

Traders take to streets as DNCC shuts risky market

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation yesterday sealed off Gulshan Shopping Centre that was declared risky by the fire service department over two years ago.

Angered by the move, shop owners and their employees blocked adjacent Gulshan-1 intersection and started demonstrating around 12:30pm, demanding reopening of the six-storey market.

This led to gridlock in Gulshan, Banani, Hatirjheel, Badda, Mohakhali, and nearby areas, causing immense suffering to commuters.

Over three hours later, police requested the demonstrators to leave the place. As they did not respond, police used truncheons to disperse them.

The protesters hurled brick chunks at police personnel. At one point, they moved back and the traffic became normal, said police.

Shahidullah, deputy commissioner (Gulshan zone) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told reporters, "We requested the traders to discuss reopening of the market with the authorities concerned. But they didn't heed the request and continued the demonstration."

"To keep the traffic moving and reduce public sufferings, the protesters were removed from the street."

Alamin Hossain, who was travelling to Gulshan from Bangla Motor, said, "I started from Bangla Motor around 1:00pm. When I reached Hatirjheel Kunipara area, I was caught in traffic."

After getting off from an autorickshaw, he walked to Gulshan-1, which took him over an hour.

Didar Hossain, a bus staffer, said his vehicle had been stuck at Gulshan-1 intersection from 11:00am to 3:00pm due to the road blockade.

Meanwhile, traders claimed that DNCC officials on June 8 asked them to leave the market by July 30, stating that the building was at risk of fire. But the DNCC shut down the market before the deadline.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Abul Bashar, owner of 30 shops, said, "Where will we go now?"

According to a notice put up at the main gate of Gulshan Shopping Centre, which has 731 shops, the fire service department said its officials inspected the market in 2017 and issued a letter to the market authorities to ensure fire safety.

After visiting the market in June 2021, the fire service department found that no action was taken by the traders in this regard. So, the department declared that the building was at high risk of fire and asked the DNCC to close the market, said the notice.

Rejecting the traders' claim of closing the market before the deadline, DNCC Zonal Executive Officer Jukker Nayan, who sealed off the market, told this newspaper, "DNCC officials visited the market and asked the traders to vacate the market by June 8. However, none of them left. After Eid, the traders sought time until July 30, but the DNCC mayor didn't consider it."

US wants talks for sake of free, fair polls

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She underscored the US desire to deepen its partnership with Bangladesh, in support of their vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific anchored in resilience.

Zuya lauded Hasina for generously hosting more than a million Rohingyas and stressed that other donors should come forward to support the Rohingyas.

On top of the \$2.1 billion that Washington provided for the Rohingyas and the host communities in Bangladesh and the region since August 2017, Zuya announced more than \$74 million in additional funds.

She encouraged Bangladesh to expand livelihood opportunities for the Rohingyas. The US is also maintaining pressure on Myanmar to end the crisis and create the conditions for the eventual voluntary



This photograph taken on Wednesday shows a high-rise residential building damaged by the remains of a shot-down Russian drone in Kyiv, Ukraine on late Wednesday said it had downed 20 Russian attack drones and two cruise missiles in a third night of strikes on Kyiv and elsewhere in the country.

PHOTO: AFP

ROOPPUR POWER PLANT Nuclear fuel rods may arrive by Sept

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC) has got permission to import nuclear fuel from Russia and store it for Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant.

Following international guideline, Bangladesh Atomic Energy Regulatory Authority (BAERA) gave the permission at a licence-awarding ceremony at Ratnadeep Resort in Pabna yesterday evening.

BAERA gave BAEC two licences -- one for importing nuclear fuel and another for its storage, while another licence for transporting nuclear fuel was awarded to a Russian company.

Science and Technology Minister Yeafesh Osman speaking as the chief guest said the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is issuing the guideline and suggestion for implementing the power plant project and that they were following the guideline.

Shawkat Akbar, project director of the plant, said, "This [permission] is another

milestone. Now there is no bar to import nuclear fuel for Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant by September this year."

"BAERA is monitoring each and every step of the progress of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant to ensure IAEA's guideline," Satyajit Ghose, chief scientific officer and project director of Nuclear Regulatory Infrastructure development project of BAERA, told The Daily Star.

The plant is being implemented by BAEC with technical and financial support from Russia. The plant has two reactors, each with a 1,200 megawatt power generation capacity.

Commissioning of unit-1 is likely to be next year and unit-2 in 2025.

The plant will get nuclear fuel free from Russia in the first three years, and the first consignment of the fuel is likely to reach the country this year.

The ceremony was chaired by BAERA Chairman Muzammel Haque.



Nato returns to Cold War 'schemes'

Says Russia, vows to respond to threats by using 'all means'

REUTERS

The latest Nato summit showed that the Western alliance was returning to "Cold War schemes," the Russian Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday, adding that the Kremlin was ready to respond to threats by using "all means."

The Nato summit in Lithuania ended with the United States and its allies giving Ukraine new security assurances for its defence against Moscow more than 500 days into Russia's invasion of its neighbour.

The summit was also buoyed by the prospect of Sweden joining the military alliance as its newest member after Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan on Monday abruptly dropped his prior objections.

The Russian ministry said in a statement late Wednesday: "The results of the Vilnius Summit will be carefully analysed. Taking into account the challenges and threats to Russia's security and interests that have been identified, we will respond in a timely and appropriate manner, using all means and methods at our disposal."

Ex-mayor Sadiq sued over hogging post in club

UNB, Barishal

A case has been filed against former Barishal city corporation mayor Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah over occupying the post of president of the Barishal Club illegally and refusing to quit.

Mofizur Rahman Chowdhury, a member of the club, filed the case in Barishal Senior Assistant Judge Court yesterday, said his lawyer Azad Rahman.

According to the case statement, to be elected as the club president, a member have to have a membership of 10 years. Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah became a member on August 20, 2016, and became the president on March 8, 2019, violating the constitution of the club.

The statement also added that the club owes a huge amount of the cafeteria bill from the former mayor. Besides, he arranged two rooms in the club for the chief executive officer of Barishal City Corporation.

Indian man held with yaba, liquor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Police detained an Indian man and seized 500 yaba pills and 84 bottles of foreign liquor from his possession during a raid at Katlamari village in Ulipur upazila of Kurigram on Wednesday night.

The detainee Saiful Sheikh, 24, is a resident of Har Singmari district in the Indian state of Meghalaya, said Kurigram Additional Superintendent of Police Ruhul Amin.

A local court yesterday around noon sent Saiful to Kurigram District Jail, the police official added.

A case was lodged against him under the Control of Entry Act, 1952 and Narcotics Control Act with Ulipur Police Station.

BARAPUKURIA GRAFT CASE Charge framing hearing against Khaleda on Aug 8

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday set August 8 for the hearing on charge framing against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and six others in the Barapukuria coal mine corruption case.

Judge Md Akhteruzzaman of Dhaka's Special Judge's Court 2 passed the order after a petition was filed on behalf of Khaleda, seeking an adjournment of the hearing, Adv Masud Ahmed Talukder, one of her lawyers, told The Daily Star.

In the petition, Masud said Khaleda, who is now out of jail after an executive order from the government, is unwell and she was taking treatment at her Gulshan residence. So, the hearing should be adjourned, he said.

Moreover, they were yet to get some important documents seized by the investigating officer during the investigation of the case, he said.

On February 26, 2008, Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case with Shahbagh Police Station, accusing 16 people, including Khaleda and 10 of her former cabinet colleagues, of taking Tk 159 crore in kickbacks on the Barapukuria coalmine deal awarded to the highest bidder.

BB begins forex reporting

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Washington had expressed concerns over the challenges of trade unions and discriminatory laws for the workers inside the EPZs and outside EPZs, as well as poor labour practices and wages.

"We also discussed and exchanged views on civil rights and the upcoming polls, about civilian security including trafficking in persons."

He requested Zuya to withdraw the sanctions on Rab.

Asked about a China-brokered tripartite initiative for Rohingya repatriation, he said they discussed all options including the tripartite initiative.

"We updated them about the latest situation. They appreciated our concerns and shared some of their thoughts on how to go forward. We will be in touch with them," Secretary Momen said.

treasury bills, reserve position in the IMF, special drawing rights holdings -- which is a form of international money created by the IMF and defined as a weighted average of various convertible currencies -- and so on.

The central bank's previous gross reserves computation factored in other components and subsequently, the number ends up being markedly higher.

"The fact that inflated reserves will no longer be published is a welcome move," said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

Inflated reserves create a host of problems for the government, the central bank and the economy.

"At one point, Bangladesh Bank reported reserves of \$48 billion, which caught the attention of a certain section of the private sector. They demanded loans from the reserves thinking the government was sitting on a mountain of dollars."

