

PAYRA POWER PLANT

Worker killed as iron pipe falls on him

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A worker of the under-construction Payra Thermal Power Plant in Kalapara upazila of Patuakhali died as an iron pipe fell on him from a crane yesterday.

The dead was identified as Tareq Ibrahim Khan. He hailed from Barishal's Kalijira area and was 26 years old.

Shah Moni Jiko, assistant manager of the Bangladesh-China Power Company Limited (BCPCL), said Ibrahim was working in the coal storage area around 9:00am when the accident happened, leaving him critically injured.

Immediately, Ibrahim was rushed to Kalapara Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared him dead, Jiko added.

Monirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Kalapara Police Station, said the body was sent to Patuakhali General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

An unnatural death case was filed with the police station, he added. Police were investigating the case.

French army denies IS claim for deadly Mali crash that killed 13 soldiers

AFP, Paris

An ambush by Islamic State jihadists did not cause a collision between two French army helicopters which left 13 soldiers dead in Mali, France's military chief of staff said Friday.

The Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP) claimed responsibility for Monday's accident, the heaviest single loss for the French army in nearly four decades.

"It's totally false," General Francois Lecointre told Radio France International.

"The truth is that there was a collision during a very complex combat operation," he said.

"The French army is telling the truth: we owe it to our soldiers and to the families of our dead colleagues."

ISWAP said its fighters ambushed a French convoy near Indelimane village, in the Menaka area, and opened fire on one of the helicopters that arrived in support.

"After staggering in flight, it then collided with another helicopter, killing 13 Crusaders," said an ISWAP statement carried on the SITE intelligence group website.

The general said there was no attack by the jihadists that the army was pursuing near the borders with Burkina Faso and Niger.

"There was no withdrawal of an aircraft in the face of fire from the jihadists," he added.

The general said the helicopter black boxes were being analysed for details of exactly what happened.

The accident brought to 41 the number of French troops killed in the Sahel region since Paris intervened against jihadists in northern Mali in 2013.

Since then, armed groups affiliated with IS, Al-Qaeda and others have advanced into southern Mali as well as neighbouring Burkina Faso and Niger.

K-pop star jailed for six years for gang rape, spycam crimes

AFP, Seoul

South Korean singer-songwriter Jung Joon-young was convicted Friday of gang rape and distributing videos of the assaults and other sexual encounters, and was jailed for six years in a scandal that has rocked K-pop.

Jung and Choi Jong-hoon, a former member of boy band FT Island, were found guilty of gang-raping two different victims on two occasions in 2016.

Separately, 30-year-old Jung was also convicted of filming himself having sex with other women without their knowledge and sharing the footage without their consent.

It is the highest-profile example of an epidemic of spycam crimes in South Korea, which have prompted widespread anger and seen women demonstrating in Seoul, chanting: "My life is not your porn."

Jung distributed his videos in mobile chatrooms with recipients including fellow K-pop star Seungri of BIGBANG, who has been accused of illegal gambling in connection with a sex and drugs scandal.

Jung was jailed for six years and Choi, 29, for five, the Seoul Central District Court said.

"Jung and Choi took part in gang rape of victims who were intoxicated and unable to resist," Yonhap news agency cited the verdict as saying, rejecting the defendants' claim the sex was consensual.



Demonstrators clash with riot police water cannon during a protest against the government in Santiago, on Thursday. Furious Chileans have since October 18 been protesting social and economic inequality, and against an entrenched political elite that comes from a small number of the wealthiest families in the country, among other issues.

PHOTO: AFP

Ragging took heavy toll on Buet students

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either. The Buet always maintains secrecy in this regard. The committee members may face pressure from different quarters if their names are disclosed," he told The Daily Star.

The issue of ragging and torture of students came to the fore after Abar, a second-year student of electrical and electronic engineering, was beaten to death allegedly by some Chhatra League leaders and activists at Sher-e-Bangla Hall last month.

After the murder, Buet students staged demonstrations and placed several demands before the authorities. The demands include expulsion of those involved in

torturing students in the name of "ragging" and "suppressing dissent". They also demanded expulsion of students involved in such incidents at Ahsanullah Hall and Suhrawardy Hall by October 11.

Talking to this newspaper, another probe committee member said they found that ragging was basically a tool for recruitment of a few students to student organisations. Those who were abused badly would get involved in student politics within about a year, he added.

"Some students thought that if they joined a student front, they would gain power and other students would be scared of them."

He said they found that if any victim lodged a complaint with his department about ragging, he would be tortured again.

OBSERVATIONS OF PROBE BODIES The investigation committees observed that a few students, who created terror at the dormitories, had tortured students in a planned way, said a member of a probe body.

They said those involved in ragging students preferred roofs and rooms of dormitories to other places for ragging students and used those as "torture cells".

