

ROHINGYAS GETTING PASSPORTS

Top cops ask SB to stay alert

The directive comes at a meeting on the fourth day of Police Week

SHARIFUL ISLAM and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Top police officials have asked the Special Branch of police to remain alert so that Rohingyas do not get Bangladeshi passports in any way.

The directive was given at a meeting of the police high-ups with the SB on the fourth day of the ongoing Police Week 2020.

According to media reports, dozens of Rohingya refugees were held in Dhaka, Chattogram and elsewhere in the country in recent months. They were either trying to have Bangladeshi passports through brokers or already managed passports.

The Department of Immigration and Passports issues a passport to an individual after having clearance from the SB that the applicant is a Bangladeshi citizen.

Last month, the Rapid Action Battalion picked up three alleged human traffickers and rescued five Rohingyas, including four women, from the capital's Khilgaon area and seized 115 passport booklets.

A Rab official had said although the brokers brought the young Rohingya women to Dhaka from Cox's Bazar promising them good jobs in Malaysia, in fact they were brought to be trafficked abroad.

In May last year, detectives detained 23 suspected Rohingyas from the capital's Khilkhet area. In September, Chattogram police arrested three Rohingya men, carrying three Bangladeshi passports in their names, from the port city's Kattoli area.

Law enforcers and passport department officials said a group of brokers, who include Rohingyas, had been arranging Bangladeshi passports for the Rohingya refugees. The brokers do the job in exchange for a big amount of money.

This syndicates collect National ID cards, citizenship certificates, birth registration certificates and police verification certificates from the related government offices by using their links and bribing officials. The Rohingyas use fake names in their applications for passports, said the officials.

Yesterday, Inspector General of Police Mohammad Javed Patwary chaired the meeting at the capital's Rajarbagh Police Lines.

The police chief asked superintendents of police, who head the district Special Branch units, to collect information about banned militant outfits and political leaders and send the information to the SB headquarters in Dhaka. He also asked the SPs to inform the SB high-ups about any important incident.

Citing intensive monitoring, making sketches of criminals and making maps of crime scenes as the reasons for the Police Bureau of

Investigation's success in probing cases, the IGP asked the other police units to follow the PBI's practice during investigation of cases.

Javed also directed the police officials to hand over the charges of investigation of sensational cases to the Criminal Investigation Department.

MEETING WITH CABINET SECY

In another meeting with Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam at the same venue yesterday, top police officials requested him to take measures to have suggestions from the SPs for the appointment of public prosecutors (PP) to lower courts.

Khandker Golam Faruk, deputy inspector general of Chattogram range, placed the demand at the closed-door meeting, said sources.

On Tuesday, top police officials at a meeting with the home minister alleged that though they provide all case documents to the public prosecutors after completing investigations, the PP's do not provide support to the investigation officers when they seek documents during the trial of cases.

At the meeting, Cumilla SP Syed Nurul Islam demanded scrapping of the "law and order review committee". The body was formed last month to identify the reasons for the trial of around 35 lakh cases remaining pending with the lower courts and also to make recommendations in this regard.

Police officials thought that the committee was unduly influencing and intervening in the probes of criminal cases.

Chowdhury Abdullah-Al Mamun, additional inspector general of CID, demanded putting the IGP on the Special Selection Board (SSB) committee for police officials.

Senior Secretary Mostafa Kamal Uddin of the home ministry was also present at the meeting, chaired by the IGP.

Sources said the meeting discussed reformation of the police organogram, limiting the duration of the judicial process of criminal cases, and providing interest-free loan to the top police officials for personal vehicles, among other issues.

Cabinet Secretary Anwarul said the government must provide the police officials with promotion opportunities to motivate them to work better.

Regarding the other demands, he said he would take measures after looking into those.

The senior home secretary said police should come up with a proposal on its organogram.

He told the meeting that they were working on the police officials' demands, including promotion.



