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Strike called off after day-long trouble

Water transport workers had called it over 11-point demand; people, businesses suffer

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh Water Transport Workers Federation called off their strike last night, following a seven-hour meeting with worker leaders and labour officials at the Shrama Bhaban in the capital yesterday.

The strike had brought river communications around the country to a halt, disrupting communication and businesses.

AKM Mizanur Rahman, director general of the labour department, told the The Daily Star last night that the work stoppage ended after the “successful” discussion.

Afsar Hossain Chowdhury, organising secretary of the federation said they took the decision as the authorities had agreed to accept some of their 11-point demand.

Of the 11 demands, the meeting decided to implement “Khoraki Bhata” (an allowance for workers while they are in the vessels) within March 2020.

Besides, the labour ministry will take action if any worker does not get salary and other allowance as per the gazette issued by the ministry in 2016, it said.

A 17-member delegation of the federation led by its president and general secretary, took part in the meeting where Mizanur Rahman led the labour officials.

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Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina receives a bouquet from senior AL leaders at the inauguration of the party's Dhaka north and south units' council in the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday. Related story on page 2.

PHOTO: PID



The Month of Victory starts today

BSS, Dhaka

The nation is all set to celebrate the Month of Victory that starts today, through different festivities and programmes to be held throughout the month.

On December 16, 1971, Bangladesh became independent from the Pakistani occupation forces after a nine-month-long Liberation War.

Throughout the month, different socio-political and cultural organisations, and educational institutions will be arranging numerous programmes to celebrate the victory achieved under the

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Faraaz Hossain Courage Award ceremony today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Faraaz Hossain Courage Award-2019 will be given at a programme in the city's Radisson Blu Water Garden Hotel today.

PepsiCo Global has been giving the award since 2016 to recognise acts of exceptional courage by individuals setting examples of empathy for friends and colleagues.

At the programme slated to start at 6:00pm, the winner will be handed \$10,000 and a certificate as award. A jury board comprising dignitaries of the country selected the winner.

Sir Fazle Hasan Abed heads the jury board. The other members are Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, singer Rezwana Chowdhury Bonya, MCCI President Nihad Kabir, Standard Chartered Bank CEO Naser Ezaz Bijoy, American International School teacher Sabahat Jahan, PepsiCo Bangladesh Country Manager Debasish Deb and Faraaz's grandfather Latifur Rahman, chairman of Transcom Group.

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GOODS-LADEN VEHICLES ON JAMUNA BRIDGE

Weight limit cut, not enough yet

Experts say it's not up to int'l standard

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA) is going to enforce a reduced weight limit for goods-laden vehicles on the Bangabandhu Bridge from today to enhance its durability. But the new limit is still not consistent with the recommendations made by experts over a decade ago.

In an office order issued on October 31, the BBA set a maximum weight limit of 22 tonnes for two-axle vehicles (six wheels), 30 tonnes for three-axle (10 wheels), 40 tonnes for four-axle (14 wheels) and 49 tonnes for five-axle vehicles.

Previously, there was no maximum weight limit for two-axle vehicles. The limit was 33 tonnes for three-axle vehicles, 45 to 49 tonnes for four-axle and 61.8-96 tonnes for five-axle vehicles, a BBA official said.

Experts consider overloading of vehicles as a major cause for early damage to roads and bridges. This increases the maintenance cost of roads and bridges, they said.

The 4.8-kilometre bridge on the Jamuna river, which was opened to traffic in 1998, is a vital strategic economic road, rail, energy and telecommunication link between the northern and southern parts of the country.

The enforcement of standard weight limit for vehicles, trucks in particular, on this important bridge has been overlooked for years even after a five-member committee of the Buet's civil engineering department recommended in 2006 that international standard weight limit should be followed.

The BBA had formed the committee, comprising five Buet professors, in July 2006 after the deck of the bridge devolved cracks. According to its documents, the government never followed the recommended weight

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IS CAP OF MILITANT Prisons, cops trade blame

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prisons and the police authorities apparently traded blame over how two death row convicts in the Holey Artisan attack case managed to wear prayers caps emblazoned with IS logo.

