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Municipalities a total mess

Indiscipline in hiring, spending leads to Tk 692cr in arrears, finds govt committee

MOUJUD AHMED SUJAN

A lack of discipline in spending and hiring employees is the main reason behind the piling up of Tk 692 crore in salary arrears at municipalities across the country, a government committee has found.

In a report, it recommended that the government give an allocation of Tk 346 crore, half the total arrears, for the employees as an immediate solution.

The committee was formed by the LGRD and cooperatives ministry in March last year after municipality employees launched protests demanding their arrears. The report, which includes a set of recommendations, was submitted on April 16.

According to an expert, the absence of good governance and legal weaknesses regarding local government are to blame for what he said has become a "humanitarian crisis" now.

Since July 14, municipality employees have been staging an indefinite sit-in in front of the Jatiya Press Club, also demanding regular payment from state coffers.

More than 35,000 employees of 260 municipalities have not received salaries for up to seven years.

Of them, some 6,000 staffers have been without salaries for five years, around 12,000 for two years and another 5,000 for a year, show the latest statistics of Bangladesh Association of Paurasava Services (BAPS).

Besides, some 964 retired employees have not received any pensions. The amount of unpaid pension is Tk 120 crore.

VIOLATIONS

Not only is there a "lack of discipline" in recruitment and

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DENGUE SITUATION REMAINS ALARMING

15,369 infected so far, mostly in Dhaka

1,335 new cases detected yesterday

Death toll reaches 41 (Official toll 8)

Dengue cases detected in 61 out of 64 districts



Districts with no dengue cases

FEAR OF FURTHER SPREAD

About 1 crore people leave Dhaka to celebrate Eid



Dengue is likely to spread further outside Dhaka during Eid vacation, experts fear

If an Aedes mosquito bites an infected person, it gets infected and can transmit dengue by biting another person

Dengue fever can start 3 to 14 days after Aedes mosquito bite

DOCTORS' ADVICE

- 1 Dengue patients are discouraged to leave the capital
- 2 Patients with fever must consult doctors without wasting time
- 3 Dengue patients must use mosquito nets at homes or hospitals
- 4 Doctors outside Dhaka need to see travel history of every dengue patient

PREPARATIONS OUTSIDE DHAKA

- DGHS asked all upazila, district hospitals to make preparations to tackle dengue
- Upazila, district hospitals need adequate dengue testing kits
- Govt already distributed 40,000 kits, sending 200 more to each district

DENGUE OUTBREAK

Faster spread feared during Eid holiday

HELEMUL ALAM and WASIM BIN HABIB

After the dengue outbreak spread to almost every district in the country, health experts now fear the viral fever will spread further and faster during Eid vacation, when tens of thousands of people are expected to head home.

Many of these holidaymakers might be infected with the mosquito-borne virus, and they may end up spreading it quickly if adequate measures are not taken, doctors and experts said.

For example, if a non-infected Aedes mosquito in a remote village bites an infected person, that mosquito in turn will infect other people, they warned.

Government and private hospitals in the capital are already struggling to cope with the pressure, and a further spread will make things worse. That is because neither the hospitals nor the doctors are prepared for a large-scale outbreak, according to the experts.

Besides, many hospitals outside Dhaka do not have the kits to run the NS1 test to detect the fever.

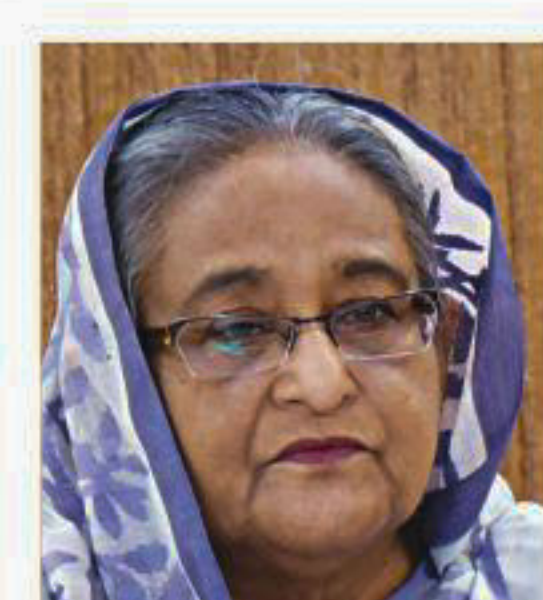
In Barishal, for example, none of the 43 public health facilities, including the 34 upazila health complexes, have the testing kits, said Shymal Krishna Mandal, assistant director of the Divisional Health Directorate.

In the absence of the kits, doctors there are only looking at the platelet count for diagnosis, said Shymal, also the civil surgeon of Jhalakathi.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) has

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WHEN WILL EFFECTIVE INSECTICIDE ARRIVE? -- PAGE 3
DENGUE NOW IN 61 DISTRICTS -- PAGE 2



RETURN OF ROHINGYAS

Japan willing to mediate

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Japan has offered to mediate between Bangladesh and Myanmar for early repatriation of the Rohingyas, said Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen following a meeting with his Japanese counterpart in Taro Kono.