As they walk by, a man and a child looks at a passenger shed in appalling condition near Mohammadpur Bus Stand in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Culprit a serial rapist: Rab

FROM PAGE 1

Rab said she identified him as the rapist.

"I can forget all the faces in the world but not this one," Rab Director Sarwar quoted the victim as saying.

One of her uncles also confirmed to The Daily Star that she had indeed identified Majnu as the rapist.

Sarwar also said the suspect attacked the victim finding her alone. She fainted several times while being tortured by him.

Asked about the security at the place, he said they would strengthen it.

MAJNU

A skinny man with short hair and light dark skin, Majnu was born in Noakhali's Hatiya upazila. He came to the capital about 12 years ago.

His father died a couple of years ago and mother lives in Noakhali, but he has recently been not in touch with his family, said Rab officials.

Since his wife died a few years ago, Majnu has been living in Cantonment Railway Station and nearby areas. He works as a day-labourer or hawker, apart from mugging people, they said.

He raped many women, mainly beggars and intellectually challenged individuals, in the last five to six years, Rab officials said, without giving further details about the incidents.

After his arrest, Rab handed him to the Detective Branch of police, which is investigating the case filed by the victim's father with Cantonment Police Station.

THE ARREST

On the day of the incident, the victim managed to flee while Majnu was rummaging through her backpack. Minutes later, he left the place taking her bag, cell phone and other belongings, said Rab, quoting the arrestee.

Majnu then went straight to nearby Shewra railway area and sold the phone to one Aruna Biswash, 45, for Tk 500. She gave him Tk 400 and promised to give the rest within a couple of days.

The phone's display got damaged.

So Aruna gave it to a rickshaw-puller, Khairul Islam, 38, for repair.

According to Rab, Majnu fled to Narsingdi by train that night after selling the cell phone. He spent the next day at a railway station in Narsingdi and was unaware of the countrywide protests spurred by the rape.

On Tuesday morning, he came back to Dhaka to take the money from Aruna and passed the entire day in the Cantonment Railway Station and nearby Shewra area.

Rab Director Sarwar said they first held Khairul and recovered the cell phone from him. Based on information gleaned from him, they caught Aruna.

The description given by Aruna matched the one provided by the victim, he said at the briefing, adding that Rab then raided the Shewra Level Crossing area and arrested Majnu around 4:45am yesterday.

While describing the rapist, the victim had said he was aged between 25 and 30; around five and a half feet tall; had tan complexion and short hair; and was clad in an old pair of jeans and a dirty black jacket.

Two of his front teeth were missing and he spoke in his local dialect.

Majnu does not have two of his front teeth. He lost them falling off a moving train 12 years ago, Sarwar said, adding this crucial clue helped them identify and find him.

He also said, "He [Majnu] doesn't seem to repent. He seemed nonchalant after his arrest."

Asked, Sarwar said the accused did not use chloroform or any sharp weapon while assaulting the victim.

"There were hardly any clues and CCTV footage. We found him based on physical description and through technological analysis," he added.

PROTESTS CONTINUE

Like the previous two days, students demonstrated on the DU campus yesterday.

Also, Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) formed a human chain at the base of Aparajeyo Bangla.

Speaking there, Duta President Prof ASM Maksud Kamal demanded the highest punishment for the rapist and said, "There is no difference between a war criminal and a rapist. The maximum punishment for committing war crimes is death penalty, then why it is not the same for rape?"

Expressing solidarity with the teachers, DU Vice Chancellor Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman said the university authorities want the rapist's exemplary punishment within the shortest possible time.

He too demanded amendment to law to hand maximum punishment to rapists.

Duta General Secretary Nizamul Hoque Bhuiyan, university Proctor Prof AKM Golam Rabbani, and former proctor Amzad Hossain, among others, participated in the human chain.

DU students from 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2018-2019 academic sessions, history department and residents of five female dormitories of the university demonstrated on the campus under separate banners, demanding swift trial of the rape case and death penalty for the rapist.

The students thanked the law enforcers for arresting the alleged rapist and also demanded that the case be tried under the speedy trial tribunal act.