A three-member Department of Prisons committee, formed after the incident, said the caps were handed to the militants at the court.

This contradicts a police-formed committee's primary finding that the caps were brought from jail.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, head of the three-member committee, Additional Inspector General of Prisons Col Abrar Hossain, said, “There is no chance of collecting the caps from jail ... We analysed CCTV footage and found that there was no negligence on part of the jail staffers.”

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VR headsets for 'productive' cows!



ODDITY CENTRAL

In an attempt to reduce cows' anxiety and hopefully increase their dairy production, a cattle farm in Moscow's Ramensky district has equipped its herd with specially-designed virtual reality headsets.

Research has shown that there is a link between a cow's emotional state and it's daily milk yield. In the past, we've heard of dairy farms playing soothing classical music for their cows in order to lower their stress level and increase productivity, but as technology advances, new mood-altering solutions are introduced. For example, the RusMoloko farm in Moscow recently equipped its cattle with VR systems adapted for the “structural features of cow heads”.

News of the unusual experiment at RusMoloko recently made national headlines in Russia, after a photo of a cow wearing a large virtual reality headset went viral on social media. At first, people

Petrol pump owners go on strike in 3 divisions

UNB, Dhaka

Leaders of Bangladesh Petrol Pump O Tank Lorry Malik Shramik Oikya Parishad have called an indefinite strike starting today in three divisions.

They called the strike to press home their 15-point demand.

The demands include paying 7.5 percent commission on fuel sale, introducing accident insurance of Tk 5 lakh for Tank Lorry workers, increasing fare of Tank Lorry, and stopping police

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PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 1

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5-15 12-45 3-45 5-19 7-00
JAMAAT 5-50 1-15 4-00 5-22 7-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

4-year-old found dead in Dinajpur

Family alleges rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Police recovered the body of a four-year-old girl in Parbatipur upazila of Dinajpur last night.

Mother of the victim -- Abida Sultana, of Dangapara village in the upazila -- alleged that her daughter was raped before being murdered.

Mokhesur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Parbatipur Police Station, said the victim had been missing since 3:00pm yesterday.

Family members and locals searched for the girl in the locality and made announcement through loudspeakers. Failing to find the girl, they informed police.

Meanwhile, a five-year-old boy of the locality told the villagers that he saw Abida with one of their neighbours Amzad Hossain, 22.

On information, police reached Amzad's house and found it locked from

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Wagons, decommissioned by Bangladesh Railway, lie covered in weeds and gather rust at a storage spot of Chattogram Port Yard in the port city. None of these was even put up for auction and in this state their value depreciates every day as no maintenance work is done.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Terrorists mustn't be released early

Says UK PM as ex-terror convict, released last year early, kills two in London Bridge attack

AFP, London

Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday vowed to review Britain's sentencing system after a convicted terrorist released early from prison was suspected of stabbing two people to death in an attack around London Bridge.

Police shot and killed Usman Khan after his suspected assault that seriously injured three other people was broken up by bystanders -- one armed with a five-foot (1.5-metre) narwhal tusk and another a fire extinguisher.

Video footage of the confrontation showed Khan, 28, being challenged by a man, reportedly a Polish chef, wielding the tusk -- believed to have been taken from a nearby historic hall -- and sprayed with the extinguisher.

He had been conditionally released from jail last December after serving less than half of a 16-year prison sentence for terrorism, and was wearing a suspected fake explosive device.

Moments later armed police officers arrived on the scene and shot him dead.

Investigators have said they are not actively seeking others in relation to the incident, which recalled a three-man terrorist assault two years ago on London Bridge that killed eight.

The latest attack came less than two weeks before Britain's general election, and politicians temporarily suspended campaigning.

“It does not make sense for us as a society to be putting people who have been convicted of terrorist offences... out on early release,” Johnson said as he visited the scene.

“We argue that people should serve the tariff, serve the

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