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9TH WAGE BOARD

BFUJ urges Noab, BSP to pay arrears

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) yesterday urged the Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab) and Bangladesh Sangbadpatra Parishad (BSP) to pay the arrears of the 9th Wage Board Award. "The government announced the 9th Wage Board Award on September 12, 2019. But Noab immediately filed a case against the award, even though Noab and BSP leaders participated in the preparation of the recommendations for the award," BFUJ President Omar Faruque and Secretary General Dip Azad said in a joint statement yesterday.

As the court did not impose any restrictions on the wage board award, there was no obstacle in implementing it, they said.

"Despite repeated

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While one bus is parked in the background illegally, waiting to pick up passengers, another crashes into a rickshaw. Witnesses alleged that the bus hit the three-wheeler intentionally. The photo was taken near Gulistan yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Protect the ozone layer

Speakers urge compliance with Montreal Protocol

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has been phasing out use of Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS), by setting a specific timeframe to comply with Montreal Protocol—an international treaty designed to protect the ozone layer, said Md Shahab Uddin, Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

The minister shared this remark at an event organised by Department of Environment (DoE), marking World Ozone Day, at DoE headquarter in Agargaon, yesterday.

Md Shahab Uddin said they will phase down HCFC (Hydrochlorofluorocarbon) by 67.50 percent by 2025. HCFC is an Ozone Depleting Substance, which is widely used in fire extinguishing equipment, refrigerators, and air conditioning devices.

The minister also said that all alternative technologies, which will protect the ozone layer, are encouraged. By implementing this plan, Bangladesh will enter a new era in the field of air cooler production, opening the door for export of manufactured products.

Manufacturers who use energy efficient technology in refrigeration and air conditioning devices are receiving incentives from government, he said.

He also noted that Bangladesh has been praised by United Nation's Environmental Programme for implementing the clauses stipulated in the Montreal Protocol.

Ziaul Haque, Director of DoE (Air Quality Management) gave the keynote presentation in the event.

Habibun Nahar, Deputy Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, also emphasised the need to protect the ozone layer.

3 fraudsters held from Uttara: PBI

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Police Bureau of Investigation arrested three members of a gang involved in fraudulent activities from Dhaka's Uttara on Saturday.

The arrestees are -- Abdul Bari, 65; Rashed alias Rasel, 37; and Naem, 43. They used to scam people by pretending to be businessmen, said Jahangir Alam, special superintendent of PBI (North) yesterday.

Abdul Bari was identified as the mastermind of the group, who used fake identities while scamming unsuspecting individuals.

This gang has swindled over a crore taka from victims, the official estimated.

The PBI was tasked with investigation of a case filed against the fraud gang with Airport Police Station on July 30.

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CAAB owes Tk 1192cr to 3 defunct airlines

Novoair, currently in operation, also have arrears of Tk 29cr

RASHIDUL HASAN

Four domestic airlines, three of which are now defunct, owe BDT 1,222 crore to the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) for various aeronautical and non-aeronautical fees.

The four airlines are Regent Airways, United Airways, GMG Airlines and Novoair. Of them, only Novoair is now in operation.

CAAB owes over Tk 1192 to the three defunct airlines.

CAAB yesterday placed this information before the parliamentary standing committee on the Civil Aviation Ministry during a meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Sources in CAAB said the aviation authority owes the money to the four airlines in the form of charges for landing, parking, housing of aircraft and route navigation and embarkation fees.

The CAAB solely depends on the

fees to meet its revenue expenses and finance its development projects.

Earlier, the committee wanted to know how much money CAAB would get from the country's domestic airlines as arrears.

As of last May, two other private airlines, US Bangla and Air Astra, both of which are still in business, have no dues.

According to the CAAB report, the regulatory authority will get a total of Tk 1,222 crore 98 lakh 25 thousand from Regent Airways, Novo Air, United Airways and GMG Airlines.

As of last May, two other private airlines, US Bangla and Air Astra, both of which are still in business, have no dues, it added.

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In its report, CAAB said it will get more than Tk 408 crore from Regent Air. GMG Airlines owes more than Tk 394 crore to CAAB. United Airways has arrears of more than Tk 388 crore while Novoair owes more than Tk 29 crore.

