

BRT GIRDER INCIDENT

Probe body submits final report

Finds contractor, its safety team responsible

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The final findings of the government committee, formed to investigate the August 15 BRT Line-3 incident, are “similar” to its preliminary findings that were revealed earlier.

A member of the seven-member committee told this to The Daily Star after it submitted the final report to the Road Transport and Highways Division yesterday.

Another member, preferring anonymity, said, “There are similarities [between the final and preliminary findings] regarding major issues. But they are not identical because we have incorporated many details in the final report.”

The preliminary report, submitted the day after the incident, said the project’s Chinese contractor, safety team and the crane operator were responsible.

The committee, led by Neelima Akhter, additional secretary of the division, submitted the new report yesterday – 15 days after five people were crushed to death when a crane toppled over, making a box girder segment fall on a private car in the capital’s Uttara area.

The committee, in the final report, also recommended the completion of the long delayed project as soon as possible, while ensuring all necessary safety measures, as the ongoing work is causing trouble for commuters on the road.

Contacted, ABM Amin Ullah Nur, secretary of the division, said, “I have received the report but did not go through it yet. I was hoping to inform you [journalists] about the findings on Sunday.”

The division initially formed a three-member committee a day after the incident. Four more members, including an expert from Buet, were later added, while the deadline for the final report’s submission was extended twice.

Based on the preliminary report that blamed Chinese contractor China Gezhouba Group Co Ltd, Amin Ullah had said that as per the contract, the contractor can be terminated from the project and be blacklisted, barring it from working in any other country.



Local residents stand in front of a damaged apartment building following a missile strike in Kramatorsk, Donetsk region on Wednesday, amid the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine. PHOTO: AFP

UN inspectors reach Ukraine nuclear plant

Their arrival delayed several hours due to shelling near the site; Kyiv, Moscow accuse each other of trying to sabotage IAEA mission

AGENCIES

A team of UN experts yesterday arrived at Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia atomic plant complex to assess the risk of a radiation disaster after being delayed several hours by shelling near the site.

Russia and Ukraine accused each other of trying to sabotage the mission of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to the plant in southern central Ukraine, which is controlled by Russian forces but operated by Ukrainian staff.

Conditions at the nuclear plant, Europe’s largest, have been unravelling for weeks, with Moscow and Kyiv regularly trading blame for shelling in the vicinity and fuelling fears of a Chernobyl-style radiation disaster.

A Reuters reporter saw the IAEA team arrive in a large convoy with a heavy presence of Russian soldiers nearby. A Ukrainian source with knowledge of the situation told Reuters the mission “may turn out to be shorter than was planned”.

Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Moscow was doing everything to ensure that the plant could operate safely, and for the IAEA inspectors to be able to

complete their tasks.

“In the event of further attempts by Kyiv to disrupt their work with shelling or sabotage, the entire responsibility for the consequences will fall entirely on the Zelensky regime and its handlers and their “support group” in the West,” the Russian foreign ministry said in a statement, referring to Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Earlier, Ukraine’s state nuclear company Energoatom said Russian shelling had forced the shutdown of one of only two operating reactors at the site, while Moscow said it had thwarted a Ukrainian attempt to seize the plant.

A Reuters reporter in the nearby Russian-controlled town of Enerhodar said a residential building was struck by shelling, forcing people to take cover in a basement. It was not possible to establish who had fired.

The head of the IAEA said yesterday he saw what he “needed to see” at Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant.

“I think we were able in these few hours to put together a lot, a lot of information. The key things I needed to see I saw, and your explanations were very clear,” Rafael

Grossi told Russian media accompanying the IAEA inspection team at the atomic plant. The UN team will be “staying” at the plant, he added.

In the battlefield, both sides have claimed successes amid a new Ukrainian push to recapture territory in the south. “It is a very slow process, because we value people,” said Oleksiy Arestovych, an adviser to Zelensky, referring to the Ukrainian offensive.

Moscow has denied reports of Ukrainian progress and said its troops had routed Ukrainian forces.

In eastern Ukraine, Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks in the direction of Bakhmut and Avdiivka, towns north of the Russian-occupied city of Donetsk in Ukraine’s industrial Donbas region.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin said yesterday that a European Union decision to scrap a simplified visa regime for Russian tourists was “ridiculous” and bad news for Russian citizens.

EU foreign ministers agreed on Wednesday to scrap a deal that allows Russians to apply for visas to the 26-member Schengen Zone, because of Russia’s military campaign in Ukraine.

Launch fare reduced by Tk .15 per km

Govt earlier raised it by Tk .70 following fuel price hike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has reduced launch fare by 15 paisa per kilometre after the price of diesel dropped by Tk 5 a litre.

According to a notice issued by the Ministry of Shipping yesterday, the new fare will be effective from today.

Launch fare for the first 100km will now be Tk 2.85 per kilometre. Beyond the first 100km, the fare will be Tk 2.45 per km.

The minimum fare has been set to Tk 30 from Tk 33.

On August 16, the government increased launch fare after diesel price went up by 42.5 percent, from Tk 80 to Tk 114 a litre.

The fare for the first 100km was increased 70 paisa per kilometre, which pushed the fare up to Tk 3 per kilometre from Tk 2.30. After the first 100km, the fare was raised to Tk 2.60 from Tk 2 per kilometre.

The current prices at the pumps are: diesel and kerosene Tk 109, petrol Tk 125, and octane Tk 130.

2 more die from Covid

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh reported two more Covid-linked deaths and 216 cases in 24 hours till yesterday morning, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

With this, the country’s total fatalities rose to 29,325 while the caseload to 2,012,162, it added.

The daily case test positivity rate rose to 5.46 percent from Wednesday’s 4.20 percent as 3,955 samples were tested.

The mortality rate remained unchanged at 1.46 percent. The recovery rate remained static at 97.24 percent as 232 patients recovered during this period.

CORRUPTION CASE

Wife of Malaysia’s ex-PM sentenced to 10 yrs in jail

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Rosmah Mansor, the wife of Malaysia’s ex-premier Najib Razak, was found guilty of graft yesterday and sentenced to 10 years in jail with a \$216 million fine, just over a week after her husband began serving a 12-year term after his own corruption conviction.

The 70-year-old has long been criticised by Malaysians for her reportedly vast collection of designer handbags, clothing and jewellery, acquired on overseas shopping trips.

Prosecutors said Rosmah had sought a 187.5 million-ringgit (\$41.8 million) bribe and received 6.5 million-ringgit for helping a company secure a solar power project for rural schools in the Malaysian part of Borneo during her husband’s tenure.

“The accused is found guilty of all three charges,” High Court Judge Mohamed Zaini Mazlan said as Rosmah sat quietly in the dock.

After mitigation, he handed down a sentence of 10 years in jail for each of the three charges.

“The sentences are to run concurrently,” Zaini said, also imposing a fine of 970 million-ringgit.

1 shot dead, over 200 hurt

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party’s central office at Naya Paltan in the capital.

The party will arrange Shaon’s gayebana namaz-e-janaza after Juma prayers today.

The party will also stage demonstrations across the country on Saturday.

Yesterday’s violence comes amid a series of clashes the BNP has had with police and Awami League activists in several districts since August 22, when the party men took to the streets to protest the hike in prices of fuel and daily essentials.

In Narayanganj, the district BNP’s acting president Monirul Islam Robi said they brought out a jovial procession marking the party’s founding anniversary around 10:30am.

“No sooner had the procession reached the Rail Gate-2 area on Bangabandhu Road, police barred us. As we protested, police started truncheon-charging, firing teargas and bullets,” he said.

“Police firing left Shaon dead and at least 50, including me and other top leaders, injured. I am receiving treatment,” said Monirul.

Shaon was taken to Narayanganj General Hospital. Sk Farhad, resident medical officer of the hospital, said, “A young man was brought dead to the hospital. There are bullet marks on his body. The body has been kept at the hospital morgue.”

He also said another 20 to 25 injured, eight of them with bullet wounds, were brought to the hospital. One of the injured has been sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Narayanganj Additional Superintendent of Police Amir Khasru said BNP men brought out a procession without any prior permission on Bangabandhu Road, one of the busiest roads in the city.

“It created chaos. When we tried to convince them to stop, they threw brick chunks and Molotov cocktails at police. Police also fired teargas canisters and rubber bullets in self defence,” he said.

Around 20 police personnel were injured and are undergoing treatment at hospitals, he said.

On the matter of one person being killed in police firing, Amir said, “One person has died. But right now, it can’t be said how he died, because they also threw brick chunks and Molotov cocktails. We will let all know after investigation.”

Asked how many bullets and teargas canisters were fired, he said, “A lot of bullets and teargas canisters were fired. It will be calculated and notified later.”

Locals said when leaders and activists of the district and metropolitan BNP brought out a procession in front of the Ali Ahammed Chunka Library and Auditorium, police stopped them and chased them.

Another procession came out in front of Narayanganj Club in Ukilpara area and went to Rail Gate-2. Police also stopped this procession, locals said.

At one point, BNP men started to throw brick chunks at police. Police also fired rubber bullets, teargas canisters and bullets. Seven to eight vehicles, including four motorcycles, were vandalised, the witnesses said.

The clash also left Mohona TV’s Narayanganj correspondent Ajmeri Islam injured.

Terrified by the clashes, locals fled the area and shopkeepers shut their shops.

Speaking to our Narayanganj correspondent around 1:00pm, Anisur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station, said the situation was brought under control after the clashes.

In Manikganj, around 100 BNP men were allegedly injured and one was hit by a rubber bullet after law enforcers attacked BNP’s procession yesterday, claimed Afroza Khan Rita, president of the district unit BNP.

The clash took place in the Khalpara area when police truncheon-charged, fired teargas canisters and rubber bullets at the BNP’s procession around 11:00am,

she said.

The person hit by the rubber bullet was Fazlul Haque, president of Manikganj Sadar upazila unit BNP. Police arrested three people, including Fazlul after he was shot, she claimed.

However, Manikganj Sadar Police Station’s Officer-in-charge Abdur Rouf Sarker said none sustained bullet injuries. He said seven police personnel were injured as BNP men hurled brick chunks at police.

He also said that three people, including Fazlul, were arrested.

In Netrakona, some 50 BNP men and eight members of police were injured in a clash between BNP and police in Chhoto Bazar area in the town yesterday morning.

The party men were gathering in Chhoto Bazar area in the morning for a programme, but police asked them to leave.

When the BNP men declined, police fired rubber bullets and teargas canisters, leaving 50 BNP men injured. Of them, 12 were hit by rubber bullets, claimed BNP leaders.

Police said they asked BNP men to leave the road to ease traffic movement. But BNP men attacked police.

In Sirajganj, some 20 BNP activists attacked the procession without any provocation. Police, however, said they truncheon-charged the activists, fired rubber bullets and teargas canisters to break up a factional clash.

In Rangpur city, 10 people, including seven BNP men and three police personnel, were injured when they clashed in the afternoon.

In Natore, BNP alleged that five of their party men were injured after Chhatra League men attacked them. Local Chhatra League leaders denied the allegations.

[Our correspondents from Narayanganj, Manikganj, Natore, Mymensingh, Pabna and Rangpur contributed to the report]

‘Raped, blackmailed and cheated’ in Mauritius

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meagre income from a garment factory in Dhaka.

A woman working at the Mauritius garment factory then advised her to get a job there. Rokšana managed to get her passport with the help of a broker and reached Mauritius through a recruiting agency. It cost her Tk 1.10 lakh, of which Tk 70,000 was borrowed.

AN ABUSIVE GANG?

After the first month there, a Bangladeshi co-worker named Munni Begum suggested that Rokšana get intimate with Anil Kohli, she alleged.

“Munni tried to persuade me saying that this would help me earn more, visit Bangladesh more frequently at the company’s expense and even get jobs for my brothers there,” she said.

When she refused, they stopped paying her. The HR officials asked her to contact Munni, allegedly a close aide of the factory owner.

She did, and Munni took her to Anil’s office where he raped her for the first time, Rokšana alleged, adding that Munni and Anil beat her up when she protested.

Over the next one year, the man raped her six times, before she married an Indian man, Anand Chauhan, in May 2020, she said.

She said the Indian man married her with full knowledge of her abuse.

However, enraged by Anil’s past abuse of his wife, Anand uploaded a video on YouTube, warning Bangladeshi female workers not to join the company.

This landed him in jail after the owner filed a defamation case. Anand is still in prison there, she said.

A week before her return to Bangladesh was confirmed, Rokšana tried to lodge a complaint against Anil with the Mauritanian authorities at Port Louis. But officials there asked her to report the matter to the Bangladesh High Commission instead.

At the Bangladesh High Commission, an official recorded her complaints and assured her of investigating the matter. But no one went there before her return, she said.

She was finally able to file a complaint with the expatriate welfare

and overseas employment ministry upon her return. Muhammad Rehan Uddin, deputy secretary of the ministry, then wrote to the first secretary (labour) of Bangladesh High Commission in Mauritius, asking him to look into the matter and take action.

Suman Acharjee, the first secretary (labour), wrote to the ministries of foreign and labour affairs in Mauritius on February 21, requesting them to take action.

On request of the Mauritius foreign ministry, he wrote to the Bangladesh expatriate welfare ministry in June to send them a translated notary copy of the victim’s allegations.

Rokšana told The Daily Star that the ministry contacted her and that she submitted the documents yesterday.

Sarwoer Alam, in charge of the desk concerned at the expatriate welfare ministry, told this paper that the documents would be dispatched either yesterday or on Sunday.

A REPEAT OFFENDER?

Earlier, another female migrant worker from Bangladesh brought similar allegations against Anil.

The 24-year-old who joined the factory as a helper in February last year, filed a case with Rampura Police Station in Dhaka on July 11 last year, against eight people.

They include Anil and Shah Alam, a Bangladeshi who ran a canteen for workers at Firemount Textile.

The six others, including the recruiting agency owner, were accused of trafficking and abetment to rape.

According to the case statement, Shah Alam took her to Anil’s house on April 30, 2020, where Anil raped her.

Later, both Anil and Alam raped her on several occasions, videotaped the crime and threatened to leak it on social media.

Upon investigation, Rampura police submitted a final report saying, the complainant’s “statement primarily proved” the offence of rape. However, the report noted that they cannot pursue the case as the alleged incident happened outside Bangladesh.

According to the report, the woman went for an out-of-court settlement after filing the case.

Contacted, the woman told The

Daily Star that she does not want to comment on the issue anymore.

When contacted by this paper, Anil, through his legal counsel, termed all the allegations false. He said the allegations raised by Rokšana were motivated to extort the company and to secure the release of her partner from jail.

He also claimed that Rokšana was paid in full and was also paid for her return air ticket.

About the allegation of the other worker, the company lawyer said a Bangladesh court dismissed the case and discharged all accused after a final report by police.

Presumably Munni and Tania, the two alleged aides of Kohli, picked up the calls from this correspondent, but upon hearing the allegations they said they were the people Rokšana described.

Tigers exit Asia Cup

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Shakib Al Hasan, picking them off for 13 and 18 respectively to reach 44 for no loss in five overs.

It was debutant Ebadot Hossain, whose sharp bowling got the Tigers back into the match. Ebadot had undone both Nissanka and Charith Asalanka with pace and bounce in his very first T20I over.

Mendis, who had raced to 30, survived a major scare when a no-ball from Mahedi Hasan saw him continue his innings despite nicking one back to the wicketkeeper.

In the eighth over, Mendis got his third reprieve right after Ebadot sent back Danushka Gunathilaka. A nick went through to the wicket-keeper and was taken but no one appealed. Mendis also survive a tight run-out chance later on.

The game eventually ended in a way that depicted the entire day for Bangladesh as Mahedi overstepped to gift Sri Lanka the winning run.

Earlier, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Mosaddek Hossain and Afif Hossain played aggressive knocks that helped Bangladesh amass their highest T20I total in the UAE.