

Buet students continue to boycott exams

Call for banning politics on campus

DU CORRESPONDENT

As part of the ongoing movement against politics on campus, students of Buet are continuing to boycott exams even after the Eid holidays.

Only eight of the 1,279 students of the 21st batch sat for the term final exam held yesterday, students said.

Exams were also boycotted before the vacation.

Abrar Faiyaz, a student of the batch, yesterday told The Daily Star that a whopping 1,271 students, 99.37 percent of all students of the 21st batch, were absent during the term final exam.

Another student, wishing anonymity, said the university banned student politics after the murder of second-year student Abrar Fahad inside the Sher-e-Bangla Hall on October 7, 2019. "It [student politics] should not resume."

The movement began when Imtiaz Hossain Rahim Rabbi, a student of the university and a leader of Bangladesh Chhatra League, led over 100 BCL activists to gather on the campus in the early hours of March 28, violating the ban.

In the face of protests, the university administration had cancelled Imtiaz's hall seat.

He then filed a writ petition with the High Court, after which the bench of Justice Md Khosruzzaman and Justice KM Zahid Sarwar on April 1 stayed the university's ban on student politics.

Suu Kyi moved to house arrest

REUTERS

Myanmar's detained former leader and Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi has been moved from prison to house arrest, a spokesperson for the military government told media.

"Since the weather is extremely hot, it is not only for Aung San Suu Kyi ... For all those, who need necessary precautions, especially elderly prisoners, we are working to protect them from heatstroke," junta spokesperson Major General Zaw Min Tun said in comments reported by four media outlets late on Tuesday.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina places a wreath at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on Dhaka's Dhanmondi-27 yesterday to pay homage to the Father of the Nation on the occasion of the historic Mujibnagar Day. Senior Awami League leaders were present. PHOTO: PID

Gaza ceasefire talks at 'delicate phase'

Says Qatar; 56 more Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes

REUTERS, Dubai

Talks on a Gaza ceasefire and a release of hostages are at a "delicate phase", said Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani yesterday.

"We are trying as much as possible to address this stumbling block," he added, without giving further details.

Qatar's premier condemned what he described as the policy of "collective punishment" still followed by Israel in its offensive against the enclave's ruling Palestinian group Hamas and the latest escalation in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

The ceasefire discussions, mediated by Qatar and Egypt, are continuing as a humanitarian crisis devastates Palestinians in Gaza with severe shortages of food, medicine and hospital care.

Israel's has continued to pound Gaza in an air and ground offensive which has killed at least 33,899 Palestinians, according to Gaza health authorities

▶▶ Playground in Maghazi refugee camp struck

▶▶ Israel follows policy of collective punishment: Qatar PM

▶▶ Death toll in enclave rises to 33,899

yesterday.

Fifty-six Palestinians have been killed and 89 injured in the past 24 hours, the ministry added in a statement.

Israeli air strikes hit a playground and busy market in Maghazi refugee camp. Another strike on Gaza City's Sheikh Radwan neighbourhood killed at least seven people and wounded 20 others.

Video from the scene showed the bodies of the victims were being transported to the Baptist Hospital in Gaza City. "There was a tent where people

gathered to communicate with their families in Rafah and Khan Younis. Children, young men, and women were martyred inside the tent," Islam al-Jaidi, a resident and an eyewitness of the attack, said.

According to the latest report by Human Rights Watch (HRW), surging settler violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank has been aided by the Israeli military, whose forces have either taken part in or failed to protect Palestinians.

In one instance, Israeli soldiers participated alongside illegal settlers in an attack on the Palestinian Bedouin village of Wadi as Seeq, the report said.

In a statement marking the Palestinian Prisoner's Day, Hamas emphasised that freeing its prisoners from Israeli jails is a "top priority", reports Al Jazeera Online.

"[Israel] continues to practice the most heinous crimes against prisoners inside prisons and detention centres, including medical negligence, torture and direct killing," said Hamas.

Halt unnecessary C-sections, NHRC urges govt

STAR REPORT

The National Human Rights Commission has urged the secretary of the Directorate General of Health Services to halt unnecessary C-sections, enhance women's awareness in this regard, and penalise those responsible for the abnormal spike in Caesareans.

In a press statement yesterday, the NHRC urged the government to investigate the root cause of this surge in C-sections and swiftly impose restrictions on unnecessary caesarean deliveries.

Quoting a recent news report on 7TV, it said that a pregnant woman was pressured into a C-section at Midford Hospital, despite previous successful vaginal deliveries. She also faced offensive remarks and was harassed by the doctor, even though she later birthed her child at a different government hospital in Mugda.

The NHRC also asked the director of Midford to conduct an inquiry into the allegations against the hospital and inform the commission after taking appropriate action against the doctor concerned.

Man held for rape in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police yesterday arrested a man on charges of raping a girl in Rajshahi's Kashiadanga upazila.

