

BSC put Banglar Samriddhi in harm's way Claims mariners' body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

Bangladesh Shipping Corporation showed sheer negligence by allowing Banglar Samriddhi to sail to a war zone in Ukraine, claimed leaders of Bangladesh Merchant Marine Officers' Association yesterday.

They also demanded a high-level committee be formed to investigate negligence, if any, on the part of BSC. The attack on the ship caused the death of a Bangladeshi mariner and damage to the state-owned vessel.

Addressing a press conference at its office in Chattogram, BMMOA General Secretary Shakawat Hossain said the vessel's sailing to a war zone could have been avoided and it seems that BSC, the vessel's operating company, showed sheer negligence in this regard.

Who in the BSC gave the vessel permission to go to the war zone?

Its Vice-President Mahbubur Rahman was present.

It is questionable why the vessel entered the Ukrainian port limits on February 22 although the area was declared a war zone by Joint War Committee, a non-government administrative body, on February 15, Shakawat said while reading out a statement.

"We think the decision of sending the vessel to the area even after it was declared a war zone was wrong," he said.

Mentioning the war risk clause of BIMCO (Baltic and International maritime Council), Shakawat said according to the Charter-Party (CP) rules, any ship owning company can issue embargos on the sailing of its ship to a war or piracy-prone region.

Who in the BSC gave the vessel permission to go to the war zone? he asked.

He alleged that no steps were seen immediately to evacuate the sailors after the ship got stranded in the war-torn zone.

The BMMOA leader urged the government to declare late mariner Hadsur Rahman a national hero and demanded bringing back of his body.

In a briefing on Thursday, BSC Executive Director (Commercial) Bijush Dutta said they had to allow the ship to go to the Ukrainian port to abide by the Charter-Party agreement.

"If our [the ship's] insurer gives permission to the ship to go anywhere by taking war risk premium, we have to allow the sailing according to the Charter-Party (CP) agreement."

CP is a document containing all the terms and conditions of the contract between shipowner and a charterer.



A blanket of dust covers the Tongi Bazar bus stop area in Gazipur as part of the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway is dug up for implementing a development project. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Time to end Covid-19 policies: IMF

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh needs to end the easy policy measures it ushered in to soften the blow of the global coronavirus pandemic, closely monitoring the bank asset quality and inflation, and stand ready to normalise its monetary policy, said the International Monetary Fund.

The Washington-based multilateral agency made the observation at the conclusion of its 2021 article IV consultation with Bangladesh.

During an Article IV consultation, an IMF team of economists visits a country to assess economic and financial developments and discuss the country's economic and financial policies with government and central bank officials.

The team had called in to Bangladesh in December last year and placed their report on the visit before the IMF executive board last week.

"The authorities reacted quickly and decisively to address the economic fallout of the pandemic," the IMF said.

Entering the crisis with macroeconomic stability, the authorities announced support packages equivalent to 6 percent

of GDP with space from curtailing non-priority current spending and suspending low-priority capital projects.

The prompt and decisive policy response to the pandemic has facilitated a faster recovery.

But the time has come to end the Covid-19 policies – although in an orderly manner.

The pandemic has increased the

The caps on interest rates need to be phased out to improve credit allocation.

existing vulnerabilities in the banking sector that could impair medium-term growth, the IMF said.

The caps on interest rates need to be phased out to improve credit allocation.

The multilateral agency stressed the need to strengthen banking regulation and supervision, improve corporate governance and reform legal systems to stem the flow of high default loans, particularly in the state-owned commercial banks.

They urged the authorities to implement the recommendations of the 2021 safeguards assessment and to further strengthen the AML/CFT

framework.

The IMF welcomed the completion of the audits related to COVID-19 spending and urged the authorities to publish them without further delay.

Noting that reserves coverage is adequate, they emphasised the need to safeguard reserves and cautioned against using them for non-monetary purposes.

Growth is expected to pick up to 6.6 percent this fiscal year supported by a robust rebound in exports, continued implementation of the stimulus packages and accommodative monetary and fiscal policies.

On the other hand, inflation is projected to rise to 5.9 percent in fiscal 2021-22 driven by higher international commodity prices, it said.

The mission noted the risks, including the uncertain path of the pandemic, low vaccination rates and vulnerabilities to climate change.

The IMG emphasised that continuing with sound macroeconomic policies, modernising policy frameworks and addressing structural impediments will be key to successfully graduate from the least-developed country status.

DUAA to honour 100 posthumously

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University Alumni Association is going to accord posthumous honours to 100 dignitaries to celebrate 100 years of the university.

They will be awarded at the DUAA's get-together held at the central playground of Dhaka University on March 12.

DUAA is observing the centenary with the theme: "Dhaka University Alumni in the Progress of Bangladesh", reads a press release.

Motiul Islam, oldest living student of the university, will be present as the chief guest at the inaugural session presided over by DUAA President AK Azad.

Members are requested to collect their security passes and other materials from the Alumni Floor of the Senate Building between 10:00am and 7:00pm by March 10, the release added.

Swechchhasebak League leader in jail for mugging

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

A Swechchhasebak League leader on Thursday landed in jail on charge of snatching money.