Besides, as part of their protests, a number of female students gathered in the TSC area and performed on the street chanting "The Rapist is You".

At the DMCH, doctors said the victim's condition improved yesterday.

Asked, Rab officials said decisions on Aruna, who allegedly bought the victim's phone from Majnu, and Khairul, who allegedly took it for repair, would be taken by the DB, which is investigating the case.

In another development, a Rab mobile court, led by Executive Magistrate Sarwoer Alam, evicted vagabonds in areas between Kurmitola and Kuril Bishwa Road yesterday evening.

Father held for raping daughter

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

A man was held for allegedly raping his daughter in Bogura early yesterday.

The incident occurred around 4:00am. The accused, 50, works in a restaurant in the district, police said.

The 17-year old daughter told The Daily Star that her father divorced her mother when she was a child.

"I got married four years ago but on January 3, my husband divorced me. After that, I went to stay in my father's house.

"In my father's house, there is only one bed, which we had to share. Around 4:00am (on Wednesday), I suddenly woke up to see my father naked, trying to rape me."

The next morning, she shared the incident with her neighbours, who informed the police.

SM Badiuzzaman, officer-in-charge of Bogura Sadar police station, said the girl's neighbours informed them about the incident and they immediately went to the spot. "The girl then narrated the incident to us herself."

He added that the father was detained around 9:30pm from Naruli area of the district yesterday and the girl filed a rape case against her father around 12:00am today.

"We will send the victim to hospital and the father to court tomorrow morning," the OC said.

US-Iran escalation threatens aid to millions: charity

AFP, Beirut

The escalating cycle of reprisals between the United States and Iran is threatening the delivery of aid to millions across the Middle East, the Norwegian Refugee Council warned Wednesday.

"Tens of millions of people across the Middle East need humanitarian assistance. Most of them are already devastated or displaced by conflict," NRC chief Jan Egeland said in a statement.

Dhaka seal

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Off-spinner Mahedi Hasan had Naim caught before having Watson trapped in front in successive deliveries, leaving Rangpur at four for two. A batting collapse ensued and Rangpur were bundled out for a meagre 84 in 15.3 overs.

Dhaka skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who has had a quiet tournament so far, returned economical figures of two for 18 from four overs. It was however Mahedi who, having initiated Rangpur's downfall, also ended Rangpur's misery when he removed Mustafizur Rahman in the 16th over and finished with impressive figures of three for 13 in 3.3 overs.

Earlier, Dhaka stuttered in the beginning as only stalwart Tamim Iqbal was able to score some runs at the top. Tamim, who usually plays the anchor role, scored a team high of a 38-ball 40 while only four other batsmen were able to get to double digits.

Rangpur's right-arm pacer Taskin, who removed Tamim in the 14th over, shone with the ball, returning figures of three for 32. After struggling for most of the innings, it would not have been possible for Dhaka to post a decent total without an unbeaten 19-ball 31 cameo from Shadab Khan at the death.

Crosscheck

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"Guardians and teachers should always remain alert to these things."

About giving mobile phones to children, she asked parents and guardians to keep an eye on what their children were watching on the internet and which sites they were visiting.

The PM said the government, as per 2008 election manifesto of the Awami League, was able to establish "Digital Bangladesh" as people were now getting the good results of digital services.

Hasina said her government had spread broadband connections up to most of the unions, and the remaining ones would be brought under broadband coverage in phases.

Referring to launching of Bangabandhu-1 satellite into space, she said it had strengthened connectivity. The work on launching the second satellite into space had already begun, she added.

The premier said the IT sector in Bangladesh has a huge potential and that is why the highest priority has been given to make country's export a multifaceted one.

She said the Fourth Industrial Revolution was knocking at the door, and the government had taken preparations so that the people of Bangladesh did not fall behind.

State Minister for ICT Division Zunaid Ahmed Palak, Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Post, Telecommunication and Information Technology AKM Rahmatullah and Senior Secretary of ICT Division NM Zeaul Alam also spoke at the programme.

