

RESIGNATION OF PROF Colleagues threaten to quit in solidarity

The Indian teacher wrote
paper questioning BJP's
2019 polls win

STAR REPORT

Teachers at Indian uni threatens to quit after colleague resigns amid controversies over a research paper questioning BJP's 2019 election win

Faculty members at a university in India's Haryana state have threatened to stop taking classes after an assistant professor resigned last week amid controversies over a research paper last week.

The paper by Assistant Professor Sabyasachi Das titled "Democratic Backsliding in the World's Largest Democracy" is on India's 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

The paper says the BJP either committed electoral fraud or it was able to accurately predict closely contested seats and mobilise party activists to campaign more intensively, reports Hindustan Times.

After the research paper led to political mudslinging between the BJP and the opposition parties, Ashoka University distanced itself from the paper by issuing a statement.

Days later, Sabyasachi Das tendered his resignation, reports India Times.

Over the last few days, teachers of the departments of political science, sociology, anthropology, and English put out statements in solidarity with professor Sabyasachi Das, according to media reports.

In a letter, they threatened a "faculty exodus" if Das is not offered reinstatement.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

Info minister slams BNP for not lauding pension scheme

BSS, Chattogram

Information Minister Hasan Mahmud yesterday slammed the BNP certain civil society members for being reluctant to appreciate the new universal pension scheme.

"Though it is an extraordinary initiative, BNP as well as a section of civil society members have failed to hail it. The culture and politics of denial don't bring any good to a state," he said.

Hasan, also the joint general secretary of Awami League, was addressing the inauguration ceremony of Chattogram City Corporation-Red Crescent Physio Orthopedic Rehabilitation Centre.

The minister said the country has received international appreciation for making remarkable progress.



Human haulier companies have illegally turned the space under Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover in the capital's Jatrabari area into a parking lot. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Russia destroys drones in Moscow, Black Sea

Four airports briefly suspend flights; US approves sending
F-16s to Ukraine from Denmark, the Netherlands

AGENCIES

Russian forces have destroyed Ukrainian drones targeting Moscow and its Black Sea Fleet, officials said, the latest in a surge of attacks on the capital and the flashpoint waterway.

Russia's defence ministry said its air force downed a Ukrainian drone over the capital at about 04:00 (0100 GMT) yesterday.

"The UAV, after being exposed to air defence weapons, changed its flight path and fell on a non-residential building in the Krasnopresnenskaya embankment area of Moscow," the ministry said on Telegram.

Moscow's mayor said emergency services were on the scene, but that early reports indicated there were no casualties.

"The wreckage of the UAV fell in the area of the Expo Centre, and did not cause significant damage to the building," Sergei Sobyenin said on Telegram.

State-run news agency TASS reported that one of the walls of the venue's pavilion had partially collapsed, citing emergency services.

Air-traffic was briefly suspended at



four major airports around the capital - Vnukovo, Domodedovo, Sheremetyevo and Zhukovsky - though later they reopened.

Hours before the strike on Moscow, Russia thwarted a Ukrainian marine drone attack on its warships in the Black Sea, the latest in a string of assaults on its fleet, reports AFP.

Russia's defence ministry said the drone was destroyed late on Thursday night by navy patrol ships, 237 km (147 miles) southwest of Sevastopol - the base of its Black Sea Fleet on the Moscow-annexed Crimean peninsula.

Meanwhile, the first vessel that used

Ukraine's Black Sea corridor is crossing through Turkey's Bosphorus Strait, a Reuters witness said yesterday.

The Hong-Kong flagged Joseph Schulte container ship that left the Russian-blocked Ukrainian Black Sea port of Odesa earlier this week had been in the port since February 23, 2022, the day before the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

As the war rages on, the United States has approved sending F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine from Denmark and the Netherlands to defend against Russian invaders as soon as pilot training is completed, a US official said on Thursday. Ukraine has actively sought the US-made F-16 fighter jets to help it counter Russian air superiority.

Washington gave Denmark and the Netherlands official assurances that the United States will expedite approval of transfer requests for F-16s to go to Ukraine when the pilots are trained, the official said.

"We welcome Washington's decision to pave the way for sending F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine," Dutch Foreign Minister Wopke Hoekstra said on messaging platform X, formerly known as Twitter.

SAYEDEE'S DEATH

Inspector transferred over condolence post

UNB, Rajshahi

A police officer was transferred from Rajshahi Metropolitan Police to Bandarban Armed Police Battalion (APBn) for posting on social media in favour of war criminal Delawar Hossain Sayeede, who died on Monday.

The police officer is Khairul Islam, court inspector of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police (RMP).

Vijay Basak, additional commissioner (crime and discipline branch) of RMP, said that an investigation was conducted about Khairul Islam's Facebook post.

"As he was found guilty, he was transferred to Bandarban following the order of the police headquarters on Thursday," he added.

Sayedee, who was sentenced to life imprisonment for crimes against humanity during the Liberation War, died while undergoing treatment on Monday night.

After the death of Sayeede, inspector Khairul Islam posted on his personal Facebook expressing his condolences.

When his Facebook post came to light, RMP Commissioner Vijay Biplab Talukder ordered the cybercrime unit to investigate the matter.

Missing man's body found after 26 hours

UNB, Kishoreganj

The body of a man was recovered from Mithamain Haor in Kishoreganj yesterday, 26 hours after he went missing while fishing, said police.

The deceased was identified as Syed Miah, 60, of Atpasha (Nayabari) village.

Quoting locals, Mithamain Police Station OC Kalindra Nath Golder said Syed Miah went fishing in the canal adjacent to Mahmudpur Bazar of the Dhaki union of the upazila on Thursday.

"At one point, his fishing net got stuck to something underwater. He dived in to free the net, but he couldn't return to the surface," said the police official.

A five-member dive team of Kishoreganj Fire Service started the rescue operation around 3:15pm on Thursday, which was later called off due to strong currents, OC Kalindra said.

Later, fishermen found his body floating in the haor near Mithamain Sadar union around 9:30am, he said.

Farmer beaten to death

UNB, Narail

A farmer was beaten to death allegedly by his rivals in Narail's Lohagara upazila on Thursday night.

The deceased was identified as Sufal Biswas, 36, of the upazila's Kalyanpur village.

According to family members, Sufal was processing jute fibres outside his house on Thursday afternoon.

At that time, Rostam Sheikh, along with his two sons, Tamal and Rubel arrived and thrashed Sufal with a hammer and iron rod, leaving him seriously injured.

Sufal died on Thursday night while undergoing treatment at Khulna Medical College Hospital.

Nasir Uddin, officer-in-charge (OC) of Lohagara Police Station, said that Sufal might have been killed over previous enmity.

Narrow highway may serve as a bottleneck

FROM PAGE 1

148 km, only 16 km of the highway - 8km from the Chattogram part and 8 km from the Cox's Bazar part - have already been made four-lane.

Suvash Barua, road communication expert and vice president of Planned Chattogram Forum, said there would be a traffic mess if all the related issues remained unaddressed, adding that an integrated communication system should be put in place first.

"The 36-feet wide highway will not contribute much if there is no service lane on the highway for local inhabitants. When it is widened to four-lane, three-wheelers, rickshaws, easy bikes and other local transports will use the same highway. If there is no service lane, it is very likely there will be a mess."

Police and locals have echoed Barua when they say local vehicles

will increase jam and accidents on the highway. They say local markets, unruly driving and haphazard parking on the road also cause traffic congestion.

According to RHD data, nearly 30 thousand vehicles ply the Chattogram-Cox's Bazar highway every day.

A survey conducted by the Bangladesh Bridge Authority in 2013 states more than 17,000 vehicles can use the Bangabandhu tunnel per day. An average of more than 28,305 vehicles will travel through the tunnel every day by 2025, which will increase to an average of 37,946 by 2030.

Highway police also fear huge tailbacks on the highway after the inauguration of the tunnel.

Shehangshu Bikash Sarkar, officer-in-charge of Patiya Highway Police Station told The Daily Star,

"Road accidents occur often on this road as three-wheelers, CNGs, buses, trucks, and other heavy vehicles ply the road on a regular basis."

Vehicles, coming from across the country towards Cox's Bazar and Bandarban, will enter the tunnel through Patenga, using the Outer Ring Road in the port city. Getting past the tunnel, the vehicles will first take the six-lane approach road and then the six-lane Chaturri-Chaumuhani road, which leads to the six-lane Patiya-Anwara-Banshkhari (PAB).

After that, the vehicles will reach the Chittagong-Cox's Bazar highway through the Shikolbaha Y Junction in Karnaphuli Upazila.

Local sources say the two-lane highway is being connected with the six-lane PAB via a newly constructed intersection at the Y Junction.

A project proposal to upgrade the

highway into six-lane was sent to the ministry of road transport and bridges last year. In the proposal, RHD asked for Tk 5,800 crore to implement the project, say RHD sources, adding that the proposal is now awaiting a green signal.

"It's not true that there will be huge traffic congestion on the highway after opening the tunnel. We are now widening it to 36 feet from Patiya to Keranirkhat, which is enough to tackle the situation."

Jointly funded by Bangladesh and China, the tunnel is 3.40 km long and the approach road is 5.35 km.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the construction work of the first tunnel tube on February 24, 2019.

The Bangabandhu Tunnel is being built at a cost of Tk 10,374 crore.

Triples in 15yrs despite

FROM PAGE 1

indicators, included 1,799 universities across 104 countries.