Sirajul Islam Robin is the joint secretary of Rangpur district Swechchhasebak League.

Citing the case statement, Akhtaruzzaman Pradhan, officer-in-charge of Tajhat Police Station, said Nazmul Shakib, of Alamnagar Khamarpara area of Rangpur city, was going home after withdrawing Tk 50,000 from an ATM booth. Sirajul along with some cohorts forcibly took Shakib to Rangpur Carmichael College campus and took Tk 54,000 from him on February 26, the OC added.

France lifts Covid-19 restrictions on Bangladesh

BSS, *Dhaka*

France has lifted restrictions on Bangladesh and decided to consider it a "Green" listed country with regards to Covid-19.

The French Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Interior said the decision came into effect from Thursday, a handout said here yesterday.

By dint of the latest decision by the French government, travellers from Bangladesh who got vaccinated with vaccines of BioNTech-Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca (Vaxevria/Covishield), and Johnson & Johnson will no more be required to have tests to arrive in France and depart from France.

A proof of a complete vaccination schedule will be sufficient to arrive in France from Bangladesh.

For unvaccinated travellers from Bangladesh, the obligation to present a negative test (RT-PCR) to travel to France will remain effective.

KU teacher sent to jail

UNB, *Khulna*

A Khulna court on Thursday sent a lecturer of Khulna University in a case filed over torturing his wife for dowry.

The court rejected the bail petition of Sadhan Chandra Swarnakar, a teacher of the environmental sciences department.

On January 31, Puja Swarnakar, the accused's wife, lodged the case with the court alleging that her husband tortured her for dowry.

To be evacuated

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asked about the matter, Momen said: "They are now busy protecting their land – they can't respond to Bangladesh's queries."

The sailors rescued from the vessel are in a bunker, said Khairunnesa, the mother of Mohammad Omor Faruk Tuhin, the chief engineer of Banglar Samriddhi, at a press briefing arranged by the Bangladesh Merchant Marine Officers' Association (BMMOA) at its office yesterday.

She could speak with her son several times since the vessel got stranded at the inner channel of the Ukrainian port of Olvia, but for the last two days, they could not speak due to poor network on the vessel following the missile attack.

In the last two days, her son managed to send her voice messages and the last message she received was at 9 am yesterday.

A group of Bangladeshi business persons in Ukraine got in touch with BMMOA President Anam Chowdhury offering to help with the evacuation of the sailors, said Md Shakawat Hossain, the association's general secretary, at the press briefing.

The BMMOA connected the group with the director-general of the department of shipping, who then set the wheels in motion for the rescue act.

The group coordinated with the shipping and foreign ministries, the Prime Minister's Office as well as the associated offices in Ukraine and Russia and arranged the evacuation of the sailors along with the body of the deceased sailor from the damaged ship by a

tugboat and took them to a bunker in the shore.

They are also arranging for the safe passage of the sailors to another country, Hossain added.

In another development, the Bangladesh government is now fearing disruptions in financial transactions for Russia-funded projects for the sanctions on the Soviet nation by the US, the UK, the EU and the Group of Seven nations.

"The situation may be complicated if there are more sanctions on Russian banks or SWIFT or the big companies," Momen said yesterday.

One of the major projects being implemented with Russian funding is the Rooppur nuclear power plant.

Asked if the project will be affected, Momen said it is not clear yet as the sanctions are still in their initial days.

"At this moment, we are not facing any problem. Everything will depend on the situation in the coming days."

Woman killed

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criminals.

Noapotong UP Chairman Chanu Mong Marma said, "Villagers of Aluche Para went looking for Chuiramong in the forest as she had not returned home till evening and found her dead near a creek.

"Around a week ago Chuirongma had given her farm house to the woodcutters who were from Tanchangya community to stay," he said, demanding immediate arrest of the culprits.

Even jail stay not free

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"decent" space to sleep.

Those failing to bribe the nexus are sometimes not allowed to use the washrooms when needed. At times, some are forced to give foot massage to convicts and the wards in-charge, several inmates said.

All prisoners get inadequate and low-quality food. The quality dips when they don't pay the bribe, they also said.

"You will have to pay Tk 200 if you want to have a proper dinner or lunch with fish or meat," said an inmate.

Jail officials said they give Khichuri or bread with vegetables or sweets in the morning; rice, lentils and vegetables for lunch; and rice, fish or meat and lentil for dinner.

For comments, The Daily Star tried to reach IG Prisons Brig Gen ASM Anisul Haque over phone repeatedly over the last two weeks. He neither responded to the phone calls nor texted back.

These correspondents went to his office, but he refused to talk on the matter.

Additional IG prisons Col Abrar Hossain and DIG Dhaka Division Touhidul Islam also did not receive phone calls from The Daily Star.

JAIL SITUATION

The Cox's Bazar district jail is among the most congested prisons in the country, accommodating at least 4,508 inmates against its capacity of 830, as of February 27.

Forty inmates were using one washroom. Inmates

also don't have enough water to bathe properly.

