

CYBER SECURITY ACT Man sent to jail over FB post

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A man was sent to jail yesterday after being arrested under the Cyber Security Act over a Facebook post in Dinajpur's Hakimpur upazila.

The post was about the 30 percent quota for government jobs for children of freedom fighters.

Zahangir Alam, 43, a former employee of Hili Land Port, was arrested from his home in the upazila after Liakat Ali, former commander of the upazila's Muktiyoddha command, filed the CSA case with Hakimpur Police Station on Wednesday afternoon.

Dulal Hossain, officer-in-charge of the police station, confirmed that Zahangir was produced before a court, which sent him to jail.

According to the case statement, his post, made on June 17, "belittled freedom fighters and their children" with regard to the quota system for government jobs.

It sparked widespread criticism and protests on social media, prompting Liakat Ali to file the case, the statement added.



An overloaded truck on the road near Doyel Chattar on the Dhaka University campus yesterday morning. Bamboos sticking out could cause a major accident as they hide the vehicle's tail lights.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

HSC, equivalent exams deferred under Sylhet division

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to defer the upcoming Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and equivalent examinations under the Sylhet division in light of the prevailing flood situation in the northeastern part of the country.

All exams scheduled up until July 8 have been postponed under the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Sylhet, Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board, and Bangladesh Technical Education Board, reads a press release issued by the Inter-Education Board Coordination Committee yesterday.

The exams on July 9 and subsequent exams will be held as per schedule, added the release signed by Prof Tapan Kumar Sarkar, chairman of the Inter-Education Board Coordination Committee and chairman of Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Dhaka.

The schedule for the deferred exams will be announced later, the release also added.

The HSC and equivalent exams set to begin on June 30 will proceed as planned elsewhere in the country, the press release mentioned.

In 2022, the government similarly postponed the SSC and later the HSC exams under the Sylhet division due to a worsening flood situation in the northeastern part of the country.

Traffic collisions claim two lives in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two unidentified persons lost their lives in separate road accidents in the capital's Paltan and Jatrabari areas early yesterday.

Police said the victims, both middle-aged males, were likely vagrants.

A man, believed to be in his 30s, who was sleeping near the road divider at Paltan intersection was run over by a truck around 5:30am, said Abdul Aziz, sub-inspector (SI) of Paltan Police Station.

He was taken to the emergency department at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital at 6:20am, where doctors pronounced him dead, Aziz said. "We have detained the truck driver and impounded the vehicle," he added.

In a separate incident, another man, believed to be in his 40s, was killed after being hit by an unidentified vehicle on the Jatrabari Flyover, said Sub-inspector Hiranam Biswas of Jatrabari Police Station.

On information, police recovered his body around 1:30am and sent it to the DMCH morgue.

Necessary legal steps are being taken regarding the accident, he added.

EXTREME HEAT Hajj death toll tops 1,000

AFP, Riyadh

The death toll from this year's hajj has exceeded 1,000, an AFP tally said yesterday, more than half of them unregistered worshippers who performed the pilgrimage in extreme heat in Saudi Arabia.

The new deaths reported yesterday included 58 from Egypt, according to an Arab diplomat who provided a breakdown showing that of 658 Egyptians who passed away, 630 were unregistered pilgrims.

All told, around 10 countries have reported 1,081 deaths during the annual pilgrimage, one of the five pillars of Islam.

The figures have come via official statements or from diplomats working on their countries' responses.

The hajj, whose timing is determined by the lunar Islamic calendar, fell again this year during the Saudi summer.

The national meteorological centre reported a high of 51.8 degrees Celsius (125 Fahrenheit) this week at the Grand Mosque in Makkah.

According to a Saudi study published last month, temperatures in the area are rising 0.4 degrees Celsius each decade.

Each year tens of thousands of pilgrims attempt to perform the hajj through irregular channels as they cannot afford the often costly official permits.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

Russia strikes Ukraine energy sites in 'mass' attack

4 killed; Romania to send Patriot missile system to Kyiv

AFP, Kyiv

Russian attacks overnight damaged a Ukrainian power plant and several energy facilities, Kyiv said yesterday, the latest in a series of bombardments that have pushed its power grid to the brink.

