

India opens new probe into BBC

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's financial crime fighting agency has opened an investigation into alleged violations of foreign exchange rules by the BBC, a source told Reuters yesterday, months after tax officials searched the broadcaster's Mumbai and Delhi offices.

The tax raids in February had come close on the heels of the release of a BBC documentary about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership of the state of Gujarat during riots in 2002. At least 1,000 people were killed in the riots, most of them Muslims.

The latest investigation is being conducted by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) under India's Foreign Exchange Management Act. The agency issued a notice to the BBC in March and questioned some employees earlier this month, said the source, who declined to be named citing the sensitivity of the matter.

British Foreign Minister James Cleverly, during a visit to New Delhi in March, raised the BBC tax searches with his Indian counterpart.

Relations between India and Britain, who are working to seal a delayed free-trade agreement, have also been strained by protests outside the Indian High Commission in London last month.

CAAB suspends pilot Sadia's licence

RASHIDUL HASAN

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) has finally suspended the privileges of commercial pilot license (CPL) of Sadia Ahmed, a first officer of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, for her alleged forgery of Higher Secondary School Certificate.



A recent letter to Sadia, signed by Air Commodore Shah Kawsar Ahmed Choudhury, member (Flight Standard & Regulations) of CAAB, said, "An investigation has been initiated on the report in The Daily Star on March 1 regarding your HSC examinations details. CAAB, hereby, suspends all the privileges of your CPL#470 till further notice."

Sadia, who was suspended from Biman, in connection with the forgery, reportedly left the country late last month without appearing before a probe body of the national flag carrier.

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A 70-year-old woman patient, who according to her family members suffered a stroke, is being transferred from a small boat to a launch heading for Dhaka at Monpura ghat of Bhola to be treated at a hospital in the capital. It takes around 14 hours for the launch to reach Sadarghat terminal in the city. The photo was taken around 2:00pm yesterday.

PHOTO: HASHIBUR REZA KALLOL

5 killed as bus hits three-wheeler in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Five people were killed and another was injured in a head-on collision between a bus and a CNG-run three-wheeler in Chattogram's Boalkhali upazila yesterday morning.

The accident took place in Raykhali Bridge area of Arakan Highway in the upazila, said police.

The dead are all the passengers of the three-wheeler. Police arrested bus driver Jakir in this connection.

The dead are Mohammad Selim, 45, of Boalkhali, Anjana Akhter, 35, Babul Dey, 60, and Rohingya man Abu Faye, 25. Rest of the dead could not be known immediately.

Injured Abdur Jalil was admitted to Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

Abdur Razzak, officer-in-charge of Boalkhali Police Station, said, "A CNG-run three-wheeler, carrying six people including the driver, collided head-on with a bus coming from the opposite direction around 9:00am. Four people died on the spot."

On information, police and fire service personnel rushed to the spot and started rescue operation. Traffic movement on the road was halted for around an hour.



Witnesses said reckless driving of the bus driver caused the accident.

"The bus was reserved and came to Chattogram from Netrakona taking shrine devotees in Boalkhali. While returning, the bus hit the three-wheeler triggering the tragic accident.

"Bus driver Jakir had no idea about the road. So, he was driving fast as if it was a highway. After the accident, locals nabbed him and later handed him over to police."

A victim's family member filed a case accusing Jakir in the evening and he was shown arrested in this case, the OC said.

Dhaka swelters thru' hottest day in 8 years

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

City dwellers yesterday experienced the hottest day in the last eight years, with a heatwave sweeping over the country for more than a week.

Dhaka's temperature was recorded at 39.9 degrees Celsius -- the highest in the last eight years. The previous highest temperature in Dhaka [40.2 degrees Celsius] was recorded on April 14, 2014.

"There is no possibility of the temperature decreasing till April 16. It may then decrease slightly in a few places, but will continue [overall] till April 23," Md Omar Faruq, a meteorologist of Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD), told The Daily Star yesterday.

He also said the people are feeling the scorch of the heat more than usual due low levels of humidity.

According to the Met office, the humidity may increase from April 16.

It further said country's the highest temperature yesterday was recorded 41.3 degree Celsius in Chuadanga and Satkhira.

The Met office further said the medium heatwave turned into a severe one as the temperature crossed over 40 degrees Celsius.

Charges framed

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The same court on November 1 last year had issued arrest warrants against the duo after accepting the charges brought against them.

On June 26 last year, the HC declared Tarique and Zubaida "fugitives" and rejected their writ petitions challenging the filing of the graft case.