The parliamentary watchdog recommended taking necessary measures to realise the money from the respective private airlines, meeting sources said.

In the meeting, Mokammel Hossain, secretary of the civil aviation ministry, informed that Biman has identified 4 new routes -- Male, Chennai, Rome and Sydney -- based on passengers' demand.

However, he said the purchase of new aircraft is a must to launch those.

Mokammel said discussions are going on with Airbus, a European multinational aerospace corporation, to procure new aircraft.

Participatory polls not on EC Says Commissioner

UNB, Dhaka

The participation of all political parties in the next general election would be determined by the political parties themselves, rather than by the Election Commission, Election Commissioner Anisur Rahman said yesterday.

"We are determined to create an election-friendly environment and we'll do it. In the past one and half years we have urged the political parties to participate in the election and we are urging them repeatedly even now," he said, while talking to reporters at Kishoreganj Circuit House.

"Whether the election would be participatory will depend on the decision of the political parties. The EC has no scope to interfere in it. We have taken preparations to hold elections as per the constitution," he added.

Canadian cops, FBI official allowed to testify in Niko case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday allowed the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to produce an official of Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and two officials of Royal Canadian Mounted Police as witnesses in the Niko graft case.

The officials are Debra LaPrevotte Griffith of FBI and Kelvin Duggan and Lloyd Schoepp of Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Judge Sheikh Hafizur Rahman of the Special Judge's Court-9 passed the order after a hearing from the prosecution and defence on an application submitted by ACC on September 12.

Later, the judge set October 10 for next hearing of the case, ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan said.

Attorney General AM Amin Uddin on September 12 submitted the application with the court seeking permission to produce the three officials as witnesses in the Niko graft case.

The ACC filed the case in December 2007, accusing Khaleda and several others of abusing power to award a gas exploration and extraction deal to Canadian company Niko when she was prime minister between 2001 and 2006.

On May 5, 2008, the ACC pressed charges against 11 people, including Khaleda Zia, accusing them of causing a loss of more than Tk13,000 crore to the state exchequer by signing that deal.

Ensure gender-inclusive infrastructures

Speakers tell workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Infrastructural designs and implementation must be inclusive and accessible for all genders, especially women and non-binary individuals, to enhance gender equality and achieve SDG 5, said speakers at a workshop yesterday.

They made the remarks at an event titled "Pathways to Progress: Strengthening Bangladesh through Gender Responsive and Resilient Infrastructure", jointly organised by United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and UN Women, held at a hotel in the capital.

The chief guest, Dr Md Sarwar Bari, director general of the Local Government Division's Monitoring, Inspection, and Evaluation Wing, said gender-responsive infrastructure is a fundamental aspect of sustainable development.

"We need to acknowledge that infrastructure is not gender-neutral. So, we must ensure that our infrastructure-related investments promote gender equality and social inclusion," he said.

Infrastructure should enhance the safety and security of women and girls. Adequate street lighting, well-maintained public spaces, and reliable public transportation are essential to minimise the fear of violence and harassment, he added.

Gwyn Lewis, UN resident coordinator in Bangladesh, said gender mainstreaming in infrastructure is vital because it is not just about physical structures but also about meeting the diverse needs of the communities, ensuring equal access to essential services, and uplifting

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A group of women gather at an OMS truck, after waiting for hours to purchase daily essentials at lower prices. The continuous rise in prices of commodities has left many people struggling to make ends meet. The photo was taken in the capital's Khilgaon area yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

First test-tube baby doing well at DMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Doctors at Dhaka Medical College Hospital recently reported that their first ever "test-tube baby" is in good health. The girl is the first child to be born using the in vitro fertilization (IVF) method at any public hospital in the country.

"This marks the first successful attempt. Both baby and mother are doing well," Prof Dr Fatema Rahman, head of the Infertility Department at DMCH told The Daily Star yesterday.

She shared that the success rate of IVF is around 30 percent.

"Given that IVF is an expensive and lengthy procedure, having such facilities at DMCH can offer hope to many infertile couples, who cannot afford the costs at private facilities," she added.

According to Dr Fatema, the primary cost associated with IVF is related to medication.

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