven bighas.

Saifuddin turned the remaining 13 bighas into mango orchards. Later he took lease of 50 bighas land from farmers paying them Tk 12,000 per bigha annually.

"In mango farming, the possibility of loss is low," he said.

Saudi youth

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interfaith dialogue, in protest against the detention of Qureiris.

Qureiris was 10 years old when he committed at least one of the acts alleged in his charge sheet.

He was charged with accompanying his activist brother, Ali Qureris, on a motorcycle ride to a police station in the eastern Saudi city of Awamiya, where Ali allegedly threw Molotov cocktails at the facility.

His other alleged crime includes attending his brother's funeral which

later became a rally.

Qureiris has denied the charges and said that the confessions, which the prosecution has largely relied on, were obtained under duress.

At the time of arrest, Qureiris was considered by lawyers and activists to be the youngest known political prisoner in Saudi Arabia.

Murtaja Qureiris is from a Shia family in the eastern province of the majority Sunni Saudi Arabia.

In April, Saudi Arabia announced it had executed 37 men who, according

to rights group Reprieve, were mostly from the kingdom's Shia minority.

At least three of the men executed were minors at the time of the commission of alleged crimes, court documents reviewed by CNN and Reprieve showed.

All three were arrested for violence the government says was committed during protests around the time of the Arab Spring. But the prosecution relied heavily on confessions which the prisoners said were extracted from them. In the court proceedings,

they said that they were tortured, the confessions made under duress.

The country has one of the highest rates of execution in the world, and has frequently been criticised by rights groups for executing people who were minors at the time of the commission of crimes.

Amnesty International responded to the news about Qureiris's case on Twitter yesterday: "Much relief to learn that Saudi authorities confirm that #MurtajaQureiris will NOT be sentenced to death. #EndDeathPenalty #SaudiArabia."

Sugar, edible oil prices may rise

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Bill 2019" organised by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) at its office in the capital.

Prices of soybean oil may raise by 2 to 3 percent for VAT measures, he said, but added that the NBR tried its best to levy VAT in a way that prices of goods and services did not increase too much.

"But we will watch. We will catch them [businesses] if they increase prices too much," he said.

His remarks came as businesses have hiked prices of sugar just after the NBR increased specific duty and regulatory duty on both refined and raw sugar for the fiscal 2019-20.

Soon after the proposed budget, traders increased prices of sugar. Prices of sugar rose by Tk 120 per maund to Tk 1,830 per maund in Khatunganj-Chaktai market, the hub for wholesale commodities in Chattogram, on Saturday.

Mosharraf said duty on sugar was hiked taking into consideration its low prices in the domestic and international markets. Locally, sugar is being traded at Tk 45 a kg at wholesale and Tk 50 a kg in loose form.

Packaged sugar prices stand at Tk 55 to 60 a kg, he said, adding that a family might require one kg of sugar in one or two weeks.

"Why cannot I spend Tk 60 or Tk 70 for two weeks?" he asked and said residents in Dhaka city usually buy one kg of vegetables at Tk 60 to 70 and there would be a very few vegetables

priced below Tk 40 a kg.

From that perspective, a Tk 5 increase in sugar price would not hurt consumers too much, he said.

To keep impact on prices low, he said the NBR slapped specific amount of VAT on rod instead of imposing reduced rate.

"Prices of the construction ingredient would have increased too high had we imposed 5 percent VAT. We have also kept special rates for petroleum and medicine. If needed, we will revise rates of a couple of more items," he said.

The NBR chairman said concerns have been raised from various quarters regarding spiral in prices of goods and services as rebate benefit for VAT rates less than 15 percent is being offered.

He added that it was said that VAT had turned into an excise in the absence of rebate benefit.

"What is wrong if we can relieve people by introducing four rates and at the same time increase revenue collection," he said.

ICAB President AF Nesaruddin said automation of VAT system was the key to this new law implementation.