The DU and the NSU have been ranked 186th and 192nd respectively in the UK-based Times' Asia University Rankings 2023, which included 669 universities from 31 territories.

"I wasn't learning anything new. There is limited scope of specialisation and research-related freedom. It couldn't add to my skills for the sector I want to work in," explained a Dhaka University graduate, who preferred not to be named, as the student reasons to pursue a master's degree at a university in the US.

Although, the US, the UK, Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan and some other European countries are among the usual destinations for Bangladeshi students, in recent years many students are opting for other countries.

According to the Unesco data, the United Arab Emirates is the top destination for Bangladeshis with 11,157 students followed by the USA with 8,665 students and Malaysia with 6,180.

Kazi Faridul Haque, president of the Foreign Admission and Career Development Consultants Association of Bangladesh, said thousands of students are going to the UAE and Malaysia in recent years as the cost of studying in these countries is comparatively low.

"Besides, many students, especially the madrasa-based ones choose these Muslim-majority countries," Haque claimed.

Prof Abdul Mannan, a former UGC chairman, said quality the UAE and Malaysian universities are affiliated with universities in the UK, the US, and other Western countries.

This makes these universities attractive choices for students here who can't afford direct admission to institutions in the UK or US, he added.

He said foreign universities are offering scholarships and other facilities to get international students.

"Besides, the improved financial capacity of a section of Bangladeshis is also a factor," he said, adding that in the past only upper class or very bright students could afford to study abroad.

But now, due to financial solvency, higher-middle class, as well as middle-class families, can send their children abroad for higher education, added Mannan.

According to education consultancy firms, English medium students prefer undergraduate programmes abroad while mainstream Bengali medium students usually go abroad for post-graduation courses.

Dil Afroza said the number of English medium schools has increased in recent times, and students of these institutions generally struggle with admission tests at public universities, mainly due to differences in curriculum.

"Besides, limited job opportunities, nepotism, and corruption in the job market here prompts many parents to send their children abroad so that they can settle there," she observed.

However, Mannan said the lack of quality education at many public and private universities remains a big issue. "These institutions lack the atmosphere needed for higher education. Most of these do not have adequate research facilities and quality faculty to attract students," said Mannan.

"Sadly, education here remains exam and certificate centric, not knowledge-centric. We focus on numbers, not quality. A university is more than bricks and mortar," he added.

Both Mannan and Dil Afroza said that political uncertainties are also a reason why many students go abroad for better study and life there.

Mannan said brain drain is a longstanding problem for Bangladesh as the country is deprived of service as the majority of these students do not return home after completing their studies.

BTI pesticide importer blacklisted by DNCC

FROM PAGE 1

to probe the matter and asked the committee to submit its report within 10 working days, said Selim.

"We will take legal steps against the company after getting the probe report," he said, adding that they stopped trial of the BTI.

He further said they did not pay any money to Marshal Agrovet for supplying the pesticide and would return it to the company.

In another development, the Singaporean company known as Best Chemical Co (S) Pte Ltd (Bestchem) yesterday sent a cease-and-desist letter to Marshal Agrovet, warning of legal action if it persists in such misleading activities using the Bestchem company's name, Johnny Wong, managing director of Bestchem, told this newspaper.

Characterising Marshal's actions as entirely illegal and a grave offence, Wong said, "The issue now is that the product did not undergo the proper registration process. And the product label did not meet the requirements. And the supplier has fraudulently used our company name. This evidence is more than sufficient for the authorities to arrest them."

Talking about the product's effectiveness is no longer important at this point when the supplier is dishonest, he added.

EXPLANATION

As per Marshal Agrovet's explanation, the company said it imported the BTI pesticide through a third party. It claimed that the documents it submitted to the DNCC during the tender process mentioned a deal between Marshal

and a Chinese company named Shandong Ganon Agrochemical, through which the pesticide would be imported.

However, the company failed to provide any relevant documents with the explanation letter whether it bought the pesticide from Bestchem directly or via the third party, said DNCC sources.

Responding to these claims, Wong said, "As I've mentioned, we have never sold five tonnes of BTI to anyone in the world."

Marshal Agrovet, which imported the pesticide, does not have the importing licence. Despite this, the company participated in an open tender and emerged as the lowest bidder. Subsequently, the company was given the job to import the pesticide.

It has now emerged that the

company did not import the pesticide from Singapore as it claimed. Instead, it took the product from a Chinese company although tender documents clearly say the BTI must be imported either from the US, EU countries, Singapore, India, and Malaysia.

Earlier this week, Bestchem went on Facebook to refute Marshal Agrovet's claim that the product was procured from it.

After media reports on the alleged scam, DNCC on August 14 served a show-cause notice on Marshal Agrovet and sought information about the source of the larvicide.

DNCC opened an e-tender on April 11 for the import of the BTI in an effort to tame the breeding of Aedes mosquitoes that carry the dengue virus.