

BANSHKHALI PLANT KILLINGS

Writ petition seeks High Court order for judicial inquiry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights organisation Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) yesterday filed a writ petition with the High Court seeking its directive on the authorities concerned to conduct a judicial inquiry into the killings of workers at SS Power I Plant at Chattogram’s Banshkhali upazila on April 17.

ASK submitted the petition as a public interest litigation to the office concerned of the HC requesting it (HC) to order the government to take appropriate legal action against the perpetrators who are involved in killing and injuring the workers.

It also requested the HC for its directive on the authorities to give Tk 3 crore in compensation to the families of the workers who were killed, and Tk 2 crore compensation to families of the injured.

In the petition, it also urged the HC to ask the officials concerned of the government to withdraw the case filed against the workers, saying that officials’

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A considerable number of people were seen browsing plant shops near Dhaka University’s Curzon Hall amid the lockdown yesterday. With a whole week of Dhaka residents being cooped up in their homes, it seems a lot of them thought being surrounded by greenery would be a welcome change. However, following health guidelines is of utmost importance in this crucial time.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

‘STRICT’ LOCKDOWN

All but buses ply streets of Dhaka

MUNTAKIM SAAD

If one goes out in the streets of Dhaka, they might mistake the ongoing “strict lockdown” for a public transportation strike -- after all, all sorts of vehicles are plying the streets, save for buses. At some points of the city, there was enough congestion of vehicles and people to cause traffic jams.

Last week, police were reluctant to even spare frontline workers during vehicle checks. But they have since relaxed their grip on the situation, allowing more vehicles to pass through unchecked.

The government extended the ongoing restriction on movement for the third time from yesterday to April 28 to prevent the spread of coronavirus. But as the days go by, the number of private vehicles on the streets is on the rise.

This can be attributed to the restriction of movement of buses. More and more people are resorting to rickshaws, rented motorcycles and CNG-run auto-rickshaws to get to their destinations.

Some office-goers said the cost of travel has nearly tripled. Private service-holder Shamim Ahmed expressed these grievances to this correspondent. “I’ve been using ride-sharing services to get to Motijheel from Mirpur because there is no public transport available,” he said.

Upon visiting some key intersections in the capital’s Shyamoli, Asad Gate, Mohammadpur, Mirpur, Dhanmondi, Bijoy Sarani and Farmgate areas, this correspondent found moderate to high traffic congestion on the streets.

At College Gate, Asad Gate, Manik Mia Avenue and Farmgate check posts, policemen were seen sitting idly.

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24,600 migrant workers departed Bangladesh since April 17: CAAB

RASHIDUL HASAN

A total of around 24,600 migrant workers have left the country for their respective workplaces in five countries, including Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, and UAE, in the last five days since April 17 via special flights.

Air Vice-Marshal M Mafidur Rahman, chairman of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB), told The Daily Star yesterday.

In an inter-ministerial meeting on April 16, the government decided to operate around 100 special flights to Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, UAE, and Singapore in one week from April 17 so that several thousand migrant workers who remained stuck in the country due to a week-long ban on international flights, could return to their workplaces.

Twelve airlines were allowed to operate direct flights to these five countries. They are, Biman Bangladesh Airlines, US Bangla Airlines, Saudia, Oman Air, Salam Air,

Qatar Airways, Emirates, Etihad, Air Arabia, Air Arabia Abu Dhabi, Fly Dubai, and Singapore Airlines.

The government on April 11, suspended operations of all international passenger flights to and from Bangladesh for a week from April 14 to contain the spread of Covid-19.

Due to the extension of countrywide strict lockdown from April 21, CAAB also extended the operation of special flights till April 28.

Recently, CAAB also allowed airlines to operate direct flights to China, considering the need of Bangladeshi passengers.

According to the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) and Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (Atab), about 20,000 to 25,000 aspiring migrant workers were supposed to catch their due flights in a week starting from April 14.

Baira and Atab leaders have expressed satisfaction over the speedy return of

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Allocate Tk 35,000cr for pandemic-hit poor

Say speakers at sit-in

DU CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a sit-in yesterday said the emergency fund of Tk 10.5 crore announced by the prime minister on Wednesday for the poor and daily wage-earners hit hard by the lockdown is not sufficient. They demanded allocation of Tk 35,000 crore to meet the people’s needs.

