

Madrasa teacher assaulted in Kurigram

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A madrasa teacher has been injured after the president of the madrasa managing committee punched him over a dispute related to appointment in three posts, including a teacher, police said.



Sultan Ali

The incident took place at Siraj Uddin Dakhil Madrasa at Dina village under Rajarhat union of Rajarhat Upazila in Kurigram on Monday morning.

Victim Sultan Ali, who was punched on the nose by Mokhlesur Rahman, was being treated at Rajarhat Upazila Health Complex, police and family members said.

The victim and the alleged attacker are cousins and they live in adjacent houses.

The victim alleged that Mokhlesur lobbied for appointing the candidates of his choice in three posts. When he refused, Mokhlesur hit him on the nose and other parts of his body in presence of the madrasa superintendent and other teachers.

Mokhlesur denied that he punched Sultan.

"There was a scuffle between me and his supporters on the madrasa ground," he said.

Madrasa Superintendent Yunus Ali termed the incident unexpected and said that the recruitment would be done as per rules.

Officer-in-charge (OC) of Rajarhat Police Station Raju Sarkar said they were investigating the incident.

Court battle opens in Musk, Twitter buyout fight

AFP, Washington

The high stakes court battle between Elon Musk and Twitter kicked off yesterday, as the social media firm tries to force the entrepreneur to honour their \$44 billion buyout deal.

The first hearing was centering on Twitter's push to set a trial date for as early as September in a case focused on Musk's move to walk away on allegations the platform misled him about its tally of fake accounts.

Billions of dollars are at stake, but so is the future of the platform that Musk has said should allow any legal speech, an absolutist position that has sparked fears the network could be used to incite violence.

The hearing is being held in the eastern state of Delaware.



Ukrainian service members fire a shell from a towed howitzer FH-70 at a front line, as Russia's attack on Ukraine continues, in Donbas region on Monday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Biman blames Kolkata airport for passengers' suffering

150 made to stay in plane without food, aircon for 4 hours

RASHIDUL HASAN

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has blamed Kolkata airport authorities for the suffering of its passengers on a Dhaka-bound flight on Monday night.

Some 150 passengers inside the Boeing 737 aircraft for more than four hours without air conditioning and food due to a technical glitch, said Biman Managing Director and CEO Zahid Hossain.

The authorities of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata did not allow the passengers to deplane for four hours while it was being repaired, he added.

After fixing the glitch, the flight landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka at 1:42am yesterday, he told The Daily Star.

Talking to this correspondent, passengers said they were kept inside the aircraft without air conditioning or food.

Some of the passengers, who went to India on medical visas, fell sick inside the plane, they added.

Asked, Biman MD said the pilot of the aircraft had to abort a take-off because of a faulty sensor on the plane.

"They [Kolkata airport authorities]



didn't give necessary permission to bring the passengers inside the terminal from the aircraft," he said.

The Biman boss said food could not be served as the plane was undergoing repairs.

He also said the air conditioning system also failed due to an issue with the wiring system that was fixed later.

The Daily Star couldn't contact any official concerned of Kolkata airport to get their comments.

Showket Hossain, a former governor of Rotary International Club, said the flight was supposed to depart from Kolkata for Dhaka at 8:35pm local time. However, just before the departure, the flight cancelled its take-off.

After around an hour, the flight again prepared for departure.

However, the take-off was aborted after reaching the runway.

The Boeing 737 was later taken to the apron.

Investigators get 90th time extension to probe Sagar-Runi murder

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Investigators in the Sagar-Runi murder case were given the 90th extension to complete the probe in the case yesterday.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Debdash Chandra Adhikary asked Rab to submit the probe report by August 24 after Rab's Additional Superintendent Khondoker Md Shafiqul Alam, also the investigation officer, failed to submit the report yesterday, court sources said.

After Sher-e-Bangla Nagar police and the Detective Branch of police, Rab was tasked with the probe on April 18, 2012.

Sagar, news editor of Maasranga, and his wife Runi, a senior reporter at AIN Bangla, were killed in the early hours of February 11, 2012 in their home in the capital's West Razabazar.

Three Deepto TV officials get bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

Three officials of Deepto TV were yesterday granted bail in three cases filed under the controversial ICT act in 2016.

Judge Md Jahirul Kabir granted the bail a day after the court sent the trio to jail in the cases.

The three are Deepto TV Directors Kazi Jahin Hasan and Kazi Rabet Hasan, and Chief Operating Officer Kazi Urhi Ahmed.

The court on Monday also ordered sending Deepto TV's Managing Director Kazi Jahedul Islam to jail, but granted him bail after a couple of hours because of his ailing health.

The cases were filed against three journalists and the four officials of Deepto TV by Sheikh Ahmad, manager of Sanowara Group, and Jahangir Alam, manager of Sanowara Poultry and Hatchery.

The four accused Deepto TV officials, also top officials of Kazi Farms Group, were accused of defaming the former overseas employment minister Nurul Islam and his son Mujibur Rahman with fake news.

AL rebel held after man dies in pre-polls violence

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Police in Patuakhali on Monday night arrested a rebel AL candidate after a 70-year-old Awami League activist died of injuries suffered during pre-polls violence in Nazirpur Bangla Bazar area on July 8.

Ami Hossain Mridha of Nazirpur Taterkathi union died at Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital around 8:00pm. He was also a supporter of Ibrahim Faruk, the ruling party backed candidate for the post of union parishad chairman in the by-elections slated for July 27.

After his death, police arrested rebel AL candidate SM Mohsin and two supporters, Zahir Khan, 30, and Md Farooq Hossain, 40, around 9:30pm the same day, said Al Mamun, OC of Baulal Police Station.

According to police and locals, Amir Hossain and nine others were injured during a clash between supporters of AL-backed candidate and the rebel candidate.

Mridha's son filed a case with Baulal Police Station on July 9.

Piecemeal steps won't solve it

FROM PAGE 1

He believes that instead of taking such temporary measures, the government should take up specific and effective plans.

"Did the government take note of the overall situation before making such a decision? Or was it just to say 'see, we have shut down the diesel-run plants?'" the former professor asked.

"Before shutting down the power plants, it should have come up with estimates on how much energy will be preserved by doing so.

"Despite the closure of the plants, diesel use in other sectors is bound to rise [due to the crisis]. The generators that we use in our farms, factories and homes -- they all run on diesel. Load shedding will only increase the use of the fuel in these generators."

Badrul further said, "This was a piecemeal decision... Our problems can't be solved by piecemeal management..."

Due to such an approach, the chances of solving the problem have become slim.

According to the expert, the main focus should be on energy generation from native sources.

"The current state we are in is thanks to our liquified natural gas [LNG] purchases. In the global market, the price of LNG is \$40 per MMBtu. But we get local gas at \$1.3 at best per unit. Thus, we should focus on the gas reserves we have -- the one geologists can't stop talking about.

"We have to take up specific and appropriate plans. Geologists across the globe say the Bengal delta is a highly prospective gas-rich province and this a textbook statement. So there really is no reason for us to not have abundant gas reserves. Why aren't we focusing on that?"

Badrul also said, "Till date, we have utilised 18 to 20 trillion cubic feet [TCF] of gas. However, geologists believe we still have more than twice that amount."

According to a survey conducted by the USGS Petrobangla, the amount of undiscovered gas in Bangladesh is 32 TCF, while another survey, conducted

by the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate and Bangladesh Energy and Mineral Resources Division, puts the amount at 42 TCF.

"We are claiming there's a gas crisis. What is the basis of this claim? This is an unwise statement and we must be realistic. We need wide-scale exploration drives, and only that will help us find a solution."

The government is also considering keeping petrol pumps closed one day a week.

About this, he reiterated, "Piecemeal management will not be enough to solve the current crisis. This [decision] will only increase the public sufferings as people will not get petrol and will have to wait in queues."

He concluded, "Only we are to blame for the current situation. This problem was man-made, and we created it ourselves. We need to come out of it ourselves."

"We have the key to solving this problem and we need to unearth undiscovered gas reserves and extract the gas as soon as possible."

subsidy is not sustainable and must be passed through to consumers and when that happens there would be a non-food inflation shock.

"This will be a tough year for everyone, everywhere," he said, while urging the government to help the low-income people to tide through the unusual times.

Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, is expecting the inflation will settle down in two-three months seeing that many of the commodity prices in the global market have stability.

"But we have to make sure that is reflected in our market as there are many anomalies that prevent that from happening," he said, citing the tendency of traders to create artificial scarcity to keep the prices high.

Since inflation would be easing in the near future, he urged the government not to adjust the energy prices now.

"It would be too much for people, especially the low-income, marginal and fixed-income people," he added.

Tk 16,785cr paid in 9 months

FROM PAGE 1

The subsidy package for the power sector was Tk 7,400 crore in the 2019-20 budget, Tk 8,900 crore in the 2020-21 budget and Tk 12,000 crore in the 2021-22 budget, but the capacity payments alone are greater.

"It is not possible to renegotiate the capacity payments at this moment as those are settled by the agreements between the government and individual power plant owners," said Waseqa Ayesha Khan, president of the standing committee.

"But the [BPDB] officials at the meeting said when renewing agreements with some owners, the parties agreed that there would be no payments if electricity is not bought."

Contacted yesterday, CPD's Research Director Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem told The Daily Star that both the government and the parties have to bear the brunt of capacity payment. The government needs to give huge subsidies for

capital payment.

"The government could have saved huge revenue, had it been able to avoid such staggering sums of capacity charges," he said, adding that it is because around 42 to 48 percent of power generation capacity is not being used.

He also said the government should phase out inefficient or defunct power plants from the national grid, which are still getting capacity payments.