The arrestee, Sree Polash alias Rambo, 35, is also accused in several other criminal cases, including for extortion, said Emran Hossain, OC of Kashiadanga Police Station.

The case statement said Rambo and some others, on April 12, abducted the 18-year-old girl from near the Bornali intersection while she was walking back home.

She was released after four hours in a critical state and was rescued and taken to RMCH by a rickshaw-puller.

The victim's father later filed a case against Rambo and five to seven unnamed persons under Section 9(1) of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

Contacted, he said his daughter would often go for a walk by herself. "That night she didn't come back so we went out to look for her. Police then informed us from the hospital that she was there.

The victim told her father that the abductors took her to a room near Ullapara College and three people raped her there.

"We're interrogating the arrestee now to find the whereabouts of his accomplices," the OC said.

Maladies every step of the way 14 die

FROM PAGE 1

to professional drivers while renewing licences every five years, which is deemed insufficient. Many drivers receive licences without giving tests properly, while some do not have valid licences at all.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in June 2018 directed the authorities concerned to ban driving for more than five consecutive hours on highways. Her directive went largely ignored.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, Osman Ali, general secretary of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation, said, "Most of the drivers are overworked."

"They have to drive for eight to 10 hours at a stretch, in many cases amid congestion, resulting in a loss of concentration. This in turn leads to road accidents ... The government isn't investing enough for the drivers but often blame them for the accidents without proper investigations. The situation won't improve this way."

Besides, many drivers have eye problems, which can compromise safety on the roads, but there are no facilities to look after their health.

Meanwhile, the number of registered vehicles without fitness clearances has been rising over the years.

Till April 15, 6.17 lakh vehicles did not go through the mandatory fitness tests. The number was 4.79 lakh in July 2019.

On the other hand, the quality of the clearance given by the BRTA remains questionable.

The agency has only one vehicle inspection machine, meaning most of the vehicles are tested manually. With around 140 inspectors, it is almost impossible to have all the vehicles thoroughly checked.

As the government is yet to enforce the economic life set for commercial vehicles, thousands of outdated vehicles are operating on the roads.

BRTA data shows there are 35,782 registered buses over 20 years old, and 37,275 trucks and lorries aged over 25.

Unlicensed drivers are operating tens of thousands of unregistered vehicles, including three-wheelers and locally-made Nosimon and Korimon, across the country. The authorities concerned, on the other hand, have no clue about the fitness statuses of such vehicles.

Local political leaders, in collusion with a section of law enforcers and transport associations, have been allowing these illegal vehicles to run on the roads.

The Roads and Highways Department has conducted safety audits on only 1,055km of roads, which means over 95 percent of its 22,476km road network has never been audited.

These audits are a systematic, formal and thorough assessment that identify potential risks on existing or planned roads and recommend measures aimed at reducing accidents.

At least 2,152km or 10.48 percent of the 20,523km of surveyed roads under

the RHD were in "poor, bad, or very bad" conditions, according to an RHD survey published in June last year.

The BRTA, highway police and traffic police are responsible for enforcement of traffic laws. But all of them are understaffed.

The BRTA has 19 posts for executive magistrates, who carry out mobile court drives. Eleven of the posts are currently vacant. In some cases, executive magistrates of district administrations had to conduct mobile courts against errant vehicles and drivers.

Highway police mainly covers the national highways, which make up a small portion of the country's total road network. This means most of the roads remain unchecked.

On the other hand, traffic police are mostly deployed in city corporations and district headquarters and there is scarcity in their numbers.

The main problem, however, is that many transport owners and workers believe obtaining valid documents from the BRTA is unnecessary as they can easily run their vehicles by paying bribes.

Many unlicensed drivers operate unfit vehicles by paying monthly bribes to a section of crooked law enforcers and political leaders who hold sway over the transport sector, insiders said.

Moshiur Rahman Ranga, president of Bangladesh Road Transport Owners Association, said many unfit vehicles are operating right under the noses of the authorities.

"No action is taken against them, which is worsening the road safety situation," he told The Daily Star last night.

Prof Moazzem said most of the drivers of commercial and small vehicles do not have any formal training. They also lack the sense of responsibility, which usually develops during training.

"So, an anarchic driving culture prevails on the roads, which is deteriorating every day due to a lack of effective enforcement of the law."

"After any major road crash, you'll see the vehicles or drivers involved did not have valid documents. Who do they pay to operate these vehicles?" he asked.

"Given all these facts, the roads are very unsafe. It's like an atom bomb," he said, adding that vehicle speed is increasing with the improvement of roads, meaning the situation will keep worsening until revolutionary steps are taken.

Osman Ali recommended enhanced monitoring, enforcement of law and adequate training for the drivers, while Ranga said restricting the operation of unfit and illegal vehicles can be a major step towards reducing road crashes.