Besides, based on the inflated reserve figure, the government decided to give the loan to Sri Lanka, which compelled the Maldives to seek a similar loan.

If the actual reserves were published, the government would not have met such demands or faced such a situation, Hussain said.

Inflated reserves can also create scope for political grandstanding. "So this IMF methodology is good for all," Hussain said.

Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute, echoed the same.

"This is the first step in the right direction. We need to build up our reserves urgently."

As per the IMF's conditions for the loan programme, Bangladesh's net foreign currency reserves need to be \$25.32 billion by September 30 and \$26.81 billion by the end of the year.

For net international reserves

computation, short-term foreign currency drains such as impending import bills and loan repayment are deducted from the gross reserves figure, as per BPM6. This is one of the three mandatory conditions to get the instalments released by the IMF.

Bangladesh failed to meet June's net reserves floor of \$24.46 billion.

The IMF staff mission will review the progress made in the first half of the year and take a call on whether to release the second tranche of the loan in October.

"We simply have to stop the dollar sales," said Mansur, also a former economist of the IMF.

AL to stay alert, march city streets

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Bangladesh, to Dhanmondi 32.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Dhaka south AL President Abu Ahmed Mannafi said they will hold it to highlight the government's achievements since 2009.

"We will gather over one lakh people at our procession."

On July 19, Dhaka north AL will hold a procession, also starting at 3:00pm. There, party leaders and activists will parade from Satrasta intersection of Tejgaon to Mohakhali.

Besides, leaders and activists of 24 thanas and 75 wards under Dhaka south and 26 thanas, 63 wards and one union under Dhaka north will take position at party offices concerned from the morning on both days, and will be on the lookout for anyone trying to create unwanted situations, sources said.

AL Joint General Secretary Bahauddin Nasim told the Daily Star they will occupy the streets till the national election to counter anti-democratic forces.

"We won't spare anyone and will continue our battle for peace and democracy."

Natore court orders SP to sue five policemen

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Md Salam complained that they were tortured to falsely confess that they carjacked a three wheeler.

Sohag in his statement said he was detained around 8:45pm on July 9 and taken to Lalpur Police Station. OC Ujjal immediately blindfolded him and started beating him up, he said in the statement.

The OC beat him up again on the night of July 11. He was thrashed on the soles of his feet and kicked in the scrotum.

ASP Sharif then told Sohag that if he did not confess before the magistrate, he will have him placed on remand, Biswas said.

Salam told the magistrate that police arrested him from his home on July 9 around 1:00am. When the OC entered the police station, he started slapping Salam. He was thrown to the floor and SI Zahid and SI Omar slammed the leg of a table on his little finger. They pressed down on the table repeatedly. They kept doing this

and beating Salam on the legs.

On July 12 afternoon, SI Omar took a steel pipe and beat up Salam with it from the waist down.

Shamim stated that police picked him up from his home on July 10 around 3:30pm and that he was beaten the whole way to the police station, said Biswas quoting his statement to the magistrate.

He was then taken to Kushtia to pick up another suspect Md Rakibul Islam Rakib. Shamim was beaten again as Rakib's shop was closed and he could not be found, said Biswas quoting the statements.

The next day around 11:00am, a constable, SI Zahid and SI Omar took him to a section of the police station not covered by CCTV cameras, blindfolded him, and thrashed him with a piece of bamboo.

They tied up his legs, beat him repeatedly on the soles of his feet, and stomped on his chest. The cops threatened to rub chilli powder on his

private parts if he did not confess to the magistrate.

The three and Rakib, who was later arrested, were sent to the court on July 12 and the investigating officer of the case, SI Omar, sought their confessions to be recorded.

But instead of confessing, Sohag alleged torture.

The magistrate saw the injuries on their bodies and directed the jail superintendent of Natore and Natore Modern Sadar Hospital's superintendent to examine the accused and prepare medical reports on the injuries and submit them to the court by 4:00pm yesterday.

The reports on Shamim and Salam mentioned evidence of torture, Biswas said.

The magistrate then told the SP to direct a policeman not under the officers in question to investigate.

Natore SP Md Saifur Rahman, however, told this paper, "When they tried to catch the accused in

the auto-rickshaw robbery case, they began to run away, and fell and hurt themselves."

He said legal action would be taken only after investigations into the claims.

Hundreds arrested following Kenya protests