

BENAPOLE PORT 20 hurt in attack on workers

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Benapole

At least 20 people were injured as miscreants hurled crude bombs on the workers of Benapole Land Port in Jashore's Sharsha upazila, triggering a clash over the responsibility of the port's cargo handling work yesterday.

Import and export between Bangladesh and India and the loading and unloading of goods were halted at the port after the clash broke out and lasted for around three hours till 1:30pm.

Wahiduzzaman Wahid, contractor of cargo handling workers and president of Sharsa Jubsa League, said a group of miscreants on two microbuses came in front of the main gate of the port around 10:30am and attacked the port workers' union office.

Loading and unloading inside the port stopped immediately as the miscreant started hurling bombs, he said.

Locals said the workers began fighting back immediately, adding that around 70 crude bombs went off during the clash and left at least 20 people, including workers and pedestrians, injured.

Wahid has been involved in a long-standing feud with Rasheduzzaman Rashed, a councillor of Benapole municipality to take over cargo handling work in the port, they said.

Benapole police and officials from Sharsha and Jhikargachha police stations, on information, rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control, said Jewel Imran, assistant superintendent of Jashore police.

"Rashed led the attack and police are currently looking for him. Three of the attackers have already been arrested."

This correspondent tried to contact Rashed for comments but found his mobile phone switched off.



Ukrainian servicemen walk past the wreck of a Russian tank in the village of Lukyanivka outside Kyiv on Sunday as Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues. PHOTO : REUTERS

TIPU MURDER Motive, mastermind yet to be known

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Investigators are yet to find a satisfactory answer from the alleged shooter on the motive and mastermind behind the recent double murder.

Many of the information provided by alleged hitman Masum Mohammad alias Akash in primary interrogation contradicts the findings of detectives, said an official of the Detective Branch of Police.

"A professional shooter and a cool-headed hitman like Masum may mislead us with the information," he told The Daily Star wishing anonymity.

A DB officer who is involved with the investigation said they are yet to find the exact motive and the masterminds as the murder plan were executed through the cut-out systems, where people at several layers are involved.

The officer hopes to identify those involved in the second level after the arrest of Masum's associate who drove the motorcycle in which the hitman fled after shooting down former Motijheel Thana Awami League general secretary Jahidul Islam Tipu.

A college student, Samia Afran Jamal Prity, was also killed in the incident at Amtala Masjid

in Shahjahanpur on Thursday.

The hunt for the associate, whose name Masum has disclosed, is on.

Since the murders were perpetrated in the cut-out system, those involved at different levels might be killed to wipe out evidence. So law enforcers have mounted extra vigil in the Motijheel area.

Tipu's wife Farhana Islam Doly, a women councillor in the Motijheel area, yesterday said she along with her children have been living in a sense of insecurity as the masterminds are yet to be identified and arrested.

Rifat Rahman Shamim, the deputy commissioner of the Motijheel division of DB, told The Daily Star that during the preliminary interrogation, Masum admitted that he shot Tipu but could not give a satisfactory answer to the motive behind the killing.

He said he agreed to kill Tipu as those who assigned him promised to get him off the cases he has been facing. But it did not seem logical.

Masum has been placed on a seven-day remand after Mohammad Yasin Sikder, the investigation officer of the case filed over the murders, placed him before a Dhaka court with a 15-day remand prayer.



Govt chokes

FROM PAGE 1
the parliament with a separate entity to execute it. The entity will be held responsible for failing to make the act effective.

But rules can remain ineffective if a clause contradicts any other law. "The rules would be treated as an additional duty of DoE."

Hasan cited the case of China that have managed to fight air pollution after adopting the Air Pollution Control Act in 2013. Between 2013 and 2019, there has been a 29 percent drop in particulate matter pollution on average in China.

"The quality of air has been dropping each year -- there is no scope to sit idle," she added.

K a m r u z z a m a n Majumder, chairman of the Department of Environmental Science at Stamford University and also the founder of the Centre for Atmospheric Pollution Studies, echoed the same.

With the level of air pollution that Bangladesh faces, an act was the need of the hour, he said.

The law ministry initially accepted the bid for a separate clean air bill, said Saber Hossain Chowdhury, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the environment, forest, and climate change ministry.

But the cabinet division was in favour of rules under the existing law.

"A law is always superior to rules. However, even if rules are executed strictly, there will be a change in the current condition of our air," Chowdhury added. Majumder echoed the

same.

