

QUESTION PAPER LEAK Another Biman official removed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A second official whose name came up in the investigation into question paper leak of Biman's recruitment exam was removed from his post yesterday.

Major Taiz Ibne Anwar, general manager of the ground service equipment department and deputy general manager of the security department, was also a member of the committee formed to prepare the question paper.

Taiz was removed after his name surfaced in connection with the question paper leak of a test for 10 posts of electricians, mechanics, welders, painters, operators, and tailors.

The order, signed by Deputy Secretary of Ministry of Public Administration Abdullah Arif Mohammad, was issued on January 1.

He was sent back to Bangladesh Army, from where he was brought into the carrier on March 2, 2020.

This move comes just a month after the removal of Biman's managing director and CEO Zahid Hossain.



In late November, the flag carrier submitted a report to the ministry pointing fingers at Taiz on several issues, including his involvement in question paper leak of the recruitment test.

The report said around noon on October 19, 2022, the question-paper preparation committee congregated inside Zahid's room to check the question paper.

A print out was made and given to Taiz and he was asked to check it thoroughly.

One of the committee members, Chief Engineer of Production Department ARM Kaisar Zaman told investigators that he had left Taiz alone with the paper when he went to the toilet.

Another committee member, Principal of Bangladesh Airlines Training Centre Nazmul Huda said when Taiz was checking the question paper, he was facing the other way and that he heard someone go to the toilet.

Taiz told the probe committee that he had company all the time. He had denied to The Daily Star about being involved in the leak.



A delegation led by Rushanara Ali, president of UK all-party parliamentary group on Bangladesh, makes a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

PHOTO: PTD

Russia plans new major offensive

Claims Zelensky, says Moscow mulling new mobilisation to 'turn tide of war'; Donetsk missile strike on Russian troops toll rises to 89

REUTERS

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russia was planning to call up more troops for a major new offensive, even as Moscow was facing some of its biggest internal criticism of the war over a strike that killed scores of fresh conscripts.

Kyiv has been saying for weeks that Russian President Vladimir Putin plans to order another mass conscription drive and shut his borders to prevent men from escaping the draft.

"We have no doubt that the current masters of Russia will throw everything they have left and everyone they can round up to try to turn the tide of the war and at least delay their defeat," Zelensky said in his nightly video address on Tuesday.

"We have to disrupt this Russian scenario. We are preparing for this. The terrorists must lose. Any attempt at their new offensive must fail."

Russia's defence ministry yesterday blamed mobile phone use by its soldiers for a Ukrainian strike on New Year's Eve it said had killed 89 servicemen, the deadliest incident Moscow has acknowledged for its troops since the start of the war.

If Russia is planning a new mobilisation, the deaths of scores of conscripts on New Year's Eve could undermine morale. Hundreds of thousands of men fled Russia when Putin ordered the first call-up of reservists since World War Two in

September after military setbacks.

Putin said last month there was no need for further mobilisation. But in a sign the Kremlin may now be considering one, a little known group claiming to represent widows of Russian soldiers released a call on Tuesday for Putin to order a large-scale mobilisation of millions of men. The Kremlin has not commented on that appeal.

Russia has effectively shut down all

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— Zelensky

direct opposition to the war, with open criticism banned by severe media rules. But it has given comparatively free rein to pro-war bloggers, some with hundreds of thousands of followers on social media.

Many are increasingly vocal about what they consider a half-hearted and incompetently led campaign, and have expressed anger this week over the strike that killed Russian troops housed in a vocational school in Donetsk province on New Year's Eve.

Criticism has been directed at military commanders rather than at Putin, who

has not commented publicly on the attack.

The Russian Defence Ministry, which raised the official death toll in the attack to 89 from 63, blamed soldiers for using mobile phones, which it said was illegal and allowed Ukraine to locate the base.

Other pro-Russian bloggers have said the strike was worsened because ammunition was stored at the site. Moscow has not confirmed this.

Rob Lee, a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute think-tank, said Moscow had a problem safely housing freshly mobilised troops near the front in winter.

"It is more difficult to disperse them because of a lack of small unit leadership, and they will do worse in the cold than trained soldiers," he tweeted. But housing them near ammunition "is simply a leadership failure", he added.

Ukraine initially said hundreds of Russians were killed in Makiivka, and it also killed large numbers of Russian troops in a similar attack at a separate base in southern Kherson province the same night, which Moscow has not confirmed.

In its daily update yesterday, Ukraine's military General Staff said Russia had launched seven missile strikes, 18 air strikes and more than 85 attacks from multiple-launch rocket systems in the past 24 hours on civilian infrastructure in three cities, Kramatorsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson.

SAGAR-RUNI MURDER CASE

Investigators fail to submit probe report for 95th time

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday once again extended the deadline for submitting the probe report of the Sagar-Runi murder case. The new deadline is March 5.

This is the 95th time extension for the submission of the report in the case filed over the murder of journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi in February 2012.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Rashidul Alam passed the order after Rab Additional Superintendent of Police Khondoker Md Shafiqul Alam, also the investigation officer of the case, failed to submit the report yesterday, said court sources.

On December 1 last year, the same court had asked Rab to submit the report by yesterday.

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

Two murdered in Faridpur, Dinajpur

STAR REPORT

Police yesterday recovered the body of a rickshaw-van puller in Faridpur's Madhukhali upazila.

Zihad Sheikh, 16, son of late Lalu Sheikh of Dighalia village, had left home on his battery-run rickshaw-van on Tuesday noon. His body was found yesterday morning in Murardia village, while his vehicle was missing, said Sohaidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Madhukhali Police Station.

"The victim's throat was slit with a sharp weapon. It seems the criminals murdered him for his vehicle."

A case was being filed in this regard, he added. Meanwhile, a beggar was found murdered in the same manner in Dinajpur's Biral upazila yesterday afternoon.

Wahed Ali, 50, of Mondalpara village, was found injured with a slit throat around 1:30pm in a banana field near Kalitola Bazar area, said Rezaul Hasan Reza, officer-in-charge of Biral Police Station.

The victim died on his way to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital.

Both the bodies were sent for autopsies.

(Our Faridpur and Dinajpur correspondents contributed to this report.)

Dense fog

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Meanwhile, ferry services yesterday on the Paturia-Daulatdia route remained suspended for six hours and on the Aricha-Kazirhat waterway for seven hours due to poor visibility.

On Paturia-Daulatdia route, ferry services were suspended from 3:00am onwards, and on the Aricha-Kazirhat, operations were suspended from 2:15am onwards, said Shah Md Khaled Nawaz, deputy general manager of BIWTC's Aricha regional office.

Ferry operations on the Paturia-Daulatdia and Aricha-Kazirhat routes resumed around 9:20am and 9:30am, after the fog began to clear, he added.

Almost all coaches travelling at night took several hours longer than usual to reach their destinations due to heavy fog.

Most launches on long routes like Dhaka-Barisal, Dhaka-Patuakhali, and Dhaka-Barguna were stranded mid river for two to three hours.

Meanwhile, bone-chilling cold and thick fog hit the people hard, especially in the north.

In Chuadanga, Kurigram, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Thakurgaon, and Dinajpur there were fog along with strong cold winds.

In most of those districts, the sun was not visible during the day and there was fog from early evening. Most locals opted to remain indoors.

The cold wave sweeping over different parts of the country has been harder on the poor and elderly.

The Dhaka Met office in a bulletin yesterday said moderate to severe cold conditions are likely to continue over north, north-western and central parts of the country.

Night and day temperatures may remain nearly unchanged, it said, adding, "Due to lower difference between day and night temperature, moderate to severe cold conditions are likely to continue...."

Moderate to thick fog may occur over the country during midnight till morning, and may continue till noon at places, according to the weather forecast for the next 24 hours from 9:00am yesterday.

The country's highest temperature yesterday was recorded at 28.6 degrees Celsius in Teknaf and the lowest temperature was recorded at 9.0 degrees Celsius in Sreemangal.

AL sketches out a 'Smart Bangladesh'

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"But we will incorporate some updates [in the manifesto] considering the situation and realities of the time," he added.

In its declaration, the AL placed emphasis on the country's recovery from the economic slowdown brought on by the Covid pandemic, and set a target to ensure 20 percent contribution to the national economy from the ICT sector by 2041.

In its 2008 manifesto titled "Dinbodoler Sanad" or "A Charter for Change," the AL unveiled "Vision 2021". Its manifesto in 2014 titled "Bangladesh Marching Forward" pledged to make Bangladesh digital by 2021.

The AL in its 2018 manifesto, titled "Bangladesh on March towards Prosperity", pledged to make Bangladesh developed and prosperous and bring the poverty rate down to zero by 2041.

In its new declaration, it set a target to make Bangladesh smart as it claimed that the party-led government has already implemented its pledge of a "Digital Bangladesh".

The party termed its goal as the "golden masterplan to make Bangladesh smart".

The party wants to build a skilled and transparent government management system to make it modern.

In the 2018 manifesto, AL pledged

to produce 28,000 MW electricity by 2023, and in the declaration adopted on December 24, 2022, it set a new goal to produce 40,000MW electricity by 2030 and 60,000MW electricity by 2041.

The declaration also targeted producing 40 percent of the total domestic demand for electricity from renewable sources.

In its "declaration and programme" chapter, the ruling party said the main goal would be to make Bangladesh a higher-middle income country by 2031 and a developed country by 2041.

It also promised that ensuring equal rights, secular politics and social justice would be its ultimate target. The party also vowed to ensure a tolerant and multi-party democratic system that will be against any sort of extremism, terrorism or militancy.

In the immediate-past declaration adopted at the party's council in 2019, AL outlined its programmes with "Vision 2021" in mind, but this time the declaration was made keeping "Vision 2041" in mind.

In the chapter titled "elimination of poverty", the party pledged to bring poverty below 15.6 percent by 2025 and to fully eliminate begging.

The ruling party vowed to invest more in the energy sector and pledged to construct more nuclear power plants, ensure natural gas transmission to the country's north and west, and place greater

importance on renewable energy.

It also vowed to increase the capacity of the country's only state-owned fuel refinery, Eastern Refinery Limited, from refining 15 lakh tonnes to 45 lakh tonnes.

The ruling party pledged high-speed train networks between the capital and Sylhet, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Patuakhali and Khulna. It will also consider expanding the service to Kolkata and constructing a new airport.

In the declaration's "effective action against corruption" chapter, it promised to "continue its efforts to make society corruption-free, and ensure punishment of the corrupt through trial, including forfeiture of illegally amassed money and property".

It also pledged to take proper initiatives to ensure the rule of law and that the appointment, promotion, and posting of law enforcers be made above political considerations. It would also strive to ensure independence of the judiciary and the human rights commission.

The declaration said the AL was committed to giving fair elections and democratic system an institutional shape, and that it would "continue its efforts to bring reforms to the Election Commission and election system for the sake of free and credible polls". It will also ensure transparency and accountability of the government.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards member shot dead

AFP, Tehran

A member of Iran's Revolutionary Guards was shot dead outside his house in Tehran, state media reported yesterday, adding that he may have been killed during a burglary.

Qassam Fathollahi of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) was shot "four times in front of his house" in southern Tehran late Tuesday by "unknown persons", the official IRNA news agency said.

Police had noted "signs of theft from the apartments around the

scene" of the shooting, the report added.

Iran has been rocked by protests since the September 16 death of Mahsa Amini, 22, an Iranian Kurdish woman who was arrested for allegedly violating the country's female dress code.

Iranian officials describe the protests as "riots" and say hundreds of people have been killed in the nationwide unrest, including members of the security forces, and thousands arrested.

AL's Ripon wins

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Primary School centre in Saghatapuzila around noon.

The number of voters there was 3,306. Of them, only people 500 voted until then, said polling officials there.

A few yards away at Kukrarhat Government Primary School centre, the situation was almost similar. Only 110 out of the 2,505 voters cast their ballots around that time.

At Kazi Azahar Ali Government Model High School centre in the same upazila, no voters were seen around 4:00pm.

Presiding Officer Rafiquzzaman said around 38 percent voters exercised their franchise till then.

Most similar situation was prevailing in most of the polling centres.

"Bone-chilling cold gripped our area. People don't come out of home during such inclement weather. Furthermore, many males of our locality are now in other districts for work. That is why the voter turnout is so low," said Solaiman Miah, 62, of Paschim Chalua village in Fulchhari upazila.

"We think the election result is fixed beforehand. The election is an eyewash for people. So, we don't have much interest in it," said Mostafizur Rahman, 45, of Udakhali village in the same upazila.

Voting, which started at 8:30am and continued till 4:30pm without interruptions, was done through EVMs.

In some areas, ruling Awami League men were seen trying to influence voters.

Govt target ever elusive

FROM PAGE 1

event, he stated that 5 percent of the share of the national health expenditure came from development partners, 17 percent from NGOs and 1.6 percent from the private and autonomous organisations.

Of the total OOP, about 64.6 percent is spent on medicine, 11.7 percent on laboratory charges, 10.8 percent on doctors, 2.4 percent on other healthcare practitioners, 0.3 percent on dentists, 10.1 percent on hospitals and 0.1 percent on medical products.

Between 2012 and 2020, the per capita health expenditure increased from \$28 to \$54.

The study said the people in the richest quintile accounted for around 54 percent of the OOP expenses

and those in the poorest quintile 4 percent.

In 2020, Dhaka division with the largest population and highest number of health facilities saw 37.7 percent of the national healthcare expenditure while Mymensingh saw the lowest 3.2 percent.

DRUGS COULD COST LESS
Anwar Hossain Howlader, secretary of the health services division, said, "I saw many physicians performing umrah [hajj]... with money from drugmakers. They take refrigerators, televisions, and even flats. If the unethical practice was not there, it [OOP] could be reduced."

Besides, the unnecessary packaging raises the retail prices of medicine, he said, adding that officials would meet the drugmakers to discuss how

medicine prices could be lowered.

Major General Mohammad Yousuf, the director general of Drug Administration, said the authorities were under "serious pressure" to hike medicine prices.

"But drugmakers can supply medicines at a lower cost if they reduce the spending on aggressive marketing, lavish packaging, gifts for physicians, and donations to professional associations," he said.

Bangladesh will have to pay more to import Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients as soon as the country graduates into a middle-income country by 2026, he said, adding that that would further raise medicine prices.

There should be a system to audit the prescriptions, he added.