

Jute mill workers go on symbolic hunger strike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Workers of nine state-owned jute mills in the Khulna-Jashore industrial belt staged a symbolic hunger strike yesterday to press home their 11-point demand, including payment of due salary and implementation of a wage commission.

The protest began around 8:00am and the workers took up positions in front of the main gates of the jute mills. The strike ended at 4:00pm.

The government announced a wage board or jute mill workers on June, 2015, but it was yet to be implemented.

Over thirty-one thousand workers (permanent and on daily basis) have been working in the nine state-owned jute mills.

Their demonstration was part of their seven-day agitation programme, announced under the banner of the “State-owned Jute Mills Collective Bargaining Association (CBA) and Non-CBA Sangram Parishad” on November 17 in Dhaka.

Their demands include cancelling

of public-private ownership, payment of provident fund gratuity for retired workers, regularising weekly wages and implementing the wage board, and payment of outstanding bills. They also demanded that the government buy jute products for other sectors.

Workers of Daulatpur, Khalishpur, Crescent, Platinum and Star jute mills took part in hunger strike.

Workers of Alim and Eastern jute mills also went on hunger strike in Atra industrial area of the city.

In Jashore, workers of Jashore Jute Industry and Carpeting Jute Mills Ltd went on a hunger strike in Rajghat area.

Khalilur Rahman, former president of CBA of Platinum jute mill told The Daily Star that the workers would not stop the protest at any cost, because most were outraged as the national wage commission had not been implemented in five years.

“This symbolic hunger strike is part of the demonstration and will continue until the wage commission is implemented”, he added.



Workers of state-owned Platinum Jute Mills in Khulna lying on the road during a hunger strike demanding arrears in front of their living quarters yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Brac employee murdered in Nilphamari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Nilphamari*

Police arrested two employees of a building material store yesterday morning on suspicion of hacking a Brac employee to death in Kazirhat area of Nilphamari town Tuesday afternoon.

Police recovered the body of Mahidul Islam, 45, of Naogaon's Manda upazila, from his rented room after locals noticed a stream of blood coming out of the door, said Sub-inspector Mintu Chhandra Banik of Nilphamari Sadar Police Station.

The arrestees, Moinul Islam, 25, and Faruk Hossain, 26, are also suspected of stealing Tk 8 lakh from the building material store by breaking into a locker, said Mintu who is investigating the case.

The suspects are being interrogated and the “investigators have made significant progress”, he added.

Mahidul, who worked in the microcredit programme of Brac, used to live alone in a rented room behind the building material store.

His wife and children live in Rangpur's Taraganj, where she teaches in a school, police said.

Owner of the building material store, Isahaq Ali Shohag, 47, told this correspondent that he kept Tk 8 lakh inside the locker of his shop earlier that day and went home for lunch, closing the store.

He returned in the afternoon and found that “somebody broke into the store and stole the cash along with the computer and CCTV cameras”.

Shohag and a few locals then went behind the store and found that the door of Mahidul's room was locked from outside and a stream of blood was coming from under the door.

Informed by locals, police officers went to the scene and broke into the room and found the body of the victim. They sent the body to a hospital for autopsy.

Ruhul Amin, additional superintendent of police in Nilphamari, said the Brac employee may have been killed after he witnessed the robbery at the store.

Mahidul's brother-in-law filed a case later that day.

A special police team along with Rab and CID officials is investigating the case, he added.

Bangladesh

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President of the Unesco General Assembly Altay Cengizer and its Director General Audrey Azoulay were present at the assembly.

Education Minister Dipu Moni, who was at the preparatory meeting to celebrate the “Mujib Borsho”, briefly described different aspects of the Unesco's decision.

She said the Unesco made the decision unanimously at the plenary session of its 40th General Assembly on November 25 to celebrate the “Mujib Borsho” together with Bangladesh.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was born in Tungipara of Gopalganj on March 17, 1920.

A year after his 100th birth anniversary, Bangladesh will celebrate the golden jubilee of independence on March 26, 2021.

Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, chief coordinator of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Birth Centenary Celebration National Implementation Committee, highlighted various aspects of the birth centenary programmes through a power point presentation.

He said the inaugural function would begin at 4:00pm on March 17, 2020, at the National Parade Square.

Rohingyas use

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using mobile communication applications like WhatsApp, Viber, and WeChat.

It was said that the Rohingyas used to use the apps to contact people in Myanmar. The apps were also used for committing crimes in the country, said a BTRC official yesterday.

SM Farhad, secretary general of Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh, said the operators had already implemented the BTRC's instructions.