The government should also renegotiate regarding different clauses on capacity payment and try to ensure that capacity payment is not included in renewal contracts in any form, he said.

The Bangladesh-China Power Company Limited -- owner of the 1,320MW Payra coal-fired power plant -- was paid the highest capacity charge of Tk 2,277 crore in the first nine months of the last fiscal year because half of its capacity remained

unutilised till April this year.

"For the delay of about one and a half years [in utilising the second unit that started commercial operation in December 2020], BPDB had to pay the power plant over Tk 253 crore monthly," said a BPDB official.

According to BPDB data, in 2019-20, between Tk 400 crore and Tk 600 crore was paid in capacity payments each to independent power plants Sembcorp NWPC Ltd of Sirajganj; APR Energy Ltd at Keraniganj; Summit Meghnaghat Power Ltd and Meghnaghat Power Ltd in Narayanganj; and United Anowara Ltd.

Among rental power plants, Khulna Power Company Ltd, owned by Summit Group, was paid Tk 160 crore in capacity payments, the highest in 2019-20; in 2020-21, Dutch Bangla Power and Associates were paid the highest Tk 182 crore; and Acron Infrastructure Services Ltd of Chattogram was paid Tk 100 crore, the highest in the first nine months of 21-22.

Rights situation, labour law

FROM PAGE 1

a special incentive to pursue sustainable development and good governance.

Bangladesh will not be eligible for GSP after 2029 and then needs to be eligible for GSP Plus. The country has to implement 32 international conventions on human rights, labour rights, environment, and good governance.

In return, the EU cuts its import duties to zero on more than two-thirds of the tariff lines.

The delegation, led by Heidi Hautala, met ministers and officials of commerce, labour, justice and foreign affairs, employee associations, trade unions and civil society organisations. It also visited a textile and a pharmaceutical factory and Jute Diversification Centre to assess compliance levels.

"I wish to stress that full and successful implementation of the Labour Roadmap is a clear precondition for our further trade relations,"

said Heidi Hautala at the DCAB Talk (Diplomatic Correspondents' Association, Bangladesh) at the National Press Club yesterday.

EU Ambassador to Bangladesh Charles Whiteley and DCAB President Rezaul Karim Lotus also spoke at the event.

Heidi said they note concerns over reported delays in amending the labour law in full compliance with international standards. They want the implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) by the stipulated time of 2026.

The EU has been pressuring Bangladesh over the last few years to make a uniform labour law for both the workers of the Export Processing Zones (EPZs) and outside of the EPZs. Currently, the labour law allows trade unions outside of the EPZs, not inside EPZ factories.

"We have today received promising signals that EPZ Labour Law would be soon amended to correspond to the government's commitments. No

delay should be acceptable," Heidi Hautala said.

She said the EU has a zero-tolerance policy on child labour, and it attaches great importance to Bangladesh's commitment to fully eliminate child labour by 2025.

"Respect of human rights is also a fundamental condition of GSP Plus," she said.

She also expressed concerns over the application of the Digital Security Act but added that she was happy about the law minister's move to amend the DSA.

Heidi said the full implementation of labour law legislation requires a well-functioning and independent judiciary system, and that the recent creation of a labour court is a step in that direction.

Commerce Secretary Tapan Kanti Ghosh said Bangladesh has no plans to sign a Free Trade Agreement with EU but it may consider it after 2029 when zero-duty benefits to EU market would end.

Inflation at 9-year high

FROM PAGE 1

price has not shot up in recent time -- even the price of green chilli has gone up to Tk 160 a kilogramme. How could we run our family in a decent way with this salary?"

The price shock was largely felt in the case of food. In June, food inflation was a staggering 8.37 percent, reaching 8.93 percent in rural areas.

"My family has cut back on our food consumption. Forget three square meals, we are barely managing one a day," said Touhidul Islam, an electrician in Satkhira's Koyla union under Kalaroa upazila.

Inflation in rural areas has been more pronounced: in June, it stood at 8.09 percent, on the back of higher food and non-food inflation than in urban areas.

Islam has been asking for a higher rate for his services but has found no takers in his village.

"The competition among electricians in the village is fierce, so my income will stay this way for God knows

how long," he added.

But Planning Minister MA Mannan bore some good news for Islam, Ahmed and Hossain while unveiling the inflation data yesterday.

"The prices have stabilised and in some cases are gradually falling -- the momentum for inflation has come off."

The government will put all-out effort to ensure a good harvest to bring relief from the elevated food prices for the common people.

"We are hopeful that the prices will come down soon," Mannan added.

Binayak Sen, director general of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, is not as hopeful.

"There are inflationary expectations, so the price level will increase further."

In economics theories, inflation expectations matter because prices end up reflecting, in part, what people expect them to be. When inflation expectations get too high, they impact the actual rate of inflation.

The ride will get tougher in the days ahead, according to Sen: the energy