Earlier on September 26, 2007, the ACC filed the case with Kafrul Police Station against the two and Zubaida's mother Syeda Iqbal Mand Banu, on charges of amassing assets worth Tk 4.82 crore through illegal means and concealing the information of Tk 2.16 crore in their wealth statements.

The investigation officer of the case pressed the charges against the three with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka on March 31, 2009.

However, trial proceedings against Zubaida's mother were rescinded.

Earlier, Tarique was sentenced to life in the August 21 grenade attack cases.

He was also sentenced on different terms of punishment in two other cases, including the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case.

FBCCI

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Now, there is no scope to legalise untaxed wealth.

If the blanket amnesty to illegally earned wealth is allowed for the next five to 10 years, a substantial amount of money will remain in the country and the real estate sector will flourish, said the apex trade body.

A lot of money is flying out of the country as many are buying a second home abroad, where the source of the money is not asked.

And this will continue to grow in the absence of the amnesty, the FBCCI said.

In fiscal 2020-21, a total of 11,859 taxpayers legalised their black money by paying Tk 2,064 crore in tax, according to data from the National Board of Revenue. Of the sum, Tk 343 crore came from 4,514 land and flat owners, showed NBR data.

Nation pays tribute to Zafrullah

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Around 12:30pm, Zafrullah was paid a guard of honor led by Hedayetul Islam, additional deputy commissioner of Dhaka District Administration. His body was then taken to Suhrawardy Udyan where his third janaza was held.

A fourth janaza took place at Dhanmondi Gonoshahstha Nagar Hospital at 4:00pm.

His coffin will be at Gonoshastha Kendra in Savar from 10:00am to 12:30pm today for people to pay tribute. He will be laid to rest there after juma prayers.

At the Shaheed Minar, Planning Minister MA Mannan said, "Zafrullah Chowdhury was an ideal Bangalee. He was a brave freedom fighter. Some newspapers wrote 'people's doctor'. He was not just a doctor. He was also a pure, genuine Bangalee... He is the pioneer of our current healthcare system."

"He is also a pioneer of the drug

policy that benefitted us. Bangalees were trying to make a lawful, democratic, and non-communal society where all citizens enjoy equal dignity. Zafrullah Chowdhury was a frontline soldier in that great war. Today, I pay my respects to him."

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said Zafrullah was one of the greatest sons of this soil.

"I have known him since my student life. He embarked on building the nation soon after independence. The nation benefited immensely from his valour and initiatives. Gonoshastha Kendra is the best example of it. We don't know whether we will ever get such an outspoken and democratic-minded figure again," he said.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon said, "Today we are proud to export medicines worth \$300 million. He put in unwavering efforts to formulate

the drug [policy] and it has been possible due to those efforts.

"I would say that he did not participate in politics, but remained the voice of conscience in politics and took people forward. I pay my deepest respects to him."

Cultural personality Nasir Uddin Yousuf said Zafrullah could have lived in comfort in a western country, but he chose to join the Liberation War.

"In times of disasters, he always stood by the people. His initiative helped poor people access medical treatment at affordable costs. His drug policy was remarkable. His political views were different to mine, but patriotism was what we had in common," he said.

Social activist Khushi Kabir said, "Zafrullah dedicated his whole life for the people. He had love for the oppressed. The whole world will miss him, not just Bangladesh."

will take place in the second half of 2023, when the IMF staff team will assess the programme's quantitative targets and progress of reform implementation, Rahul Anand, the IMF mission chief, told The Daily Star.

An IMF staff team will visit Bangladesh from April 25 to May 2 to discuss recent economic developments and policy implementation under the IMF-supported programme, an IMF spokesperson told The Daily Star.

On April 8, PM's ICT Affairs Adviser Sajeeb Wazed Joy criticised the expulsion of two African-American minority US state lawmakers, sparing another one over their gun control protests, questioning the fairness of democracy in the US.

"US State legislature votes to expel two minority lawmakers, while keeping a third who was white. This is the state of democracy in the US," Joy said in his verified Facebook account.

He added, "The US State Department are nothing but a bunch of hypocrites."

The lawmakers were later reinstated. Hours after Hasina's remarks, Momen and Blinken met in Washington.

UP member hacked to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Some unidentified criminals yesterday hacked a union parishad member to death in Chapainawabganj's Shibganj.

The victim is Alam Ali, 50, member of ward 9 at Nyalavanga Union Parishad in the upazila.

Around 1:30pm, Alam was heading towards his home from the union parishad. He was attacked with sharp weapons at Nawab Mor, said police.

He was rushed to 250-bed General Hospital in Chapainawabganj where doctors declared him dead, said Sukomal Chandra Debnath, inspector (investigation) of Shibganj Police Station.

Police sent the body to the hospital's morgue for autopsy.

The victim might have been killed over previous enmity, suspected the OC.

DSHE amends its directive on Pahela Baishakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education has amended its directive that made Pahela Baishakh rallies compulsory for students of educational institutions today.

According to the new directive, the Bangla New Year should be celebrated in proper manner in all educational institutions preserving the sanctity of Ramadan and maintaining religious sentiments.

The new decision was announced in an order of the DSHE yesterday, a day before the Bangla New Year.

Ex-civil servant found dead at home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered the bloodstained body of a former official of Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research from his home in the capital's Shekhertek yesterday afternoon.

The deceased, Nurul Alam, 74, was the former deputy chief scientific officer of BCSIR, Shaker Mohammad Zobair, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Adabar Police Station, told The Daily Star.

He said Nurul's son Ittekhhar Alam Sumon was detained for interrogation. Sumon is an assistant director at the environment, forest and climate change ministry.

The body was sent to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

Asean condemns Myanmar air strike

AFP, Jakarta

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) "strongly condemns" recent air strikes in Myanmar in which dozens of people were reported killed, said a statement issued yesterday by Indonesia, the current Asean chair.

"All forms of violence must end immediately, particularly the use of force against civilians", said the statement.

A statement from the Asean chair does not necessarily indicate the agreement of all member states.

Eid trip to north gets expensive

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As per Road Transport Act-2018, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority is to set fares for public transport following government permission.

But AC coaches and public transport with special amenities are not under its purview, according to section 34 (2) of the act.

However, the government or the BRTA could take steps to set the fares if there are allegations of overcharging, section 34 (2) says.

But the authorities never fixed the fare for AC coaches. "Taking advantage of the situation, bus operators are charging at will," a BRTA official said, wishing anonymity.

NON-AC BUSES OVERCHARGING Many non-AC bus service providers have started overcharging.

Al-Amin Hossain, a labourer of Mirpur in the capital, said he bought a ticket for Rangpur from Shyamoli Paribahan for Tk 650. The usual fare is Tk 500, he said.

"I asked about the reason behind the hike when Eid is 10 days away, but

the staffers at the counter did not give any reason," he told this paper at Gabtoli terminal.

During a visit to the terminal between 9:30am and 1:00pm yesterday, no monitoring by government agencies was seen.

Abu Raihan, general secretary of Bangladesh Bus Truck Owners' Association, told The Daily Star yesterday, "Usually we charge less than the fixed rate to compete. Now we are charging the fixed rate, but passengers are alleging that we are overcharging, which is not true."

Asked about the AC bus fares, he said, "We have to charge extra as our buses return to Dhaka empty during the Eid rush."

Right before every Eid, the overcharging worsens and this time it is expected to be even worse as strict ticket checking on trains is expected to increase demand for bus tickets.

The Daily Star could not reach the BRTA chairman and Road Transport and Highways Division secretary for comments.

Govt set to buy 16.5 lakh tonnes

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"Since the target for rice was achieved last year, we're hopeful of fulfilling the target this year too," he added.

The government, however, has lowered the target of paddy procurement by 2 lakh tonnes to 4 lakh tonnes this year.

"We could procure only 2.86 lakh tonnes of paddy last year," said Ismiel, adding that they could not fulfil the target though paddy was available. That's why new prices have been proposed to make an adjustment with the market price.

Farmers and millers have a tendency not to sell rice to the government, said Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque. "It is not that farmers will feel encouraged to sell their paddy to us because of the price hike. We need an adjustment."

Food Minister Sadhan Chandra said they have proposed the prices considering production costs.

"After the government subsidy in

fertiliser and irrigation, the average production cost for each kg paddy would be Tk 28.29. It is a scientific estimation but the actual production cost would be much less," he said.

Replying to a question, he said there will be no impact on the poor as the government operates different food assistance schemes, including open market sales and Food Friendly Programme.

Asked whether the price increase will impact the limited income people who buy rice from the market, Sadhan said there will not be any impact on people.

"Farmers should be given fair prices since fertiliser prices and cost of transportation and labour have gone up. There are OMS, Food Friendly Programme and VGF [Vulnerable Group Feeding] for people who face troubles," he said.

The government has a stock of 17.29 lakh tonnes of food grains, according to the food ministry.