Contacted, ABM Amin Ullah Nuri, secretary of the Road Transport and Highways Division, did not comment on the overall situation. However, he said they would investigate the two major road crashes that took place recently and take action against those involved.

FROM PAGE 1

returned with bodies. Six people died on the spot and six others were declared dead after being taken to Jhalakathi Sadar Hospital, said Shahidul Islam, officer in charge of Jhalakathi Sadar Police Station.

Two people died of their injuries at the Barishal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital, said the hospital's Director Saiful Islam.

Nine others were being treated there and five of them were in critical condition, he added.

Jhalakathi Civil Surgeon HM Zahurul Islam said three others were undergoing treatment at Jhalakathi Sadar Hospital.

Jhalakathi Superintendent of Police Mohammad Afruzul Haque Tutul said apart from arresting truck driver Al Amin Hawlader, police also detained his assistant Nazmul Sheikh and seized the truck.

The SP told journalists that Al Amin was not the regular driver of the vehicle and that he was filling in for someone else. CCTV footage of the accident, apparently collected from the toll plaza, went viral on social media.

[Our Barishal and Pirojpur correspondents contributed to this report]

Bank Asia

FROM PAGE 1

and will likely provide more details about the move afterwards, said a senior official of Bank Asia.

If the current deal carries through, it will be Bank Asia's third acquisition of a foreign bank.

In 2001, the private commercial bank acquired the operations of Canada-based Bank of Nova Scotia in Dhaka, the first of its kind in the banking history of Bangladesh, according to Bank Asia's website.

Subsequently, it also took over the Bangladesh operations of Muslim Commercial Bank Ltd, a renowned Pakistani bank.

Bank Asia started operations in 1999, and is a pioneer in Agent Banking services in Bangladesh.

It posted a 12 percent year-on-year increase in profit to Tk 305.47 crore in 2022. Its disbursed loans were Tk 28,960.27 crore till December last year, with 5.51 percent of it turning into bad loans, according to Bangladesh Bank data.

On the other hand, Bank Alfalah is one of the largest banks in Pakistan, with a network of over 1,024 branches across more than 200 cities in Pakistan, and an international presence in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bahrain and the UAE.

Its profit from the Bangladesh unit soared more than three times in 2023, which is Tk 43 crore, posting a 214 percent rise year-on-year.

Bank Alfalah started its operation in Bangladesh in 2005, and currently has seven branches in the country.

Its total disbursed loan stands at Tk 1,616 crore, of which 1.87 percent was bad loans last year, according to BB data.

Fighting flares up across the Teknaf border

FROM PAGE 1

On Tuesday night, 46 more members of Myanmar Border Guard Police (BGP) took shelter in Bangladesh amid the ongoing conflict. Yesterday, one more BGP member crossed over into Bangladesh, said Shariful Islam, public relations officer of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

A total of 261 Myanmar border guards are currently in custody of BGB, he said.

BGB members also seized the weapons of the BGP personnel who crossed into Bangladesh through different points of the border in Bandarban's Naikhongchhari upazila, Shariful said.

Concern is growing among the people living along the Naf river in Teknaf as they have been hearing sounds of loud explosions coming from the other side for the last one month.

The conflict between the Myanmar junta and the rebel Arakan Army (AA) intensified from the start of February along the Ghumdhum border in Naikhongchhari upazila of Bandarban.

Myanmar troops had to retreat and many fled to Bangladesh due to the heavy intensity of the attacks by the rebel group.

On February 15, a total of 330 Myanmar nationals who had entered Bangladesh were returned to their country. Among them were 302 BGB members and four of their family members, two army personnel, 18 immigration officials, and four civilians.

Meanwhile, BGB and Bangladesh Coast Guard have increased day and night patrolling on the border road and the 54-kilometre stretch of Naf river from Whykong to Shah Porir Dwip.

Concern is growing among the people living along the Naf river in Teknaf as they have been hearing sounds of loud explosions coming from the other side for the last one month.

Man dies

FROM PAGE 1

She alleged that the people identified themselves as policemen.

Contacted, Rajon Kumar Das, additional superintendent of police (crime and operations) of Sunamganj District Police, said, "Deceased Romij was accused in seven cases and a group of policemen went to arrest him with a warrant. During the arrest attempt, he [Romij] managed to run away through the backdoor of his shop and took cover in a nearby house."

"After police had reached the spot, they were confronted by other people at the house and by this time, Romij ran away to a house some 10 to 15 minutes away. Exhausted from the running, he collapsed on the ground and died," he said.

"He was suffering from breathing and heart issues and was treated at a hospital recently. We have found no sign of him being beaten up," he said.

He claimed that they learnt about his health issues after talking to his family and others on the spot.

An autopsy was done at the Sunamganj Sadar Hospital. After getting the autopsy report, it will be clear, he added.



A dog stands on rubble as rescuers work at the site of a destroyed building during a Russian missile strike, amid Russia's attacks on Ukraine, in Chernihiv, Ukraine yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS