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Railway staff defer strike for 10 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Railway staffers, including loco-masters, postponed their scheduled strike from early today for 10 working days.

"We have decided to postpone our work abstention for 10 working days following the assurance of the Prime Minister's Office," Mujibur Rahman, chief convener of Bangladesh Railway Running Staff Oikya Parishad, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said they will have a meeting with the principal secretary of the prime minister on August 29 over the issue and will take the next step accordingly.

Running staffers — officials including loco masters, assistant loco masters, guards and travelling ticket examiner (TTE) — on August 1 announced to go for work abstention from 12:01am of August 28 demanding reinstatement of their post-

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina waves at the crowd at Dhaka airport upon returning from Johannesburg, South Africa yesterday. The premier arrived home after attending the BRICS Summit.

PHOTO: PIU

'365 days of injustice'

Students, eminent citizens seek Khadiza's immediate release

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a programme yesterday demanded the immediate release of Jagannath University student Khadijatul Kubra, who has been in jail since August 27 of last year in two separate cases filed under the Digital Security Act.

The DSA has now been converted into the Cyber Security Act (CSA).

Criticising the CSA, Dhaka University Professor Tanjim Uddin Khan said, "Such laws were enacted so that none can criticise the ruler, and by enacting such laws, they (the rulers) have not only ensured their stay in power but also ensured the safety of those who are their associates."

Professor Tanjim made these remarks while addressing a programme titled '365 Days of Injustice' organised by students from different universities on the one-year anniversary of Khadijatul Kubra's detention, held at the Dhaka University Teachers Students Centre.

"This law targets not just persons like Khadijatul, but also others who criticise and speak out about the government's wrongdoings. They will be watched by the government, their voices will be muffled, and they will finally be imprisoned and die in jail day one day," he added.

Dhaka University Prof Samina Lutfa stated, "Whenever elections approach, the names of these laws are changed, but the laws and their clauses have remained the same. In some cases, these laws have become even more oppressive than their previous versions."

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Ex-minister Motiur Rahman dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Veteran Awami League politician and former religious affairs minister, Principal Motiur Rahman, passed away yesterday due to old-age complications. He was 81 years old.

Motiur, a valiant freedom fighter and recipient of the Ekushey Padak award, breathed his last at 11:00pm while undergoing treatment at Nexus Hospital in Mymensingh.

His elder brother, Zia Uddin Ahmed, confirmed this to The Daily Star.

He is survived by his wife, a son, and three daughters.

Born in 1942 in Akua village in Mymensingh Sadar upazila, he served as a member of the advisory committee of the Bangladesh Awami League

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GOPLAGANJ SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY UNIV

Academic activities in peril

Teacher shortage, lack of infrastructure to blame

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Academic activities at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University in Gopalganj are being severely hampered due to a shortage of basic infrastructure and teachers.

Established in 2011, the BSMRSTU currently has only 284 teachers for a total of 10,845 students enrolled across 34 departments. The university with its student-to-teacher ratio of 38:1 falls short of meeting the University Grants Commission's recommended ratio of 16:1 for science universities.

In several departments, the ratio is far higher than the average of one teacher for every 38 students. Departments like Architecture, Botany, History, Tourism and Hospitality Management, Food and Agro Process Engineering, Fisheries and Marine Bioscience,



and Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering, have less than five teachers each.

"We don't have enough teachers for such a high number of students. Students in many departments are deprived of the required number of lectures and sessional classes as a result," said Dr Kamruzzaman, former president of BSMRSTU

Teachers' Association.

We have urged the university administration to recruit more experienced teachers to address the issue, he added.

Talking to The Daily Star, Jamal Uddin, assistant professor of Computer Science and Engineering Department, said he

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MARSHAL AGROVET BTI pesticide tested effective

DIPAN NANDY

Following two tests, *Bacillus Thuringiensis israelensis* (BTI) pesticide, imported from China by Dhaka North City Corporation's blacklisted company Marshal Agrovet, has proved to be effective.

The tests were conducted by Plant Protection Wing (PPW) of Department of Agriculture Extension, and Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research. Both organisations sent their reports to DNCC yesterday.

While DNCC is still firm in their choice to use BTI to combat *Aedes* breeding, their decision regarding the use of Marshal Agrovet's imported pesticide remains unclear.

Acknowledging the pesticide's efficacy, DNCC Chief Executive Officer Selim Reza said, "Both the organisations, in their reports, said Marshal's BTI is effective for killing *Aedes* larvae. However, we are yet to decide if we will use it."

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DENGUE OUTBREAK

Tk 50,000 spent per patient

Claims health minister; Unicef to provide \$2.2m

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said the government has already spent Tk 400 crore for the treatment of dengue patients in public hospitals across the country.

This expenditure translates to approximately Tk 50,000 per dengue patient, the minister said at a roundtable in Dhaka which discussed the ways to tackle the dengue crisis.

"Around 70 percent of the dengue patients receive treatment from public hospitals while the remaining 30 percent from private hospitals," the minister said, adding that the patients receive treatment at public hospitals free of cost.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) organised the roundtable where high-ups from the development partners, UN agencies, two city corporations in Dhaka, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, and business organisations attended.

Representatives from different local, private and government organisations at the roundtable highlighted that they have been doing their best to tackle the dengue outbreak.

Prof Ahmedul Kabir, additional director general (Planning and Development) of the DGHS said, despite all the efforts, the mosquito menace

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NATIONAL POLLS EC may allow journos to use motorbikes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal yesterday hinted that the Election Commission might change its decision on banning journalists using motorcycles during elections.

On April 12, the EC issued a guideline for media workers that banned journalists using motorcycles when they are covering the polls.

After a meeting with British High Commissioner Sarah Cooke at the Nirbachan Bhaban, Habibur told reporters that they discussed the media guidelines.

The UK envoy wanted to know whether media personnel needed permission to enter a polling station. "We said that there is no permission required," said Awal.

Journalists said that it would be difficult for them to cover election activities without motorcycles, which is justified.

"That's why we said we've put it [new guideline] under review," he added.

Meanwhile, British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Sarah Cooke said after the meeting that the UK is encouraging free, fair, participatory and peaceful elections in Bangladesh.

"So that, citizens of Bangladesh can exercise their democratic rights," she said.

"This was my first meeting with the CEC and his team. We had a very constructive introductory discussion," the envoy said.

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Holding onto a moving human hauler, a boy on roller skates glides along the busy Khamarbari roundabout while a passenger and a helper, standing on bumpers, somehow hold onto the vehicle. Such careless actions not only defy traffic rules but also exacerbate the risks of accidents. The photo was taken yesterday near Ispahani Eye Hospital in the capital.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Khaleda's health not satisfactory Says her personal physician

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's health condition was "not satisfactory" even after 18 days of hospitalisation, her personal physician Prof AZM Zahid Hossain said yesterday.

Khaleda was admitted to Evercare Hospital on August 9 but her condition was improving very slowly, Zahid told The Daily Star.

"Had her condition improved faster, she would have been released from the hospital," the doctor said.

It is uncertain how many days she needs to stay in hospital, he said.

The physician said Khaleda was under close observation and her treatment plan was being changed constantly.

"New medicines are being prescribed ... and some are being dropped," he said.

"She should be taken abroad urgently for proper treatment," Zahid said.