

Journo assaulted inside Khaleda's Gulshan office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Daily Amar Desh journalist Jahidul Islam was physically assaulted by BNP activists at the party chairperson's Gulshan office yesterday.

The staff reporter of the daily newspaper came under attack while filming inside the chairperson's office, where aspirants from the Sylhet division got into a scuffle around 4:30pm.

Following the incident, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir condemned the attack and issued a statement.

Talking to The Daily Star, Jahidul said, "I had been at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office since the morning, gathering news, talking to nomination seekers. Around 4:30pm, nomination seekers began quarrelling and scuffling with each other."

"When I tried to take footage of the incident with my phone, three to four people dragged me inside a room and beat me. They broke my phone. When I showed my press ID card, they seized it and threw me out," he added.

Jahidul claims to have identified one of the assailants as Mohammad Faisal, an office staffer, who he

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Firefighters continued working yesterday at the site of a blaze that destroyed the import section of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport's cargo village in the capital on Saturday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Media professional found dead at Dhaka home

Police suspect suicide; news portal says claims linking death to workplace complaint 'unfortunate'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A graphic designer of the online news portal Dhaka Stream was found dead at her home in Dhaka's Sobhanbagh area on Saturday evening.

The deceased was Sornomoye Biswas, 28. She joined Dhaka Stream early this year as a trainee graphic designer.

An unnatural death case was filed with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station over Sornomoye's death, said Sub-Inspector Saiful Islam, who is investigating the case.

Saiful suspects Sornomoye died by suicide.

She lived with her family. During the incident, her brother and sister-in-law were home; her parents were in their village home.

Her death came months after she, along with several colleagues, lodged a complaint against Altaf Shahnewaz, Bangla content editor of Dhaka Stream, alleging "inappropriate behaviour" in the workplace.

Following her death, many on social media raised questions about whether the complaint had any link to her death.

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Sornomoye Biswas

Teachers reject govt's offer

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According to the circular, the rate was set considering the existing fiscal constraints. It also stated that the house rent allowance would be automatically adjusted in the future in line with any national pay scale revisions, and that payments must be made strictly in line with MPO rules and relevant government gazettes.

The announcement came while thousands of teachers and employees were continuing their sit-in at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka.

"Our initial victory is that the government responded. But we reject it [the response]. We'll continue our protest, work abstention and hunger strike until our demands for 20 percent house rent, Tk 1,500 medical allowance, and 75 percent festival allowance are met," Delwar Hossain Azizi, member secretary of the MPO Nationalisation Expectant Alliance -- the platform leading the protest, told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, Education Adviser CR Abrar expressed hope that the protesting teachers would accept the new house rent and return to classrooms. "We believe that the teaching community deserves much more. However, due to the current limitations, the decision that has been made comes with an allocation from the finance ministry."

Rejecting the decision, the teachers in the afternoon brought out their pre-scheduled "hunger march", which started from the Central Shaheed Minar and was blocked by police near Shikkha Bhaban.

Many teachers were seen carrying bowls in their hands. They chanted slogans like "accept our logical demands" and "we want 20 percent house rent" before returning to the Shaheed Minar again around 4:30pm.

After the government circular was issued, a delegation of teachers, led by Azizi, went to meet BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir at the party chairperson's Gulshan office.

Speaking to reporters afterwards, Azizi said that Fakhrul assured them of prioritising the nationalisation of MPO-listed educational institutions if his party returned to power, reports UNB. He added that the BNP leader not only gave them hope but also showed genuine interest in the issue. Azizi further said the delegation even proposed that they would address other demands later if the government at least raised the house rent allowance by 20 percent now. At the entry level, MPO-listed teachers now receive a monthly salary of Tk 12,500, along with Tk 1,000 as house rent, Tk 500 as medical allowance, and 50 percent of their basic pay as festival allowance.

In September, the finance ministry approved a Tk 500 rise in the house rent allowance, which the teachers rejected, calling it "insufficient".

On October 12, teachers across the country joined a protest in front of the Jatiya Press Club. Police used water cannons, sound grenades, and batons to disperse them.

They then moved to Shaheed Minar, where they protested the police action and announced a countrywide work abstention from the following day.

Currently, there are over 26,000 MPO-listed non-government institutions in the country, with around 3.8 lakh teachers and 1.7 lakh staff members.

Airport fire sends shockwave

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would become "higher this year" due to the backlog created by the fire. The strike at Chattogram port has already been forcing a "significant quantity" of goods to be diverted to HSLA.

While the airport typically handles up to 1,000 tonnes of dry cargo daily, volumes spike dramatically during the October-December rush. Now HSLA's capacity is bracing for yet another surge in air cargo to rapidly replace the destroyed samples and accessories.

Industry leaders are scrambling for solutions. Faisal Samad, a director of the

BGMEA has instructed members to clear all imported materials from the airport within 36 hours, while the government has directed the cargo village to operate round the clock, including on weekends, to accelerate processing.

BROADER IMPACT

The lost goods included not just garment materials but also other sensitive cargo, such as pharmaceuticals and telecom equipment.

Muhammad Halimuzzaman, deputy managing director and chief executive of Healthcare Pharmaceuticals Limited, warned that Bangladesh's

manufacturers to resume supply," Halimuzzaman said. "Now, we need government support to prevent disruption."

On the possibility of using alternative terminals, he said, "That decision rests with the authorities. Our priority is restoring the supply chain as quickly as possible."

Mizanur Rahman, customs coordinator for Salvation Logistics, said all 40 consignments his firm had inside the facility were either burnt or damaged. "All were telecom items that we distribute to various operators. Our losses may exceed Tk 10 lakh," he told The Daily Star.

Belal Hossain of Jane Trading Ltd, a clearing and forwarding (C&F) agent specialising in garments and foreign investment imports, estimated that his clients' goods, worth Tk 200 crore, were lost in the fire.

At the site, forwarding agent Nizam Bhuiyan described the destruction as "immeasurable".

"Crores and crores worth of products have been damaged. I can't even estimate how big it is without getting inside," he said.

Mohammad Rafiq, in charge of Matata Trading Company Limited, said they had prepared to pay nearly Tk 30 crore in taxes to customs, but the entire consignments worth around Tk 250 to 300 crore was destroyed.

Most of the items were high-value mobile components such as ICs, displays, and other accessories from brands such as Oppo, Xiaomi, Vivo, Samsung, OnePlus, and Realme, Rafiq told The Daily Star yesterday.

DELAY IN FIREFIGHTING

The Dhaka Customs Agents Association accused the Civil Aviation Authority and the fire service of a delayed response, saying the lack of coordination caused "irreparable damage".

"Unfortunately, the Civil Aviation Authority and the fire service failed to arrive at the spot instantly to douse the blaze. This irreparable damage was caused due to the delay and a lack of coordination," the association said in a statement.

In response to media queries over the alleged delay, Adviser Bashir Uddin said a full probe was underway, covering all possible aspects of the fire. "Within 30 seconds of the fire being reported, our firefighting team was deployed," he said, adding that 37 units participated in extinguishing the blaze, with additional water supplied by WASA.

on election day, while Jamaat, NCP, and other Islamist parties preferred it be held before the election.

Experts have suggested that the government decide the timing of the referendum.

Parties also disagree over how many questions should be included in the referendum. Experts initially proposed two: one on consensus issues and another on dissenting issues.

However, it is now being considered that there may be only one question, asking whether the people support the special order. Alternatively, it could ask whether the people support the constitutional reform proposals.

Meanwhile, Gono Forum yesterday signed the July charter, as the consensus commission decided to retain the Proclamation of Independence in the constitution.

On behalf of the Gono Forum, its acting president Subrata Chowdhury and General Secretary Mizanur Rahman signed the charter at the LD Hall of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban at 12:30pm.

With this, a total of 25 parties have signed the charter.

However, the National Citizen Party, formed by student leaders who led the July uprising, has yet to sign the charter, citing a lack of legal foundation and assurance for its implementation.

The party demanded that Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus issue the implementation order of the July Charter as an expression of the people's sovereign will.



Importers, clearing and forwarding (C&F) agents, and passersby stand in silence outside the Dhaka airport cargo complex yesterday, stunned at the destruction left behind by Saturday's fire.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said authorities have temporarily allocated warehouse space at the airport's Third Terminal to help manage the cargo overflow and expedite recovery.

While the export section remained untouched, Samad cautioned that the destruction of vital production samples could still lead to cancellation or non-renewal of work orders by international partners, warning of "multiple impacts" across the sector.

Inamul Haq Khan, senior vice-president of BGMEA, said the association is asking members to register losses as it has secured assurances of government support from Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin.

He demanded a swift government investigation into the incident and called for enhanced security within the airport's sensitive areas to reassure foreign buyers.

To ease immediate congestion, the

pharmaceutical sector will face disruption following the recent airport fire.

Halimuzzaman, who also serves as treasurer of the Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries, told The Daily Star that most major drugmakers had consignments of raw materials stored at the airport.

"These are temperature-sensitive, time-bound materials. Even a single batch loss can halt production," he said, adding that many firms operate with just-in-time inventory systems, heightening the risk of imminent shortages of essential medicines.

He urged swift government intervention, including fast-tracking approvals from the Directorate General of Drug Administration, the commerce ministry and the Department of Narcotics Control to expedite import processing.

"We're already in contact with API [Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient]

Draft special order likely by week's end

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experts and discussed a draft of the special order.

After the discussion, it was decided that the experts would submit the full text of the draft special order to the commission by the end of this week.

The draft will call for a referendum and recommend granting the next parliament dual powers, allowing it to function both as the legislature and as a constitutional reform assembly.

The proposed duration of this assembly would be six to nine months. "Some of us favour a six-month term, while others prefer nine months. Thus, the recommendation will likely propose a minimum of six months and a maximum of nine months," said one expert.

The commission also discussed with experts the possible legal basis for the special order.

Initially, experts suggested that the order could be issued by the government under Section 22 of the July Declaration, but political parties criticised that approach during the dialogue process.

When asked, one expert said, "The preamble of the order will explain how the interim government has the authority to issue it. The justification will come from the July uprising itself, which conferred this authority on the current government. Therefore, we are considering recommending that the government issue the order based on the people's mandate through the uprising, rather than citing Section 22 of the July Declaration."

Cargo village fire

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He added that the incident might have been prevented if such systems had been installed.

Following the incident, questions arose over why it took so long to contain the fire in such a sensitive area and how it spread so rapidly through the entire import complex.

Authorities have yet to determine the exact cause of the fire or the extent of the damage.

Meanwhile, concerns about the country's disaster preparedness were discussed at an emergency meeting of the Inter-ministerial Disaster Management Coordination Committee.

Speaking to The Daily Star, a source present at the meeting quoted National Security Adviser Dr Khalilur Rahman as asking, "If we are so helpless in containing a fire in such a critical area, how will we handle multiple incidents at once?"

The airport's firefighting team reached the scene within three minutes of the fire breaking out, but failed to contain it due to its intensity, airport authorities told the meeting, the source added.

The fire began near Gate No. 8 of the import cargo complex and quickly engulfed warehouses packed with imported chemicals, electronics, pharmaceuticals, and garments. Thirty-seven units from 13 fire stations, joined by the air force, navy, army, Civil Aviation Authority, Border Guard Bangladesh, and police, worked to control the blaze.

About seven hours after it started, the fire service announced around 9:18pm that the flames had been brought under control. Flight operations resumed shortly after. FIRE SERVICE FLAGS GAPS

At yesterday's meeting, Lt Col Tajul Islam of the fire service explained that the cargo section contained highly combustible materials in small, compartmentalised steel rooms with an "extremely high storage density", which, combined with hazardous goods and confined spaces, accelerated the spread of the fire.