The programme was held at Central Shaheed Minar in the capital, organised by Bhashani Parishad and Rashttrachinta.

Speakers said though Tk 10.5 crore may sound like a lot, it is insufficient for the five crore economically insolvent people of the country. If the amount is equally divided, each person will receive only Tk 2, they added.

Economist Reza Kibria said, “We’re only proposing an amount that is suitable for the situation. This money is about helping people survive, and it is not enough for five crore people.”

Speaking on the government’s decision to distribute the fund based on locally prepared lists, Kibria said, “Please, do not disburse this money through local Awami League members. Do it instead through NGOs and the World Food Programme.”

Gonoshasthaya Kendra founder Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury said, “The prime minister has declared Tk 10.5 crore for all the poor people in the country. But what can

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Cholera germs in rivers, canals behind Barishal’s diarrhoea cases: IEDCR

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

The widespread cases of diarrhoea in Barishal division is due to the presence of cholera-causing germs in rivers and canals, from where water is being taken and used for household work, Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) and Barishal Civil Surgeon Office have confirmed.

Divisional Health Office sources said IEDCR has released a report of one of the two teams sent by the institute to investigate the matter. Information gathered from preliminary investigation of the other team has been relayed to the civil surgeon as well.

In light of the report and information, health officials of Barishal division recommended not to drink water from rivers, canals and ponds, nor use it for household work. Authorities are miking in the streets, requesting people not use such water.

Barishal Divisional Health Director Dr

Basudeb Kumar Das said IEDCR sent a team of six people in March, and it worked from March 1-14 at Barguna and found cholera causing-germs in patients’ stool.

According to the preliminary report sent by IEDCR, cholera rapid test was performed on stool samples of 20 people, and the cholera-causing bacterium V cholerae was found in three of the samples. After culturing the samples at IEDCR’s lab, E coli, another cholera-causing bacterium, was also found.

IEDCR Director Prof Tahmina Shirin signed the report, Barishal divisional health director confirmed. Barishal division usually experiences a wave of diarrhoea cases this time of the year, but this year, cases appear to be excessive. Using water from deep tube-wells or boiling the water taken from river and canals were recommended.

Meanwhile, Barishal District Civil Surgeon Dr Monwar Hossain said another team has been working in Barishal for the

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FIRST SET OF METRO TRAINS

3 of 6 coaches shifted to Diabari depot

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three coaches, out of six of the first set of metro trains, have been shifted to the metro rail depot in Dhaka’s Diabari yesterday.

The next three coaches are expected to be shifted today, ABM Arifur Rahman, a project manager of Mass Rapid Transit Line or MRT-6, told The Daily Star.

“They [coaches] were kept inside the workshop’s inspection area. Apart from the individual test of the coaches, integrated test would be carried out,” he added.

The test may take up to two months and then the authorities will go for trial run which may take more than six months, sources said.

Registering a major development to the country’s first ever metro rail project, the first set of metro trains reached Dhaka on Wednesday.

Two barges carrying the coaches anchored at the newly-constructed jetty of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited (DMTCL), the implementing agency of the project, at Dhaka’s Diabari.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said the works for shifting the coaches from jetty to depot started in the morning.

He said he second set of trains was



Three coaches like this one were taken to the metro rail depot in the capital’s Diabari yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

loaded to barge on Wednesday and those are expected to reach the depot on June 16 and third and fourth sets are expected to reach within August 13 and the fifth set on September 17.

The minister said this while talking

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to the officials of Roads and Highways Department’s Gopalganj zone and Bangladesh Road Transport Authority and Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation through a video conference.

Using ‘movement pass’ to peddle heroin!

Man held at capital checkpoint

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab yesterday arrested a man for carrying heroin in a private car, while possessing a “movement pass” issued for delivering masks and hand sanitiser.

The arrestee was identified as Sawmik Ahmed Siddique.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of the elite force set up a checkpoint in Dhaka’s Mohammadpur area and arrested him around 3:30am, Lt Col Imran Ullah Sarker, commanding officer of Rab-2, told The Daily Star.

The Rab members recovered 320gm of heroin from his possession and seized the car.