The Board of Residence and Discipline Committee on Thursday suspended nine students from the

university for their involvement in ragging fellow students at Suhrawardy Hall and Ahsanullah Hall.

Six students of Ahsan Ullah Hall and three of Suhrawardy Hall were suspended from academic and other activities for different tenures, and were also expelled from their respective dormitories.

The Board also suspended 21 other students from their respective halls for different periods on the same charges and warned them against any recurrence of such incidents.

On November 21, the Buet authorities expelled 26 students over their involvement in the Abar murder. Most of them are now behind bars.

Suspect shot dead

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floor. Soon after, what sound like two gunshots ring out, and the man on the ground stops moving. Reuters could not immediately verify the footage.

The ambulance service declared a "major incident" in the area and London Bridge station, a busy commuter hub, was closed.

People in buildings around the scene were evacuated to the north side of the River Thames by security services.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson was on his way back to Downing Street

and Basu said he would be giving him a full briefing.

"I'm being kept updated on the incident at London Bridge and want to thank the police and all emergency services for their immediate response," Johnson said in a statement.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan hailed the "breath-taking heroism" displayed by ordinary Londoners in disarming the knife-wielding attacker.

"It has been confirmed that a number of people were injured, some seriously," Khan told reporters.

London Bridge was the scene of an attack in June 2017 when three militants drove a van into pedestrians and then attacked people in the surrounding area, killing eight people and injuring at least 48.

Islamic State said its fighters were responsible.

The month before, a suicide bomber killed 22 children and adults and wounded 59 at a packed concert hall in the English city of Manchester, as crowds began leaving a concert by US singer Ariana Grande.

And in March the same year, an attacker stabbed a policeman close to London's parliament buildings after a car ploughed into pedestrians on nearby Westminster Bridge.

Six people died, including the assailant and the policeman he stabbed, and at least 20 were injured in what police called a "marauding terrorist attack".

Earlier this month, Britain had lowered its national terrorism threat level to "substantial" from "severe", its lowest level since 2014.

Strike may disrupt cargo

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After a day, the federation postponed their strike for 45 days following a meeting with water transport owners, workers and authorities.

Ashikul Alam, general secretary of BWIWE, told The Daily Star, "The authorities did not meet our demands and forced us to go for the work abstention again."

Mahbubul Alam, president of Chattogram Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI), said importers may fall victim of the strike and loss

finance if cargo handling at the outer anchorage of Chattogram port and 16 other private jetties remained interrupted even for a day.

He urged the authorities to take immediate steps to solve issue in order to avert negative impact on the economy.

Biswajit Saha, director of City Group, echoed the CCCI president's statement.

If commodities remain unloaded from mother vessels, the whole supply chain would face its impact. Besides,

local businesspeople would have to loss finance for paying the price of mother vessels' overstay, he said.

Around 55 bigger vessels carrying imported goods including coal, stone, cement clinker, slag, fertiliser and different commodity items were anchored at the outer anchorage, according to data from Chattogram port.

Cargos from most of these vessels are unloaded with lighter vessels and transported to different destinations across the country.

On Wednesday, Noujan Sramik Odhikar Songrokkhon Oikya Parisad, another faction of water transport workers, observed work abstention for around 20 hours with same demands.

The strike hampered regular activities at 16 private jetties along the Karnaphuli.

The fresh work abstention programme of Bangladesh Noujan Federation may put the cargo handling at Chattogram port's outer anchorage on a standstill.

PM to join COP 25 in Spain

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Torrejon Airport at 5:40pm (Spanish time) where she will be received by Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the World Tourism Organisation Hassan Mahmood Khandker.

On Monday morning, the PM will attend the inaugural ceremony of COP25 followed by a working session at Feria de Madrid (IFEMA).

She will have a meeting with Prime Minister of the Netherlands Mark Rutte there.

After attending the official luncheon, Sheikh Hasina will again participate in the working session of

the COP25.

In the afternoon, the Prime Minister will have another meeting with Spanish President Pedro Sanchez.

Later in the evening, she will attend the reception to be hosted by the king and queen of Spain at the Royal Palace.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen at a press conference on Wednesday said Bangladesh will highlight the "future strategies" to make its position as a resilient economy in the global map by overcoming the challenges appeared before the country due to climate change at the forthcoming Madrid

climate conference.

He said at the meeting with Spanish President Pedro Sanchez both will discuss issues of mutual interest, including development cooperation, trade and investment, and mutual cooperation on various global issues while core bilateral issues like Delta Plan 2100 will come up during the meeting with Prime Minister of the Netherlands Mark Rutte.

On December 2, Momen said, the prime minister will deliver her speech at Heads of State and Government Summit highlighting climate change and Bangladesh's position.

The PM will call upon the

global leaders to consider the financial compensation through further strengthening the Warsaw International Mechanism mandate.

