

SITAKUNDA BLAST

Who started the fire?

CPA unable to find source, blasts depot authorities for negligence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The probe committee formed by Chattogram Port Authority (CPA) to investigate the devastating fire and explosion at Sitakunda's BM Container Depot last month could not ascertain the source or specific reason behind the fire.

The probe report, however, found negligence on the depot authority's end in handling and preserving dangerous cargo, and the absence of a proper fire-fighting system, which increased the casualties.

Containers carrying dangerous substance like hydrogen peroxide were not kept separately or remotely in the depot, rather those were kept alongside containers carrying other export materials like textile items, said the report.

Stating that if the depot authority had immediately removed the container where smoke was first seen, the incident might not have been so severe, the report held the depot officials responsible for this.

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PRAYER TIMING				
JULY 6				
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-10	12-45	5-00	6-55	8-17
JAMAAT 4-45	1-15	5-15	7-00	8-45
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION				



The century-old Barabakunda station in Chattogram was closed down in 2009, due to a station-master crisis, and now, the building remains deserted. Forty-six stations in Bangladesh Railway's east zone have met the same fate, all because there aren't enough staffers to keep them operational.

PHOTO: STAR

Railway's east zone reels from manpower crisis

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

Authorities of Bangladesh Railway's (BR) east zone have closed down 46 of the 228 railway stations due to severe workforce shortage. This has resulted in delays of over 30 minutes on different routes of the zone.

Apart from that, revenue collection has dropped significantly, as ticket counters of those stations are non-operational, BR officials said.

"Revenue collection of the railway has decreased. In addition, equipment and resources of the closed station are being wasted due to lack of maintenance," said Nazmul Hasan, chief commercial manager of east zone.

The Dhaka-Chattogram rail line, the most important corridor of the railway network, also constitutes a major part of

the Trans-Asian Railway.

BR officials said Subarna Express, which is supposed to take five hours for the Dhaka-Chattogram trip, takes around six due to the closed stations.

According to BR data, the workforce shortage has reached such a severe level that 10 of the active stations remain open for only eight hours a day. There are 350 station masters in the east zone, against a requirement of 667.

Omar Faruk, a loco-master, told The Daily Star, "We always run trains slowly while passing by the closed stations for safety, because there are no employees there to direct us. As a result, we usually take more time for a trip."

Although a train's normal speed should be 72 kilometres per hour, loco-masters have to decrease that to 48 kilometres

while passing by, Faruk said.

Not only Subarna Express but trains of east zone's different routes also take extra time.

Officials said 10 employees are needed for smooth functioning of any station, but several stations are running with only three or four employees, who are under huge workload.

In 2009, BR closed the century-old Barabakunda station in Chattogram, due to a station-master crisis.

Zakir Hossain, additional chief operating superintendent of east zone, told this newspaper, "Due to lack of staffers, we are not able to run uninterrupted trains. We need to make stations functional to ensure smooth movement."

Jahangir Hossain, general manager

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Boy found dead in Ctg monastery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A boy was found dead in a Buddhist monastery in Abdullahpur South Baruapara in Chattogram yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Shraman Tushi Mong Marma (10), son of Paichi Mong Marma from Kaukhali area in Rangamati, said police.

He was found hanging from a ceiling fan inside Abdullahpur Dhatuchait Bihar in Fatikchhari area around 7:00am. The body was sent to CMC morgue for autopsy. Fatikchhari Police Station Inspector (investigation) Md Shamsuddin, said they will talk to the monastery residents and visit the spot for investigation. No case was filed.

Eid joy marred by tragedy

STAR REPORT

Ashikur Rahman (28) was returning home for Eid after taking treatment at a Dhaka hospital. But little did he know that he'll never reach his destination.

His bus, Selfie Paribahan collided head-on with a truck and at Tora under Manikganj Sadar upazila on the Dhaka-Aricha Highway yesterday morning, injuring 10 (including drivers and helpers of the vehicles) and leaving him dead in the process.

Ashikur hailed from Pachuria village under Manikganj's Sadar upazila. His parents who were also travelling with him were unhurt in the accident, but their lives have been scarred forever.

According to police, the bus left Dhaka's Gabtoli for Paturia Ghat in Manikganj yesterday morning.

The accident occurred when the bus collided head-on with a truck coming from the opposite direction around 10:30am, at the eastern end of Tora Bridge on the Dhaka-Aricha Highway.



NEWS

UGC clamps down

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restrictions on rag day celebrations as per an order of the High Court," UGC acting chairman Prof Dil Afroza Begum told The Daily Star yesterday.

She categorically said they were not banning the rag day celebrations.

"The authorities of universities will determine what are obscenity, nudity, DJ party, indecent and cruel behaviour," she added.

Prof Afroza said activities that are indecent in the eyes of the society should be termed indecent.

On April 17, the HC directed the authorities to stop DJ party, illegal and cruel activities and bullying in the name of rag day celebrations at educational institutions within 30 days.

The court also issued a rule asking the authorities to explain within four weeks why their inaction to stop such activities at the institutions should not be declared illegal.

Mohammad Kamrul Hasan, Supreme Court lawyer and the writ petitioner, told this paper yesterday that he filed the

petition as there were media reports about indecent activities and bullying during rag day celebrations at different educational institutions.