WHAT'S IN THE RULES
The law ministry is now sitting on the draft of the 'Clean Air Rules' under the Environment Conservation Act 1995. Once vetted, the rule will come into effect through a gazette notification.

A National Executive Council (NEC) would be formed. The 26-member council will be empowered to advise, instruct and recommend the ministries, directorates, organisations, establishments and individuals to control air pollution.

The cabinet secretary and additional secretary (pollution control) of the environment ministry will lead the NEC.

The NEC can recommend the restriction on people's outdoor movement, the closure of industries, schools and colleges in particular towns, regions and cities in consideration of air pollution levels.

The director-general of the DoE can direct the potential source of air pollution including industries and projects to set up air quality monitoring mechanisms. Those will be connected to the central monitoring system of the DoE.

The rules also have provisions for measuring the emission level of vehicles during licence renewal. The DoE can recommend the BRTA prevent polluting vehicles from plying on the road.

The law ministry will take the necessary steps to make the rules effective, Abdul Hamid, the director-general of the DoE, told The Daily Star.

Cholera breaks out in city

FROM PAGE 1
least half of the other half, whose pathogens could be identified, have cholera.

Dr Ahmed points out that summer time diarrhoea and cholera flare-ups are normal, but this time, it is the scale that made the difference.

On March 26, approximately 1,200 patients visited the hospital, while around the same time last year, there were 600.

In March 2021, it saw a staggering 750 patients in one day.

However, this year the hospital has been logging over a thousand patient visits every single day since March 13.

In Jatrabari's Shuti Khalpar, locals say every other house has diarrhoea. Nearly 30 percent of all patients who visited the emergency ward of the Islamia General Hospital on Dhalpur Road were suffering from diarrhoea, intake records show.

Shuti Khalpar is an area where vehicles are a rare sight, but pedestrians through the broken tarmac. Hawkers with baskets sit smack-dab in the middle of the road, despite it being a major street.

Anybody in the locality, who can afford a Tk 30 five-gallon water canister, purchases their drinking water here.

As a severely dehydrated Sohel Rana was hooked on an IV saline, listless in bed, his colleague wondered what caused this.

"We are bachelors sharing a flat. We work as collectors for a

microfinance NGO. We buy our drinking water, but we use supply water for washing and [sometimes for] drinking," said Rana's colleague.

Nazma Begum, a resident in Shuti Khalpar, held up a glass of supply water with greenish-brown tinge. It smelled mildly of urine, suggesting cross-contamination with sewage lines.

In 2019, Jatrabari's water sample was tested by the local government and rural development (LGRD) ministry. The tests found both coliform and heterotrophic bacteria -- vibrio cholerae is a type of the latter.

Based on their reports, the High Court had demanded an explanation from the Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority.

Dr Ahmed said the water is perfectly safe at the source but gets contaminated when being supplied through the network.

Abdul Khaleque, operator of Dakshinkhan's Mollapara water pump, explained how the supply water gets contaminated: "A new pipeline has been introduced a week ago. We have to stop supplying water to the old one when we supply to the new. As a result, sewage water seeps into the pipelines because of negative pressure."

Taslma, a 40-year-old homemaker, gets the supply water in her house. She had just returned home following her treatment at icddr,b a few hours before the filing of

this report.

Her block in Mollapara houses 15 families living in adjacent rooms in a row. It had six diarrhoea patients.

"I used to drink boiled water, but I still got sick. The toilet water often gets mixed with the supply water," she said.

Md Muzahidur Rahman, executive engineer of Zone 9, which includes Dakshinkhan, said, "The problem will be solved once the [pipeline] work is finished. We have been notified by the icddr,b about the outbreak. The situation may improve within a week."

Meanwhile, in Jatrabari's Gobindapur area, the breaches in supply lines are directly caused by the residents.

Hosepipes flow out directly from the side of the Gobindapur water pump and run across the road and to residences. They are stomped on by pedestrians and run over by rickshaws. Resultant holes are temporarily fixed with only duct tape.

Pradeep Kanti Das, a resident in the area, said, "We had to resort to this [hosepipe] because our water comes from another pump from across the highway. As so many heavy vehicles ply the road, we get no water [from there]. All the homes get their water through hosepipes."

Pump operator Shipon Miah, standing next to Pradeep while he talked, feigned ignorance about the pipes.