Only 2G voice service will remain active as per the instruction, he said.

Tamim the mastermind

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of the Khilafah's Soldiers in Bengal) in the 12th issue of the so-called Islamic State's propaganda magazine Dabiq in 2015.

In the verdict, Judge Md Majibur Rahman cited the confessional statement of convict Aslam Hossain Rash to explain Tamim's role, and why the attack was carried out.

Aslam wanted to know from Tamim the reason behind the attack in Gulshan or in the diplomatic neighbourhood, it said.

In reply, Tamim said their organisation, Neo-JMB, was inspired by the international terrorist organisation, IS, and it was necessary to launch an attack in the diplomatic area in Gulshan to draw the attention of IS, added the court, quoting Aslam.

Reaction

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the Holey Artisan Bakery on July 1st, 2016, the night we lost our dear Faraaz.”

The Holey Artisan attack, the country's worst-ever terror incident, had left 20 hostages, including 17 foreigners, killed. Two police officials also got killed after they responded immediately.

On the fateful evening, Faraaz went to the restaurant to meet his friends Abinta Kabir, an American citizen of Bangladesh origin, and Tarishi Jain from India.

The militants had targeted non-Muslims and foreigners.

When they learnt that Faraaz was a Bangladeshi Muslim, they asked him to leave. He wanted to know if his two friends could come with him.

As the militants refused to let the two go, Faraaz chose to stay by their

In September, the telecom regulator directed all mobile phone carriers to stop selling SIMs to the Rohingyas.

Operators yesterday said they had already stopped selling their connections in the area.

The technical committee visited some refugee camps in Ukhia and Teknaf. According to its report, the telecom regulator made the tough decision of blocking all mobile services, except voice calls.

A senior official of the telecom watchdog said the decision would affect the locals.

“Therefore, it is established that the Holey Artisan attack was led by Tamim Chowdhury,” said the court.

“The members of Neo-JMB, following the plan of Tamim Chowdhury, attacked at Holey Artisan in Gulshan to seek the attention of IS and establish so-called Jihad in Bangladesh...,” it said.

Born on July 25, 1986, Tamim graduated in chemistry from the University of Windsor in spring 2011 and then travelled to Calgary, according to police.

Not only the Gulshan café attack, police believe that he was the mastermind of Sholakia Eidgah attack on July 7, 2016, where four people, including an attacker, died.

Police on August 1, 2016, announced a bounty of Tk 20 lakh on Tamim.

side till the end, according to witnesses who were inside the café during the siege.

Faraaz, 20, son of Simeen Hossain and Waquer Hossain, was a meritorious student of Emory University in Atlanta, USA.

“We are immensely proud of Faraaz for having shown exceptional bravery, strength of character and outstanding values by refusing to abandon his two friends. Even after being told by the terrorists to leave, for being a Bangladeshi Muslim, Faraaz refused to do so and thereby sacrificed his own life to protect his friends. What Faraaz did that night truly exemplifies what Bangladesh stands for,” Zeraif said.

He also expressed deep sorrow for the innocent citizens from Italy, Japan, the US, India and Bangladesh, who lost their lives in the mindless brutality.

Psychiatric patient mysteriously dies in drug rehab

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushtia*

A CCTV footage of a privately owned drug rehabilitation centre in Mirpur upazila of Kushtia raised question over the death of a first-year Hons student with schizophrenia.

The 19-year-old victim -- Kamruzzaman Imon, honours student of Rajshahi City College -- was sent to the drug rehabilitation centre -- Samarpan -- by his father Ezazul Azim Ripon where he died on Monday morning.

Yesterday, a leaked CCTV footage of the drug rehabilitation centre showed a group of people indiscriminately beating Imon tiding his hands and legs a day before his death.

According to Ripon, he brought back his son to home from his college on November 12.

As his health condition was deteriorating, Imon was taken to Pabna Mental Hospital on Friday, he said.

“We could not admit Imon to the hospital as we could not submit the required documents for admission at that time. Doctors there asked me to return to the hospital with all the documents.”

Later on November 19, Imon was admitted to Samarpan following family members' suggestion, he said.

“I came to know [on Monday] that Imon was admitted to Mirpur Upazila Health Complex following a cardiac arrest. I rushed there and found my son dead,” he added.

On information, police detained three -- Abdul Matin, 57, owner of Samarpan, Habib Uddin Malitha, 52, supervisor of Samarpan, and Mintu Hossain, 26, who beat Imon up -- yesterday, said Abul Kalam, officer-in-charge of Mirpur Police Station.