On June 30, Dhaka University syndicate decided that from now on, students will be able to celebrate the closing ceremony of education instead of rag day.

Department chairman or institute director and student advisers after having meetings with students will finalise the programme details.

Digitalisation saved time, money

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madrasah education division under the education ministry, land ministry, medical education and family welfare division and health services division under the ministry of health and family welfare, and ministry of primary and mass education

After losing his educational certificates, Md Solayman Hossain, an employee of a private educational institute, applied to his respective

educational board online for a replacement. In just three days, he got copies of his certificates.

He needed to visit the board just once to collect the copies, which cost him Tk 558, according to the IMED report.

Previously, one needed to pay Tk 100-200 to just collect the form although it was supposed to be free.

To request the service, one needed to collect several documents like a general diary from

the police station, a certificate of studentship from the headmaster, and photocopies of the educational certificates.

One needed to visit the headmaster for the certificate several times, had to face hassle to match the past documents from the school and also had to stand in a long queue for paying bank fees.

The process took one to six months previously, cost more than Tk 5,000 and pay five to six visits to the

board, the report said.

Similarly, it now takes five days to amend the registration card and cost Tk 1,200. This previously cost Tk 3,000 and took 28 days.

Among the employees of the ministries and divisions, 30 percent said they could focus more at work for digitalisation, 11 percent said their lives have become simpler and 1 percent said they could find time for digitalisation.

The study also found

resistance among the senior officers in offering services digitally. And many are not comfortable with using the internet yet to offer and request services.

Slow internet was another impediment to popularising government services online.

The report recommended a separate unit in the ministries and divisions to facilitate the delivery of the services online.

Henolux MD, wife held

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2020. On several occasions, they gave him some money as a share of profit. But at one point, the couple stopped providing the profit shares and started harassing him using their people.

Anisur had formed human chains in Kushtia

and Dhaka and held several press conferences. He also filed two cases against the duo with a Kushtia court, said his brother Nazrul, adding the cases are under trail now.

Nazrul said his brother had been depressed over his investment in the company.

Anisur was a contractor and had a business of used vehicles. But he was facing a financial crisis.

Anisur, a father of three, was the president of Kushtia Chhatra League in 1993. He was known as an honest student leader in the district.

Poor planning jacked up cost by 47 percent

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began, its design had to be altered for a second time as the government decided to turn the Dhaka Bypass Road an access-controlled expressway.

According to the new plan, two flyovers were constructed -- a 1,239-meter-long flyover on

Dhaka-Sylhet Highway and a 611-meter-long flyover on Dhaka Bypass Road.

The total cost of the project rose to Tk 353.36 crore and the deadline was extended to July 2020.

"It would have been possible to avoid increasing the time and cost of the

project implementation if the correct design and DPP had been prepared following a feasibility study," says the report.

"Preparation of DPP of the project on the basis of preliminary information without feasibility study has resulted in two changes in design

for construction of the functional flyovers," it added.

The report further says the completion of the project led to a reduction in traffic congestion, travel time and cost, the number of accidents and also contributed to the overall social and economic

development of people.

However, during project inspection, it was found that the flyovers were not properly maintained. Weeds had grown in several parts of the flyovers and pipes for draining water were broken. Besides, lighting was inadequate, it added.

Malaysian ACC starts probe

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froze the recruitment, citing the anomalies were resulting in human trafficking and forced labour.

Over three years later, Dhaka and Kuala Lumpur signed an MoU for recruiting workers from Bangladesh in December last year. Though more than six months have passed, the

recruitment is yet to start.

After submitting the complaint to the MACC, PKR National Youth Legal Bureau Secretary Darwin Lim Chee Chien said they called for a thorough investigation, reports Malaysiakini, an online news portal based in Kuala Lumpur.

Lim said the complaint

emphasised allegations of monopoly in the recruitment process, the integrity of the companies involved in the process and allegations of corruption in the selection process of the companies.

Lim said 1,300 companies sought permits but only 25 companies were given the permissions to

hire workers.

The complaint also referred to an agency in Dhaka which claimed that Bestinet Sdn Bhd founder Mohd Amin Abdul Nor, a Bangladesh-origin Malaysian, had influenced the Malaysian government to limit the number of agencies supplying workers to 25 companies only.

against the dollar.

"We have been navigating our business through unprecedented cost inflation, which required us to increase prices," he said, Jesmin Zaman, head of marketing at Square Toiletries, said

the company did not increase prices of those products, namely diapers and sanitary napkins, on which consumers are highly dependent. "We have hiked prices of those products, for which we could not bear the costs

at all. However, we have not increased prices in proportion to the increase in cost of raw materials."

She said prices of some raw materials and packaging materials are on the downturn and the company would reduce

prices.

Ghulam Rahman, president of the CAB, said, "But the high profiteering mentality of businesses keeps prices high at the retail stage. This ultimately affects low- and fixed-income consumers."

Solar storms

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virtually diving. The sink rate between December and April has been 20 kilometres [12 miles] per year."

It's thought that the new solar cycle -- which

started concurrently with these phenomena -- could be responsible. More solar wind activity, as well as sunspots, solar flares, and coronal mass ejections, are being generated at an increasing rate.