In the eastern Donetsk region, meanwhile, Russian cluster munitions and glide bombs killed four civilians and wounded four more in separate attacks, the regional governor said.

Targeted missile and drone attacks over recent months have crippled Ukraine's electricity generation capacity, and forced Kyiv to impose blackouts and import supplies from European Union states.

"The enemy attacked a number of energy infrastructure facilities," the energy ministry said, adding that the Russian projectiles targeted sites in four regions, including near Kyiv.

The largest private energy company in Ukraine, DTEK, said the attacks caused "serious damage" at one of its plants, without disclosing its location.

"This is already the seventh mass attack on the company's thermal power plant in the last three months," the company said.

Meanwhile, Nato member Romania announced yesterday that it would send a Patriot missile system to Ukraine, which Kyiv has requested to help its fight against Russia's invasion.

Ukraine's DTEK's CEO Maxim Timchenko echoed the calls for more military aid, and said the power plant struck early yesterday had already been damaged in a previous attack.

"We urgently need to close our skies or Ukraine faces a serious crisis this winter. My plea to allies is to help us defend our energy system and rebuild in time," he said.

Cruise ship rescues 68 migrants off Spain's Canaries

AFP, Barcelona

A cruise ship rescued 68 migrants from a fishing boat spotted adrift south of Spain's Canary Islands with five bodies on board, Spanish authorities and the ship's operator said yesterday.

Rescuers were alerted on Wednesday afternoon to the vessel drifting in the Atlantic some 800 kilometres (500 miles) south of the island of Tenerife.

The cruise ship, the Insignia, was sailing in the area and was called on to head to the boat's location to pick up the survivors, Spain's maritime rescue service said in a statement.

It took on board 68 sub-Saharan African migrants, including three women and three minors, and recovered three bodies from the fishing boat. However, "bad weather" prevented it from collecting the other two bodies, the statement said.

Discussions on former DMP chief speculative

FROM PAGE 1

Ahmed, he said, "The value of land has increased significantly. Benazir Ahmed was on a mission for a long time. He might have an explanation. If he doesn't, then questions of corruption will arise."

Benazir has recently come under the spotlight due to reports of his unusually large amounts of property, including land, houses, and apartments, which are beyond his known sources of income.

Former DMP commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia has now come into discussion regarding his assets following a newspaper report published the day before Eid-ul-Azha.

It said the former senior police official's wife owns a house and two apartments in Dhaka, while his son owns a house and his daughter an apartment.

Additionally, his wife and children have 67 decimals of land in Dhaka, Gazipur, and Narayanganj. His family members collectively own another 166 decimals of land in these three districts, according to the report.

In response, Asaduzzaman Mia claimed in various interviews said all his assets were acquired through legal means and emphasised that his children are capable of acquiring the properties with their own lawful earnings.

Dhaka, Delhi may sign rail transit deal

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh to connect its Northeastern states with the rest of the country.

India plans to reduce reliance on the existing rail route through the Siliguri Corridor, commonly known as "Chicken's Neck", according to the Times of India.

The 22 km wide strip, hemmed in by Nepal to the north and Bangladesh on its south, connects the seven northeast Indian states to the rest of the country.

According to a report run by Times of India online on June 16, the planned project will feature 14 new routes connecting Bangladesh, spanning 861km, and alternative routes to the Northeast, bringing the total length of sanctioned tracks to 1,275.5km.

The initiative will involve gauge conversion of existing tracks and construction of new ones in Bangladesh, reads the report.

In November 2010, India and Bangladesh for the first time signed a transit agreement for waterways.

The two neighbours in 2015 inked a protocol allowing India to use four river routes via Bangladesh. The routes would link Kolkata and Murshidabad to Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya.

RAIL TRANSIT

Before the partition of India in 1947, there was seamless railway communication between different regions of India and Bangladesh

through eight interchanges. Five of them -- Benapole-Petrapole, Darshana-Gede, Rohanpur-Singabadh, Biral-Radhikarpur and Chilahati-Haldibari -- have been revived in recent years.

During a high-level meeting with a BR delegation in April 2022, an Indian delegation discussed rail transit issues. Both sides agreed to work out the finer details and obtain necessary approvals from the authorities concerned, show documents.

Besides, the Indian authorities placed the transit proposal during then Bangladesh railways minister Nurul Islam Sujan's meeting with his Indian counterpart in New Delhi in June that year and the Bangladesh side agreed to examine the proposal.

Last year, Indian Railways put forward a proposal to the BR for carrying out trial runs of a freight train from West Bengal's Gede to Haldibari via Bangladesh.

The proposed route is Gede (West Bengal)-Darshana-Ishwardi-Abdulpur-Parbatipur-Chilahati-Haldibari (West Bengal).

Following an inter-ministerial meeting in May last year, BR sent a letter to Indian Railways seeking a comprehensive proposal with clarification. Indian Railways clarified saying it wants transit facility.

This year, IR has once again sent the proposal, through the Indian High Commission in Dhaka, for trial

runs of empty freight trains. India this time proposed extending the route up to Dalgaoon, a station near Bhutan border, from Haldibari of West Bengal.

WHAT BR SAYS

BR DG Shahadat said apart from Dalgaoon, Bangladesh have sought access up to Hasimara railway station at Bhutan border.

This would enable BR to transport goods and passengers to and from Bhutan, he said.

At present, Bangladesh Railway can use Indian rail transit routes to Nepal only for transporting goods. Under the MoU, BR seeks to operate both freight and passenger trains, a BR official said seeking anonymity.

Replying to a question, Shahadat said a committee will be formed to finalise the modalities, routes, charges and other issues related to the railway transit.

"Making the railway transit routes operational will take more time."

He said both BR and the Bangladesh government would be benefited from the transit.

Asked whether BR infrastructures would be able to accommodate additional trains from India once the transit facility would be available, he said there would be no big problem.

There may be some problems regarding passenger trains as the Abdulpur-Parbatipur track is a single line. "However, the transit will be mainly for freight trains."

PM leaves for Delhi today on 2-day visit

FROM PAGE 1

port, railway, and digital technology.

Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi may also discuss the key issues on the Teesta management project, renewal of the Ganges water sharing treaty, trade and tariff, Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), Myanmar conflict and regional and sub-regional cooperation.

"This visit will give a vision for the bilateral relationship in the years ahead as well as how the two countries can work together amid new global geopolitical shift," said a foreign ministry official informed with the proceedings.

This will be Hasina's second trip to the Indian capital in less than 15 days. She attended Modi's swearing in ceremony on June 9.

Hasina's visit, which is the first by any foreign head of government to India after the formation of the new

government, takes place before her scheduled trip to Beijing on July 9-12.

Hasan Mahmud, foreign minister; Salman F Rahman, prime minister's adviser on private industry and investment; Ahsanul Islam Titu, the state minister for commerce; Zunaed Ahmed Palak, the state minister for posts, telecommunications and information technology; Abdur Rouf Talukder, Bangladesh Bank governor; Lt Gen Mizanur Rahman Shameem; Armed Forces Division principal staff officer; secretaries of Power Division, Economic Relations Division and railway ministry will accompany Hasina.

"The presence of the ministers and officials indicates the type of deals that might be signed during the visit," said a diplomatic source in New Delhi. Hasina will depart Dhaka for New Delhi on a chartered flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines at 2:00pm and reach the Indian capital at 4:00pm.

S Jaishankar, India's minister of external affairs, will call on Hasina at her place of residence in the evening. On Saturday morning, Modi will host a reception at the Rashtrapati Bhavan for Hasina. After that, she will go to Raj Ghat to pay tribute to the father of the Indian Nation Mahatma Gandhi by placing a wreath at his Samadhi. Later, Hasina will hold a one-to-one meeting with Modi followed by delegation-level talks at the Hyderabad House. The two leaders will witness the signing of the MoU and agreements and then deliver press statements. Hasina will then attend a banquet luncheon hosted by Modi. In the afternoon, she will call on Indian President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar at his Secretariat. She will depart New Delhi for Dhaka at 6:00pm. The premier is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka at 9:00pm tomorrow.

Primary students

FROM PAGE 1

The census further said that over the years, Bangladesh has experienced a gradual decline in its population growth rate. In the 2011 census the population growth rate was at 1.46 percent, which dropped to 1.22 in 2022.

With the decline in population growth, the enrollment of students in primary schools began slowing down, it added.

The DPE's software -- Integrated Primary Education Management Information -- is a data storage and monitoring process that manages school management, teacher management, student management, annual census of primary schools, stipend management and annual book distribution activities.

It has significantly improved the cross-checking of multiple data, reducing the possibility of wrong or duplicate data entry of students.

"Due to this, the total number of enrollments declined in the APSC-2023 compared to APSC-2022," the census stated.

According to DPE sources, government primary schools saw a huge drop in the number of students in 2023, when there were 1,09,85,815 students in 65,567 government primary schools. The year before, there were 1,19,95,222 students in 65,565 of them.

Israeli forces

FROM PAGE 1

is now focused on the two last areas its forces had yet to storm: Rafah on Gaza's southern edge and the area surrounding Deir al-Balah in the centre. The operations have forced more than a million people to flee since May, the vast majority already displaced from other parts of the enclave.

In Rafah, near the border with Egypt, Israeli tanks stationed deep in the western and central areas of the city stepped up bombardment, forcing more families living in the far coastal areas to flee northward. Some residents said the pace of the raid has been accelerated in the past two days.

Rafah housed over half of Gaza's 2.3 million people until May 7 when Israeli forces began the ground offensive into the city. Fewer than 100,000 are now believed to be left behind.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said yesterday that at least 37,431 people have been killed in the territory during more than eight months of offensive. The toll includes at least 35 deaths in the past 24 hours,

On the other hand, the number of students shot up to 48,73,375 in 26,461 kindergartens in 2023, which was 46,08,679 in 26,478 kindergartens in 2022.

KM Enamul Hoque, advocacy adviser of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in the Asia South Pacific, said the number of students in mainstream primary schools dropped as many guardians opted for Qawmi madrasas and English medium schools.

"Many families, especially from the lower socio-economic groups, suffered financial hardships due to the Covid-19 pandemic and so they shifted their children to Qawmi madrasas as the education expenses there are significantly lower."

DPE officials said that as Qawmi madrasas are not under any government authority regulation, they do not have much information in this regard.

Meanwhile, though the number of primary level institutions decreased in 2021 and 2022 owing to the Covid-19 fallout, it saw a slight rise again in 2023.

Last year, there were 1,14,630 government primary schools, kindergartens, NGO-run schools, Ebtedayee madrasas and other private schools in the country.

The number was 1,33,002 in 2020; 1,18,891 in 2021; and 1,14,539 in 2022.

a ministry statement said.

There has been no sign of let-up in the fighting as efforts by international mediators, backed by the United States, have failed to persuade Israel and Hamas to agree to a ceasefire.

The armed wings of Hamas and Islamic Jihad said fighters battled Israeli forces with anti-tank rockets and mortar bombs, and have in some areas detonated pre-planted explosive devices against army units.

Yesterday, Israeli authorities freed 33 Palestinians who had been detained during the past months by Israeli forces in different areas of the enclave. The freed detainees were admitted into Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip after they complained of torture and mistreatment by Israeli jailers.

Israel denies mistreatment of Palestinian detainees. Palestinian and international human rights groups have criticised what they say is Israel's ill-treatment of Gaza detainees and repeatedly demanded it disclose their whereabouts and information about their well-being.