The victim's father did not file any complaint in connection with Imon's death even after repeated requests, the OC said.

Asked, Ripon said he did not file any complaint as he would not get his son back.

Upazila Health Officer Selim Uddin Farazi, who examined Imon's body, said he found marks on the body that suggested that Imon was tortured before death.

“We will be able to share further detail after receiving autopsy report,” he added.

32 women urge PM

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a deportation camp in Riyadh.

“All the women staying at the camp have injury marks on their bodies,” she added.

The migrants have been staying at the camp between one and nine months, Ferdous told The Daily Star last night.

She also said, “An officer [of Saudi Arabia] told us that Saudi authorities cannot buy tickets for us. He [the official] said our embassy has to buy us tickets. I called our embassy, but they [Bangladesh embassy officials] said they cannot buy us tickets either.

“The officials also told me that they cannot even take us to a safe home as we were already at the deportation camp.”

She also sought help from this correspondent and said, “If you cannot help us, give us poison so that we can die here.”

The Daily Star could not reach

Bangladesh Embassy in Riyadh after repeated attempts over phone.

Shariful Hasan, head of Brac Migration Programme, said the authorities should immediately take action to rescue the women and repatriate them.

He also mentioned that Sumi, a migrant worker in the Gulf country, recently returned home after pleading for life on social media.

Another migrant Hosna Akter, who was also rescued after uploading of a video clip on social media, was on her way home last night.

“The migrant workers are now finding ways to communicate and help themselves,” he said.

Hasan also said that migrant workers in Saudi Arabia were not even allowed to use mobile phones in most cases.

“Our government should negotiate with Saudi authorities for allowing the female migrants to use mobile phones,” he added.

Protect female workers

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them abroad.

The foreign minister told the meeting that they came to know about a particular incident of torture or harassment only after a victim informed the Bangladesh mission.

The foreign ministry also informed the JS body that it was planning to set up hotline numbers at different Bangladesh missions abroad and the numbers would be given to all female migrant workers. The workers would call the numbers if they faced any problem.

Officials told the meeting that some irregularities took place in sending female workers abroad, including sending job seekers aged below 14 and above 65 abroad.

They also said following communications from them, the Saudi authorities took actions against several Saudi nationals over torture of female Bangladeshi workers.

The parliamentary watchdog agreed with the foreign ministry officials that it would not be logical to bring back female workers as they send huge foreign remittances to home.

“According to statistics, a female worker sends home about 90 percent of her monthly income against 60 percent by a male worker. The

country's remittance income will be reduced if the female migrants are brought back home,” a member of the parliamentary body told this correspondent.

Committee Chairman Muhammad Faruk Khan, Awami League MP from Gopalganj-1, told the meeting that the government could not make a decision based on emotion.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, the lawmaker said most of the female expatriates work in good conditions. They also take their relatives abroad, he added.

Several lawmakers in the last session of the Jatiya Sangsad demanded that the government stop sending female workers to Saudi Arabia as several hundred bodies of female workers were sent to Bangladesh from there in the last few years.

They also said thousands of female workers returned home after being tortured physically and harassed sexually by their Saudi employers.

According to the Brac Migration Programme, bodies of 311 women workers were sent to Bangladesh from the Gulf countries, mostly from Saudi Arabia, between 2016 and June this year.

Joy elected

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In 2015, Joy was made a member of Pirganj upazila AL. He was re-elected the number 1 member of the party unit early this month. His father late MA Wazed Miah was from the upazila.

Joy had joined the ruling party's national council as a councillor of Rangpur district AL in 2016. He has been a primary member of the party unit since 2001.

Amnesty warns of Egypt's ‘parallel justice system’

AFP, PARIS

Amnesty International warned yesterday that Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's government had built a “parallel justice system” to crack down on critics and dissent.

The London-based rights watchdog said the key tools of repression were the Supreme State Security Prosecution service, known as the SSSP, as well as counter-terrorism courts and special police forces.

“In Sisi's Egypt, all critics of the government are seen as potential terrorists,” Amnesty's France director Katia Roux said at the launch of the 60-page report in Paris.

In its report entitled “Permanent State of Exception”, Amnesty said it had observed a sharp rise in cases prosecuted by the SSSP -- from 529 in 2013 to 1,739 cases last year.

The prosecution -- which deals with activities deemed threats to state security -- regularly probes political dissidents and Islamist figures including from the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood group.



People gather in support of pro-democracy protesters during a lunch break rally in the Kwun Tong area in Hong Kong yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP