

BFUJ, DUJ decry Prothom Alo report, use of DSA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two factions of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) yesterday expressed deep concern over the situation arising from "irresponsible and unprofessional journalism of the Prothom Alo".

In a joint statement, the two organisations said circulation of a photocard which was made using a child's photo with a quote from a different person is an example of "professional failure" of the editor and the newsroom of that newspaper. "Though the photocard was withdrawn soon, the task of creating confusion in people's mind had already been done. There are enough reasons to think that the quote of a different person was used with the child's picture deliberately. Providing financial assistance to that child and using him as an item of journalism are also not acceptable from the perspective of professional journalism," read the statement signed by Akter Hossain, general secretary of DUJ.

"An allegation should be sent to the Press Council to determine the prima facie of the allegation before enforcing the law against any media outlet or journalist."

They also said the intimidating situation which was created through the use of the Digital Security Act could have been avoided.

"An allegation should be sent to the Press Council to determine the prima facie of the allegation before enforcing the law against any media outlet or journalist. Some sections of the law should be amended by taking our recommendations into account. Before taking all these measures, steps should be taken to stop abuse of the law," added the statement.

Terminating the joint statement of diplomats of 12 countries on the issue "unwarranted", the journalists' platforms said, "The journalist community believes that their unwarranted intervention in this issue is tantamount to intervening in the states' sovereignty and independence."

They said if anyone makes a mistake or commits a crime, there is law of the land to address those. But the foreign diplomats' intervention in the country's internal issues is a reason for concern, they added.

The BFUJ and DUJ factions hoped that the foreign diplomats would carry out their duties in compliance with the Vienna Convention.



Three-wheelers, which are banned from highways, illegally plying the wrong side of the Dhaka-Aricha Highway, while authorities concerned remain oblivious. Such irresponsible driving often leads to tragic accidents. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

THE MALDIVES LABOUR MARKET

Unskilled worker recruitment stalled for over 3 years

JAMIL MAHMUD

The labour market in the Maldives for new Bangladeshi workers has remained suspended for about three-and-a-half years now, despite Bangladesh's continuous efforts to reopen it.

In September 2019, the Maldives imposed a ban on bringing in new Bangladeshi labourers reportedly citing that the quota for Bangladeshi workers was reached.

The ban, however, was not imposed on hiring professionals and skilled workers like chefs and nurses, said an official of the Bangladesh High Commission in Malé.

The Maldives is just currently not hiring low-skilled workers from Bangladesh because of the already large number of undocumented Bangladeshi workers residing there, which has been a major hurdle in reopening the market, the official said.

Sohel Parvez, counsellor (labour) of the Bangladesh mission, recently said they were hopeful about reopening the labour market in the Maldives.

He said following their requests about reopening the labour market, Maldives officials expressed their assurance on

several occasions.

When imposing the ban in 2019, Maldives Economic Development Minister Fayyaz Ismail announced a quota of 150,000 individuals as migrants per country, to be able to reside in the Maldives at any given time, according to media reports.

A large number of undocumented workers from Bangladesh already reside in the Maldives, and it has been a major hurdle in reopening the market.

However, at present, there is a ceiling of 100,000 foreign workers per country in the Maldives, according to its "Employment Act", an unofficially translated English version of which (amended in 2022) is available online.

Counsellor Sohel Parvez said previously an estimated 100,000 Bangladeshi workers were living in Maldives but their number dropped after several thousand of them returned home amid the pandemic.

At present, Bangladeshis are the largest foreign national community in the

Maldives with most of them involved in the construction sector.

In 2019, Minister Fayyaz Ismail also announced a regularisation programme to reduce undocumented foreign workers in Maldives.

Following the initiative, around 45,000 undocumented Bangladeshi workers applied for registration with the Maldives government in 2019.

So far, around 20,000 of them were regularised under the programme, Counsellor Sohel Parvez told this newspaper over the phone.

He said reducing undocumented workers could help reopen the labour market.

For its part, the Bangladesh mission has been providing different support services to the workers to speed up their documentation process, including providing them with the necessary information and issuing passports as soon as possible, the official added.

For regularisation, a worker's employer has to apply for a "work permit" from the Maldives' Economic Development Ministry, said a notice of the Bangladesh High Commission last month.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

Man stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

An activist of the Awami League was stabbed to death by his rivals following factional clashes in Jhenidah's Harinakunda upazila on Friday.

Victim Rabiul Islam, 50 of Jorapukuria village, was a driver of a battery-run three-wheeler, said police.

There was a long-standing feud between Jamal Uddin and Kabir Uddin, two leaders of the ruling party, over establishing supremacy in Jorapukuria, said locals.

Rabiul, a supporter of Jamal, was hacked by Kabir's followers around 5:00pm on Friday. He died on his way to Dhaka, said locals.

After the death, local Chhatra League leaders torched houses of five of Kabir's followers.

Additional policemen were deployed in the area to avert further clash, said Aktaruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Harinakunda Police Station.

'Smuggler' killed in BGB firing in Netrakona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A man was shot dead and another suffered bullet wounds when Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) fired on a "gang of smugglers" along the Baromari border in Netrakona's Durgapur upazila on Friday night.

The dead is Aminul Islam, 30, son of Abdul Berek of Laxmipur village in Durgapur.

The injured, Jahidul Islam, 38, is undergoing treatment at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, said Lt Col Mohammad Arifur Rahman, commanding officer of BGB Netrakona-31.

"Acting on a tip-off that a gang of smugglers were smuggling betel nut from Bangladesh to India through Baromari bordering area in Durgapur around 8:30pm, a patrol team of BGB led by Minhaz Uddin conducted a drive there," he said.

BGB recovered seven sacks of betel nut from the spot.

Rohingya man shot dead

UNB, Cox's Bazar

A 60-old Rohingya national was shot dead during a clash between two terrorist groups at a camp in Ukhiya upazila of Cox's Bazar early yesterday.

The dead is Syed Alam, an inhabitant of Kutupalong camp 8. He used to work as a night guard of the camp.

Sheikh Mohammad Ali, officer-in-charge of Ukhiya Police Station, said Syed sustained severe injuries when terrorist group Arakan Salvation Army and Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) traded bullets over establishing supremacy in the camp around 1:00am.

He was rushed to a local hospital where physicians declared him dead, the OC said, adding that the body was sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Resolution commending Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1

members of the Pakistan Armed Forces and pro-Pakistani militias killed hundreds of thousands of people and injured many more, the resolution said.

The war for independence was a struggle for democracy and freedom led by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, it noted.

It said Bangladesh has made enormous strides in the last five decades from one of the poorest nations to having one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, with the GDP per capita increasing to \$2,457 in 2021 according to the World Bank which now exceeds that of its regional neighbours.

Since its independence in 1971, Bangladesh's economy has grown from \$9 billion to \$450 billion, life expectancy has risen from 47 years to 73 years, and the adult literacy rate has risen to more than 75 percent, the resolution mentioned.

Bangladesh, under the leadership of PM Hasina, has made substantial socioeconomic progress in food production, disaster resilience, poverty reduction, improved health, education, and women's empowerment, it read.

According to the resolution, Bangladesh has successfully maintained a moderate Muslim society and curbed extremism, and its people have sought to maintain support for democracy and rule of law rather than descending into authoritarian rule.

It said the US and Bangladesh have extensive cooperation on matters of regional and global security, counter terrorism, and climate change.

The US is the largest export market for Bangladesh and one of the largest sources of foreign direct investment, the resolution said, adding that Bangladesh has also contributed to the US economy through bilateral trade and international security cooperation in return.

The American people appreciate the generous and indispensable role that Bangladesh performs in accepting and sheltering more

than one million Rohingya people from a genocide perpetrated by its neighbour, Myanmar. The US has contributed the largest amount of humanitarian aid to address this crisis, totalling more than \$2 billion, it added.

It said that the American people welcome that Bangladesh is one of the world's largest contributors to the United Nations' peacekeeping efforts globally. Both countries seek to enhance their people-to-people and government-to-government relationship for shared prosperity.

The resolution mentioned that Bangladesh has expressed gratitude to the USA for contributing more than 100 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine to its people.

It stated that the American people recognise and commend the nation and people of Bangladesh as they celebrate five decades of independence.

The US extends its sincere determination to remain a constructive partner of Bangladesh in achieving mutual economic, social and national security objectives now and into the future, the resolution added.

'BANGLADESH A MODEL'
US Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration Julieta Valls Noyes has said that Bangladesh serves as a model for the rest of the world in rebuilding the country after the 1971 war, and now forging the path towards economic growth, inclusion and development.

She also applauded Bangladesh's generosity as a host of over one million Rohingya refugees, said a press release of the Bangladesh embassy in Washington.

Noyes was addressing a reception hosted by the embassy on Thursday on the occasion of the 53rd Independence and National Day.

The US diplomat said Bangladesh and the USA have strengthened cooperation across broad range sectors. The two countries have built close trade and investment ties, she added.

Bangladesh Ambassador to the

USA Muhammad Imran in his speech said Bangladesh considers the USA an important and valuable partner in its journey towards emerging as a peaceful and prosperous nation.

He said Bangladesh looks forward to working closely with the USA for stronger economic ties.

Bangladesh attaches high importance to its long-standing partnership with the USA, the envoy added.

Let a case be filed

FROM PAGE 1

Siddiki, also president of Heritage Rajshahi, a history-based research organisation, a three-member group of citizens visited Naogaon, where Sultana was from, on Friday.

Other members were Prof Iftikharul Alam Mas-ud, a teacher of the Arabic language department in Rajshahi University, and Hasnat Beg, a lawyer and convener of Rastra Sangskar Andolon.

Sultana's family told the group about its fear of filing a case.

"It appeared to us that Sultana's family has been living in fear of harassment," Siddiki said, adding, "If not the family, the police could have recorded a case, but nothing was done."

Prof Mas-ud said they talked to two eyewitnesses of Sultana's detention, who informed them that no female Rab member was present while she was being detained.

The group did not mention the names of the witnesses but did say that one of the witnesses was a lawyer and the other a journalist.

The witnesses further said that on March 22, the day she was detained, some plain clothes law enforcers, all of whom were men, dragged Sultana into a microbus against her will.

Hasnat Beg demanded legal action against Enamul Haque, director of local government at the Rajshahi divisional commissioner's office, who filed the case against Sultana.

"Despite being a high official, Enamul Haque illegally used Rab to detain an employee under his jurisdiction and [made them] interrogate her in a manner that led to her death."

Tax collection target for June

FROM PAGE 1

of 5.6 percent, according to data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

"Imports are falling and corporate profits are shrinking. This is a matter of concern. Where would the extra tax revenue come from? The macro environment is not good, so not much revenue growth is not possible," said Mansur, also the chairman of Brac Bank.

He went on to forecast that the tax collection would be in the neighbourhood of Tk 336,000 crore.

"When the NBR chairman and the finance ministry put pressure on the tax commissioners, they might manage the Tk 10,000 crore needed to cross the line."

But that would come at a cost: the NBR would crank up the pressure on the taxpayers and get people to pay advance taxes by dangling the carrot of paying lesser amounts of tax next year.

This means next year's tax receipts

will be impacted.

"It will be tough to meet IMF's target — the revenue situation should not collapse further," said Mansur, also a former economist of the IMF.

In the first half of the fiscal year, tax revenue was down 3.5 percent year-on-year, while NBR's revenue was 4 percent lower than a year earlier.

The trend seen up to March and the growth typically seen in the fourth quarter indicate that the IMF's tax revenue target for June is unlikely to be achieved, said Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

There is a three-pronged beating on the NBR's revenue collection: a drop in imports to safeguard the strained dollar stockpile, shrunken aggregate demand for elevated inflation, and reduced development works for fiscal tightening.

Development spending in the first eight months of the fiscal year has been the lowest in 12 years, according

Shams was arrested

FROM PAGE 1

three sections and two more — sections 26(2) and 29.

However, none of these five sections deals with child exploitation or abuse.

Prothom Alo Editor and Publisher Matiuur Rahman was also accused in the case filed with Ramna police.

"Many media [platforms] have been continuously reporting on the cost of living in Bangladesh since the beginning of the Ukraine war, which has created a global rise in the cost of living. No one was arrested for such reporting," the release said.

"The said journalist [Samsuzzaman] was arrested because of child abuse and child exploitation, as he offered Tk 10 to a 9-year-old boy and then expressed his own views in the child's name.

"Secondly, he tried to undermine

the independence of Bangladesh on the great Independence Day. These acts are surely tantamount to punishable crimes," it added.

The release further read, "The government of Bangladesh is committed to uphold the freedom of expression for all its citizens and the media. However, creating social unrest by undertaking such a fraudulent act is contrary to the spirit of honest journalism."

The foreign ministry said that as a party to the UN Convention on the Right of the Child, the government would not tolerate any act of exploiting children.

According to the first information report of the DSA case filed with Ramna police, Shams, Matiuur and unnamed others were accused of using print, online, and electronic media to tarnish the image of the state.

to data from the Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division.

In the first seven months of the fiscal year, imports were down 5.7 percent year-on-year.

Letters of credit openings, which is an indicator of future imports, at the end of December were down 22.5 percent from a year earlier, according to data from BB.

Save for petroleum, LC openings for consumer goods, capital machinery, intermediate goods, industrial raw materials and others dropped, indicating further diminishing economic activities in future.

Tax collection growth so far has not been more than the rate of inflation, according to Rahman.

"It shows the collection is bad." Subsequently, it might be necessary to revise the tax revenue targets with the IMF in June, Rahman added.

At the end of April, an IMF mission is due in the country to monitor the progress of the programme.

Iran orders arrest of women allegedly attacked for not wearing hijab

AFP, Tehran

Iranian authorities ordered the arrest of two women, the judiciary said yesterday, after a viral video appeared to show them being attacked by a man for not wearing the hijab.

Video footage widely shared on social media in Iran appeared to show the two female customers, who were not wearing the mandatory hijab or headscarf, in a shop being assaulted by a man after a verbal altercation.

The footage shows the man pouring a bucket of what appears to be yogurt on the two women's heads before he is confronted by the shopkeeper.