Firefighters had to cut through steel partitions to gain access, and even after the flames were doused, residual heat from the metal made cooling efforts difficult. Four units remained on site as a precaution.

Despite the challenges, Tajul said the fire service's response was timely. "There were no delays or obstructions in reaching the scene," he said.

An investigation committee has been formed to identify the cause of the fire and evaluate the airport's firefighting systems, including hydrant functionality and suppression mechanisms.

Tajul confirmed that while cracks

Gaza truce put to test

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conditions, with the United Nations saying it caused a famine in northern Gaza.

Fearing the truce may collapse, some Palestinians rushed to buy goods from a main market in Nuseirat, and families left their homes in Khan Younis further south after airstrikes hit nearby.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had earlier yesterday instructed security forces to take "strong action against terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip", his office said in a statement, accusing Hamas of "a ceasefire violation".

"Earlier today [Sunday], terrorists fired anti-tank missiles and opened fire on IDF forces" in Rafah, the military said in a statement. "The IDF responded with air strikes by fighter jets and artillery fire, targeting the Rafah area."

The truce in the Palestinian territory, brokered by US President Donald Trump, took effect on October 10, but the Israeli government and Hamas have been accusing each other of violations of the ceasefire for days.

The deal established the outline for hostage and prisoner exchanges and was proposed alongside an ambitious roadmap for Gaza's future. The

appeared in some steel columns due to heat, the structure was not at immediate risk of collapse. He also said no significant air contamination was detected despite chemical reactions from burning pharmaceutical goods. GOVERNMENT ACTION

The government has formed a 12-member core committee, led by the home ministry's senior secretary, to investigate the fire and recommend preventive measures.

Disaster Management Adviser Faruk E Azam (Bir Protik) announced the committee's formation after an emergency meeting at the Cabinet Division, attended by senior aviation, security, and home officials.

Recalling the December 2024 Secretariat fire, Faruk said the committee would probe why the safety measures decided upon after that incident were not implemented.

He added that they would seek explanations from relevant authorities, including the home secretary, whose committee was responsible for the Secretariat's fire safety, a meeting source told this correspondent.

The committee will also assess the effectiveness of fire safety systems at key installations, including the airport. Faruk said that while some systems existed, their failure to contain the blaze needed to be thoroughly investigated.

The Fire Service pointed out that although its internal team responded promptly, its resources were inadequate, prompting discussions on acquiring more advanced firefighting technology, the source added.

Responding to a question after the meeting, Faruk said, "It's not that everything was absent -- some systems were there, but there were shortcomings. The Civil Aviation Authority had its own fire unit, but it might not have been sufficient."

He said the committee would also investigate possible delays in the Fire Service's response, citing traffic congestion and logistical obstacles.

Fire Service Director General Brig Gen Muhammad Jahed Kamal stressed the need for better access and coordination at key facilities like airports.

The committee will examine risks posed by courier services operating within cargo areas, which may increase safety hazards.

Faruk stressed the need to strengthen national disaster response systems, saying, "We are committed to enhancing our disaster management capabilities."

The committee is expected to submit its report within three weeks, with a follow-up meeting on November 5 to review findings and decide on further action.

issue of hostage bodies still in Gaza has become a sticking point in the ceasefire implementation.

Israel returned the bodies of 15 Palestinians to Gaza yesterday, bringing the total number handed over to 150, the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory said.

Hamas, in turn, last week released all 20 living hostages it had been holding and, in the following days, handed over 12 of the 28 deceased captives.

While Israel says Hamas is being too slow in handing over the bodies of deceased hostages, the group says it has no interest in keeping the bodies of remaining hostages and that special equipment is needed to recover corpses buried under rubble.

The military campaign, triggered by Hamas's October 7, 2023, attack on Israel, has killed at least 68,159 people in Gaza, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory, figures the United Nations considers credible.

The data does not distinguish between civilians and combatants but indicates that more than half of the dead are women and children.

Hamas's 2023 attack on Israel resulted in the deaths of 1,221 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official Israeli figures.