During primary interrogation, the arrestee told Rab that there is a huge demand for masks and sanitiser during the pandemic.

Using this opportunity, he took a “movement pass” with the excuse of delivering those items.

He had been buying drugs from different areas and supplying those around Dhaka, the Rab official said.

A case was filed with Mohammadpur Police Station in this regard.

Traders at Rajshahi market open shops defying restrictions

RU CORRESPONDENT

Traders of a market in Rajshahi opened their shops yesterday, defying the government-imposed restrictions.

Although they announced a movement on Wednesday to open shops at RDA Market, they did so yesterday morning without any demonstration.

Following the opening, the business leaders and Rajshahi deputy commissioner held a meeting at the DC office around 11am yesterday when the DC asked them to keep their shops closed till April 28 in accordance with the ongoing “strict lockdown”.

Rajshahi Deputy Commissioner Abdul Jalil said the traders agreed to comply with that. “So, we did not deploy any magistrate there,” he said.

They also agreed to comply with government guidelines and wait till April 28 to reopen their shops, he added.

Golam Ruhul Kuddus, additional deputy commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police, echoed the DC.

On April 8, traders at a press conference demanded an “alternative to lockdown” to reopen their shops before Eid.

They came up with a proposal to form a committee with district administration, police, and market representatives to monitor health guidelines at the market, and keep their shops open during the “lockdown”.

The traders said as the district administration did not take steps regarding the proposal, they started reopening their shops yesterday morning.

VACATING STAY ORDER ON BAIL

SC to hear Erfan Salim’s petition on Sunday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday fixed Sunday for hearing a petition filed by Erfan Salim, son of Awami League MP MP Haji Md Salim, for vacating its stay order on the High Court bail for him in a case filed over attacking a navy officer in October last year.

A full bench of the Appellate Division of the SC, headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, set the date, after Erfan’s lawyer Abdul Baset Majumdar requested the apex court for early hearing on the petition.

Additional Attorney General Sk Md Morshed represented the state.

Erfan, now in a Kashimpur jail, submitted the petition to the Appellate Division on April 6 through his lawyers along with the certified copy of the HC verdict that granted him bail in the case.

Citing the petition, another of Erfan’s lawyers, Sayed Ahmed Raja, told The Daily Star that his client has been languishing in jail for more than five months, although the maximum punishment of the charge, for which he has been arrested, is six months’ imprisonment.

Erfan’s mother has died in November last year, and his father has been infected with Covid-19, and therefore, the Appellate Division’s stay order on his HC bail needs to be vacated for his release from jail, the lawyer said.

Following a petition filed by the state, the apex court chamber judge on March 28 stayed for four weeks the HC verdict that granted bail to Erfan.

The SC chamber judge asked the state to move a regular leave to appeal petition before its full bench in four weeks against the HC verdict.

Following a bail petition filed by Erfan, the HC on March 18 granted him permanent bail in the case. Lt Wasif Ahmed Khan of Bangladesh Navy filed the case with Dhanmondi Police Station on October 25 against Erfan (37) and three others for attacking him.



Bangabandhu Square Monument in the capital’s Gulistan area has become riddled with garbage. People have dumped plastic bottles, polythene bags and other waste in the pool surrounding the main sculpture, in a show of blatant lack of common civic sense.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Journo imposter arrested in Ctg for blackmailing people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday arrested an alleged fraudster and journalist impersonator for blackmailing people in Chattogram city’s Pahartali area.

The arrestee was identified as Masud Rana (35) from the port city’s Uttar Kattali area, said police.

Law enforcers recovered two ID cards of “Ctg Crime TV” and “Daily Bhorer Janala”, a machete, two knives, three toy pistols, 24 yaba pills and a camera from his possession.

Palash Kanti Nath, additional deputy commissioner of Chattogram Metropolitan Police (West Zone), told The Daily Star, “Masud lives in a flat of a building of one Jamiur Alam in Pahartali’s Akata Residential area, introducing himself as a journalist.”

Police said with the help of two women, Masud used to take pictures of people in a “compromising situation” in a bid to blackmail them afterwards.

At one stage, the landlord came to know about the incident and later informed police of it, said the ADC.

Police also found Masud to be sued in seven cases with different police stations under Special Powers Act, Explosives Act, and Firearms Act, said the police official.