She will also lay emphasis on "losses and damages" caused by climate change apart from highlighting initiatives taken by Bangladesh government.

On Monday morning (at 9am, Spanish time), Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will leave Madrid by another Biman flight. Hassan Mahmood Khandker will see her off at the airport.

The flight is scheduled to land at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) on Wednesday at 12:40am (Bangladesh time).

Colombia protest leaders push Duque on dialogue

AFP, Bogota

Protest leaders in Colombia on Thursday urged President Ivan Duque to include them in negotiations aimed at ending demonstrations that have rocked his right-wing government.

The National Strike Committee -- which groups unions, students, university lecturers and indigenous groups -- called in an open letter for an "inclusive, democratic and effective dialogue," while also vowing to continue protesting following Duque's announcement of a "national dialogue" earlier in the week.

"We believe that the slogan now is: the strike continues," said Jimmy Moreno, a spokesman for the committee backing the daily anti-government protests, which are the largest in decades and have led to clashes with security forces.

Hundreds of people, some playing musical instruments and others banging pots and pans, demonstrated on Thursday in the north of the capital Bogota.

That came after tens of thousands of protesters took to the streets in Bogota on Wednesday, shutting down public transportation. Similar demonstrations were held in Cali and Medellin.

The protests have been largely peaceful but sporadic violence has left four dead -- including a young man who died Monday after being wounded in clashes with riot police on Saturday. Some 500 people have been injured.

No sign of fall

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Karwan Bazar, it was found that the supply of vegetables was good yet prices were high.

Sellers said there was no crisis of vegetable supply, but the price in the wholesale market was high, which forced the retailers to buy at higher prices.

"Vegetables were damaged by cyclone [Bulbul] and rain. So, the production was hampered. So, we have to buy and sell vegetables at high prices," Saiful Islam, a vegetable wholesaler at Karwan Bazar, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Except for old potato and papayas, no vegetable was seen selling below Tk 40 a kg.

"I didn't buy vegetables at such high prices in the winter season. But if prices remain high, then how will we buy vegetables?" said Sonia Begum, a resident of Kathal Bagan.

"We mostly rely on vegetables ... and now we cannot afford vegetables," Sonia, a mother of three, told this correspondent at Karwan Bazar.

Her husband is a rickshaw puller and she is a domestic help.

Officials said vegetable cultivation suffered damage due to heavy rain in October and the effect of Cyclone Bulbul earlier this month.

Scientists

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"Beyond testing the feasibility of such a transformation in the lab, we wanted to know how extreme an adaptation is needed in terms of the changes to the bacterial DNA blueprint."

The team said the results were a significant step in synthetic biology and highlight the "incredible plasticity of bacterial metabolism" and could provide a framework for future carbon-neutral bioproduction.

"Our main aim was to create a convenient scientific platform that could enhance CO2 fixation, which can help address challenges related to sustainable production of food and fuels and global warming caused by CO2 emissions," said senior author Ron Milo, a systems biologist at the Weizmann Institute of Science.

"Converting the carbon source of E. coli, the workhorse of biotechnology, from organic carbon into CO2 is a major step towards establishing such a platform."

The authors say that one major limitation is that the bacteria currently release more CO2 than is consumed through carbon fixation. In addition, more research is needed before it's possible to discuss the scalability of the approach for industrial use.

The researchers say their next step will be to aim to supply energy through renewable electricity to address the problem of CO2 release, and improve their understanding of the conditions in which the bacterium can flourish.

"This feat is a powerful proof of concept that opens up a new exciting prospect of using engineered bacteria to transform products we regard as waste into fuel, food or other compounds of interest," said Professor Milo.

"It can also serve as a platform to better understand and improve the molecular machines that are the basis of food production for humanity and thus help in the future to increase yields in agriculture."

9 Bangladeshi workers

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involvement in several crimes affecting migrant workers.

These companies took several thousand Bangladeshis to Brunei in the last one year and took Tk 3-4 lakh from each of them as recruitment fees, said officials at the Bangladesh high commission.

All the workers recruited by these companies are jobless, said the

officials, adding that the companies were also involved in taking extortion money from migrant workers, non-payment, and forceful deportation of workers.

Air Vice Marshall (Rtd) Mahmud Hossain, the Bangladesh high commissioner in Brunei, said some manpower brokers had got engaged in some corrupt practices in recent

times.

"Some 6,000 Bangladeshi workers were recruited in the last one year without verification and attestation from the high commission. They are all jobless," he told The Daily Star.

Many of these workers also tried to work in other companies defying the country's law. The authorities

deported many of them, he added.

The irregularities should be checked immediately as some 40,000 Bangladeshi workers still have the opportunity to enter the Brunei labour market as the country will be undertaking several development projects in the next few years, he said.