He said a provision has been included in the new VAT law that a chartered accountant would be required to get a licence from the revenue authority to be a VAT practitioner. This provision was not in the VAT Act 1991, he said, demanding the government reinstate the provision.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Prime Minister's Office
Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority
BEPZA Economic Zone
Mirsarai, Chattogram
(www.bepza.gov.bd)

Ref No. 03.06.1553.394.14.038.19.644

Date: 13 June 2019

Corrigendum Notice
Tender Ref: No. 08/2018-2019

This is to inform all concerned that the **receiving and opening of tender document** has been corrected in the OTM System for the Tender Notice Reference No: 03.06.1553.394.14.038.19.643 Dated: 29 May 2019 for the following work:

Sl No.	Tender Notice Reference No.	Name of the work	Status	As mentioned in tender notice	To be replaced as
01	08/2018-2019	Supply of daily rated labour for BEPZA Economic Zone, Mirsarai (1st phase) Project, Mirsarai, Chattogram	Place of receiving tender document	1. Superintending Engineer, BEPZA Economic Zone, Mirsarai, Chattogram. 2. Divisional Commissioner's Office, Court Building, Chattogram.	Office of the Project Director, BEPZA Complex (Level-3), House No. 19/D, Road # 06, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205.
			Place of opening tender document	Superintending Engineer, BEPZA Economic Zone, Mirsarai, Chattogram.	Office of the Project Director, BEPZA Complex (Level-3), House No. 19/D, Road # 06, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205.
			Tender opening date and time	24 June at 3:00pm	24 June at 1:00pm.

All other terms and conditions will remain unchanged. This corrigendum will be a part and parcel of this tender.

Mohammad Shafiqul Islam
Superintending Engineer
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GD-1103

Opposition slams

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The view was similar to that expressed by JP lawmaker Pir Fazlur Rahman, who also demanded good governance, saying it would check the "waste of budgetary allocation and corruption in various sectors."

On good governance, Fakhrul Imam, another JP lawmaker, said state-owned institutions had incurred a loss of over Tk 4,300 crore in the 2018-19 financial year.

If good governance was ensured, the losses could have been controlled, he added.

Fakhrul said the government had implemented 78 percent of the outgoing budget, adding that budget implementations had been decreasing since the 2012-13 financial year.

"Banks are facing a crisis of money. Loan defaults now stand at Tk 1.1 lakh crore and if we take written off loan into consideration, then it soars to Tk 1.55 lakh crore," he added.

Touching upon the agriculture sector, the JP lawmaker said it was neglected and farmers were not getting good prices, a situation that middlemen were exploiting.

"If you do not give farmers an incentive, they will lose interest [in cultivating crops]."

He proposed giving direct cash incentive to the farmers.

Fakhrul also said that most of the people running the economy from the government side were businessmen, citing the examples of the finance minister, commerce minister, jute and textile minister, food minister and state minister for power.

This period belonged to undisclosed money holders and looters of banks, said Gono Forum MP Mukabbir Khan. He said that through this budget, the rich would get richer and the poor would get poorer.

He urged the PM to take steps to redistribute black money among the poor people of the country.

BNP lawmaker Rumeen Farhana alleged that Bangladeshi money was being siphoned off to different countries. This money is being invested in the Second Home project in Malaysia and was used to build Begumpara in Canada, she said.

She also said enforced disappearances, violence against women and rape were rampant in the country.

Meanwhile, ruling Awami League lawmaker Matia Chowdhury praised the government efforts for turning the country into a middle-income country.

She also censured the people who are criticising the budget, saying such people did not see the progress and development activities of the country or the slowing down of maternal and newborn death rate, and increase in life expectancy.

They also do not see that Bangladesh has turned self-sufficient in food production, she said.

Matia said Bangladesh had developed so much that it was hard to find day labourers for harvesting crops.

"We have saved jute sector from death," she added.

She also criticised BNP MPs for terming the parliament unacceptable, despite joining it and taking all the facilities as a lawmaker.

Matia also disagreed with the those calling the budget "highly ambitious".

Agriculture Minister Dr Abdur Razzaque said the claim that the budget was too ambitious was not true.

On prices received by farmers, he said they would get a fair price for their hard work, adding that the government would allocate Tk 3,000 crore for buying machineries for harvesting.

Ruling party lawmakers Faruk Khan and Abdus Shahid also praised the governments development works and termed the budget people-friendly.

Abdus Shahid also proposed a law banning criticism of Father of the Nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

On June 13, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal placed a supplementary budget of Taka 4,42,541 crore for the 2018-19 financial year.