"Japan thinks that repatriation of Rohingyas should happen quickly. They are even ready to mediate in this regard," he told reporters.

"If need be, Japan will invite Myanmar and Bangladesh in Tokyo for mediation. They have investments in both Bangladesh and Myanmar. Most importantly, Myanmar wants a peaceful solution to the problem because it if is prolonged, more problems will be formed."

Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono, who arrived in Bangladesh on Monday night, visited the Rohingya refugee camps yesterday morning. On his return to Dhaka, he paid homage to the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in the city and then held meeting with Dr Momen at the Meghna State Guesthouse yesterday evening.

The third visit of Taro Kono to Bangladesh comes in less than two months after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to Japan in late May.

At the meeting, the two ministers discussed issues of security, economic cooperation, people-to-people contact and counter-terrorism. Updates of various projects that involve Japanese investments were also discussed.

The Rohingya issue came up prominently as Taro Kono visited the camps in Cox's Bazar. He is scheduled to fly to Nay Pyi Taw today, where he will meet Myanmar's State

RIFAT MURDER

Minni's bail plea turned down again

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhalakathi

A Barguna court yesterday rejected the bail petition of Aysa Siddika Minni, who was arrested in connection with the murder of her husband Rifat Sharif.

On July 22, a court had rejected another bail petition for Minni.

"In the petition, we mentioned that Minni tried to save her husband during the time of the attack and it was recorded [in video footage]," said lawyer Abdur Rashid of Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) yesterday.

Rashid, along with 20 other lawyers from ASK, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, Barishal, Dhaka, and Minni's lawyer Mahmudul Bari Aslam, also general secretary of Barguna District Lawyers' Association, moved the



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SESSION OF UN COMMITTEE AGAINST TORTURE

Govt questioned over human rights abuses

STAR REPORT

The Bangladesh delegation attending a UN convention yesterday faced a volley of questions about human rights violations and repression against the country's citizens.

The 28-member team, led by Law Minister Anisul Huq, had to deal with the queries as it submitted the country's first periodic report at a session of the UN Committee against Torture (CAT) in Geneva.

This was the first time Bangladesh submitted a report to the CAT since the country's accession to the UN body in 1998.

Most of the queries the team faced were regarding the role of law enforcement agencies and impunity given to them despite their alleged involvement in torture and custodial death.

In the seven-page report to the CAT, Anisul elaborated on different measures the government has taken since 2009 to "to create an appropriate environment for the full enjoyment of justice and rights by our people".

"It must be understood that in the intervening period after the assassination of our father of the nation, we suffered from a culture of impunity that created a serious erosion of values in the society.

"All our efforts have been towards removing this evil from the society. And this takes times. Surely, there has been incremental progress which is there for all to see.

"But believe us, we will continue our journey to fulfil the dream of the father of the nation of ensuring rights of all our citizens," the law minister noted.

CAT Vice-Chairperson Felice D Gaer welcomed the report, but said it was not focused solely on relevant issues.

"While the report, prepared by the government, claims to address implementation, it provides information solely about the country's legal and policy architecture related to the prevention and punishment of torture. She also criticised the delay.

"It is very regrettable that this first review is only taking place more than 20 years after the government's accession to the convention against

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14 LOCAL BRANDS

SC now stays ban on Akij, Pran milk

PM concerned over HC ban

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday cleared the way for Akij Food and Beverage Ltd (Farm Fresh Milk) and Pran Dairy Ltd (Pran Milk) to produce, distribute and sell their pasteurised milk.

Justice Md Nuruzzaman, chamber judge of the Appellate Division, stayed for five weeks the parts of a High Court order that directed the two companies to stop producing, distributing and selling pasteurised milk.

The chamber judge passed the order after hearing two separate petitions filed by the companies seeking stay on those parts of the HC order.

The apex court also asked the two companies to file separate leave to appeal petitions with this court challenging the HC order in five weeks.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, who appeared for the two companies as an individual lawyer, told The Daily Star that the SC chamber judges passed the stay order on the ground that the presence of lead and antibiotics in the pasteurised milk of the two companies did not exceed the danger level.

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Visiting Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono receives a paper flower as a gift from a Rohingya girl as he arrives at a Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar's Kutupalong yesterday. Inset, the minister talking to some refugees there.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Congratulations



We, members of Masco Group, are elated to know that Masco Overseas Limited, a concern of Masco Group, has been adorned with National Productivity & Quality Excellence Award-2018 by Government of The People's Republic of Bangladesh in recognition of its contribution to increase productivity and quality in the segment of micro industry of Bangladesh.

Masco Overseas Limited is being operated under the able direction and leadership of its Managing Director and influential business entrepreneur Mr. Ahmed Arif Billah. We are proud to extend our heartiest congratulations to the truly recognized business leader Mr. Ahmed Arif Billah.



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