As his attention was drawn to the matter, Nesar Alam, superintendent of the jail, said they have taken steps to install two pumps which will supply 10,000 litres of water to the jail every hour. "We are making the arrangements so that prisoners can take a bath twice or even thrice a day. It's because they become exhausted from staying in the crowded conditions for a long time."

Chattogram Central Jail had 7,305 inmates against its capacity of 1,885, said sources at the Department of Prisons.

AKM Fazlul Hoque, deputy inspector general (DIG) of Chattogram division, said they have some limitations, but they were trying their best to ensure better facilities for inmates.

Similar conditions were found in Chapainawabganj and Natore jails – which were accommodating 1,011 and 1,012 inmates against their capacity of 175 and 200 respectively.

Superintendent Abul Kalam Azad said the number of inmates at Sherpur district jail was four times its capacity to accommodate 100.

As many as 10,174 inmates were in the Dhaka Central Jail. It is almost double its capacity.

Asked about the different irregularities there, Senior Jail Superintendent Subhash Chandra Ghosh admitted they have some "inadequacies". He said there might have been some "bad people", including staffers, inside

the jail.

"But we have a strong vigilance, and if anyone is found doing anything illegal, stern action will be taken against them," he said.

Contacted on February 27, Sayed Belal Hossain, additional secretary (jail wing) of the home ministry, said they have already taken multiple projects to increase the jails' capacity. New buildings have been built in a number of jails in districts.

Sources at those prisons, however, said only those paying the bribes were being allowed to stay in the new buildings.

[Our correspondents in Chattogram, Rajshahi, and Mymensingh contributed to this report.]

The West horrified

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that was the site of the world's worst nuclear disaster in 1986.

"Russian tank commanders knew what they were firing at," Zelensky alleged, adding: "The terrorist state now resorted to nuclear terror."

For its part, Moscow said the attack on Zaporizhzhia was staged by "Ukrainian sabotage groups with the participation of foreign mercenaries".

After phoning Zelensky during the night, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson demanded an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council.

He accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of "reckless actions" that "could now directly

threaten the safety of all of Europe", and pressed anew for a ceasefire.

Putin, however, has been unrepentant about an offensive that has cast Russia into the economic, sporting and cultural equivalent of exile to Siberia, reports AFP.

Russia has intensified strikes across the country during the nine days of conflict, with fresh reports of civilian casualties and devastating damage, particularly in southern areas near Kherson, the first city to fall to Moscow's troops.

In a second round of talks held Thursday, Moscow agreed to a Ukrainian request for humanitarian corridors to allow terrified residents to

flee.

But there was no clarity on how the corridors would work, and no sign of any move towards a ceasefire.

The port city of Mariupol, east of Kherson, is cut off without water or electricity in the depths of winter.

Mariupol's deputy mayor Sergei Orlov told BBC radio that its humanitarian situation was "terrible", after 40 hours of continuous shelling including on schools and hospitals.

In the northern city of Chernihiv, 33 people died Thursday when Russian forces hit residential areas, including schools and a high-rise apartment block, according to local officials.

The spin stops

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before his own death.

Warne's death plunged the cricket world into mourning.

Despite retiring from international cricket as the then highest Test wicket-taker 15 years ago, Warne continues to be close to cricket lovers' hearts.

Twitter was lit up by hundreds of tweets within minutes as people ranging from former and current cricketers such as Viv Richards, Brian Lara, Sachin Tendulkar, Shoab Akhtar, Wasim Akram, Kevin Pietersen, Adam Gilchrist, Mustafizur Rahman, Mushfiqur Rahim, Virat Kohli, and football legend Gary Lineker to media personalities such as Stephen Fry and Piers

Morgan grieved Warne's loss.

Heartbreak emojis from the famous and fans alike dominated the social media site in the immediate aftermath.

Warne singlehandedly revolutionised the difficult but immensely rewarding art of leg spin in the early 1990s, and came closer to perfecting it than anyone in the game's history.

Along with Sri Lankan off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran, he can be credited for the revival of spin. His battles with the two preeminent batters of his era, Tendulkar and Lara, are the stuff of cricketing lore.

To this day, whenever a leg spinner impresses, commentators bring up the inevitable comparison with

the all-time great.

Apart from his Test exploits, he was the player of the match in the semifinal and final of the 1999 World Cup, which Australia won. He was also named one of Wisden's five cricketers of the 20th century.

The Australian held great value for the game as an incisive and often witty voice in his post-playing role as commentator and pundit.

Youngsters still look up the "ball of the century", with which Warne announced himself in the 1993 Ashes. Sauntering up for his first ball against archrivals England, Warne bowled one that swerved into and past Mike Gatting's legs before spitting back across his body to clean bowl the England great.

Although the most

famous, it is by no means the only time the Victorian left good batsmen looking foolish with his unmatched skill.

Although he never captained Australia, his ultra-sharp cricketer brain came into focus when he captained the least-fancied Rajasthan Royals to the inaugural IPL trophy in 2008.

In the future, young spinners typing his name into YouTube search box and encountering Warne's invaluable advice and his razor-sharp analysis, will be saddened to know that there will be no new inspiration from the king of spin.

As the cricket world resumes spinning, it will know that it lost more than a man. It lost an institution.