"All our pipes run five feet underground. They are illegal. I know nothing

about this... I came here three months ago," he said.

Pradeep countered, "Wasa officials know about this. None of this is free water. We pay monthly bills for it."

Al Amin, Wasa's executive engineer in Zone-1, said, "We have heard about a diarrhoea outbreak from icddr,b and have ramped up monitoring. We have checked our systems and found nothing wrong."

"We have still asked the chlorination department to be vigilant. There is a lot of water demand during the summer; so if there are leaks in the pipe, negative pressure causes sewage to seep in. Furthermore, water reservoirs are often unclean."

Turkey says second mine found floating off its coast

AFP, Istanbul

Turkey yesterday said a second mine which could have come from Ukraine was discovered off its coast near Bulgaria, adding that experts had been sent to defuse it.

Russia had warned more than a week ago that some aged mines that Ukrainians had deployed in the Black Sea against its invading troops had become dislodged from their cables by storms and could drift as far as the Straits of Bosphorus and the Mediterranean Sea.

Schools to stay open in Ramadan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The education ministry yesterday directed secondary schools and colleges to remain open 24 days into Ramadan, which is likely to begin on April 2.

Schools and colleges usually remain closed throughout the arabic month. But the decision was made to recover the learning losses caused by the coronavirus restrictions, the Secondary and Higher Education Division said in a circular.

The institutions will close on April 26. In-person classes in schools fully resumed in mid-March after over 720 days of closure in two phases.

The primary and mass education ministry earlier directed primary schools and colleges to remain open until the 20th Ramadan.

Govt announces Ramadan work hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Work hours at government, semi-government, autonomous and semi-autonomous institutions during Ramadan will be from 9:00am to 3:30pm.

Banks will remain open from 9:30am to 4:00pm.

The decision was made yesterday at a cabinet meeting held with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

JMB man sentenced to life in prison

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Lalmonirhat*

A court in Lalmonirhat yesterday sentenced Ruhul Amin Babu, a member of banned militant outfit JMB, to life in prison.

District and Sessions Judge Mizanur Rahman delivered the verdict.

The convict is from Shamsernagar Munsirhat village in Patgram upazila of the district.

In 2018, Rab members arrested him with a foreign pistol, a magazine with bullets, 77 extremist books, and 250 books related to militancy.

Public Prosecutor Akmal Hossain Ahmed said Ruhul was found guilty of anti-state activities, he said.

Bill to curb banking fraud

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Payment and Settlement Systems Bill 2022 was placed in parliament yesterday with a provision to punish top bank officials for fraudulence committed digitally.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal placed the bill which has provisions for up to five years in prison or a fine of up to Tk 50 lakh, or both for banking fraud.

The owner, director, chief executive, manager, secretary or any other official of a bank can be removed from their position by the Bangladesh Bank, the bill states.

Ukraine pauses

FROM PAGE 1
to-face peace talks with Russia in Turkey.

On the ground, there was no sign of respite for civilians in besieged cities, especially in Mariupol, whose mayor said 160,000 people were still trapped inside.

In the southern town of Mykolaiv, under heavy assault for weeks, the bombardments appeared to be easing.

One person was killed and another wounded by overnight Russian bombardment in the Lugansk city of Rubizhne, according to regional Ukrainian officials.

A senior Turkish official said the Istanbul talks were set begin yesterday, but the Kremlin later said they were not likely to begin till today, adding it was important they take place face to face despite scant progress in negotiations so far.

Mykhailo Podolyak, head of the Ukrainian delegation, told Reuters the start time depended on when the delegations could get there.

Ukrainian officials have repeatedly suggested in recent weeks that they believe Russia could now be more willing to compromise, as any hope Moscow may have held of imposing a new government on Kyiv slipped away in the face of stiff Ukrainian resistance and heavy Russian losses.

Russia's military signalled last week it was shifting focus to concentrate on expanding territory held by separatists in eastern Ukraine, a month after having committed the bulk of its huge invasion force to a failed assault on Kyiv.

Yesterday, Hasina inaugurated battalion headquarters of Rab-2, -10, -13 and -14, Rab Forces Training School, Rab Heritage Museum having a "Muhib Corner" and also laid the foundation stone of Rab-3 battalion headquarters.

"We told them they have to send them [war criminals and killers] back. They gave shelter to them in their country protecting the criminals. But they imposed sanctions on