Earlier, the PM distributed awards among the recipients.

She also enjoyed a short drama, performed by children, on cybersecurity and rumours.

On the way back home



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Sashanka Banerjee described the historic journey as his life's most important political mission in his memoir, India, Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh Liberation & Pakistan.

He was handed a brief from the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi containing guidance and instructions about what he was expected to say to Bangabandhu.

"Something interesting happened just before the flight was to take off. Ian Sutherland [British diplomat] came up to me near the door of the aircraft where I was standing as the flight was being prepared and wished me a happy journey. Using body language with no use of words he asked me to look after the guest. I assured him also using body language that there was no need for him to worry about that. I could detect a twinkle in his eye as if he knew what I was up to," Banerjee wrote.

Ian Sutherland asked him to take his seat next to Bangabandhu.

There was a working desk in front of the twin seat. Bangabandhu parked his smoker's pipe and his favourite Erinmore tobacco on it.

"After a session of cheerful banter and a drink of orange juice, as the flight progressed, Mujib took me into confidence and in a whisper asked me if he could ask me a big favour. There was no hesitation in his demeanour. I replied in the affirmative, subject however to my capacity and reach to do it."

Bangabandhu told Banerjee that he wanted him to convey a very important personal message to Indira Gandhi on arrival in Delhi before he could make a request to her in his talks at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the Presidential Palace.

"I was nervous for the first few seconds. What was the mission? Would I be able to reach the heights to the Prime Minister's ear in the celebratory atmosphere of his arrival

in Delhi? Mujib wanted me to do, in his own words, a bit of 'advance spadework' by conveying a personal request from him to the Indian PM to reconsider her decision about the timetable of the troop withdrawal."

Bangabandhu confided in him that the background of this appeal was a wish expressed by the British Prime Minister Edward Heath that if India were to agree to amend its decision to withdraw its troops from Bangladesh by 31 March 1972, that is, three months before the June 30 deadline publicly announced by Indira Gandhi, it would pave the way for Britain to promptly extend its recognition to Bangladesh as a sovereign independent country.

"Mujib added his own wish to the above request. He wanted this decision to get reflected in the Bangladesh-India Joint Communique, which was to be issued at the end of their Delhi talks," adds Banerjee.

During the trip, at times Bangabandhu would be overcome with emotion.

"After refueling in Sharjah, the aircraft resumed flight. Bangabandhu gazed out of the window at the clouds. After a while, he stood up and began to sing, 'Amar Sonar Bangla, ami tomai bhalobashi,'" Eyes brimming with tears, Bangabandhu told him, "Banerjee, join in. Let's rehearse."

"The journey seems endless. The free skies, people and nature of Bangladesh summon me. I cannot explain the feeling," Banerjee quoted Bangabandhu as saying in a Prothom Alo interview published on January 10, 2018.

At 8.10am on January 10, 1972, the flight carrying Bangabandhu landed at Palam Airport, Delhi.

[The report is based on the memoir of Dr Kamal Hossain titled Bangladesh: Quest for Freedom and Justice; former Indian diplomat Sashanka S Banerjee's book titled India, Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh Liberation & Pakistan; an article of MM Rezaul Karim published in The Daily Star and an interview of Sashanka S Banerjee published in Prothom Alo]

FROM PAGE 1

he called "Iranian aggression." He offered no specific measures.

Iranian forces fired missiles at military bases housing US troops in Iraq yesterday in retaliation for the killing last week in Iraq of Iranian general Soleimani, raising the stakes in its conflict with Washington amid concern about a wider war in the Middle East.

Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, addressing a gathering of Iranians chanting "Death to America," said the missile attacks were a "slap on the face" of the United States and said US troops should leave the region.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif had said the strikes "concluded" Tehran's response to the killing of Soleimani, who had been responsible for building up Iran's network of proxy armies across the Middle East. He was buried in his hometown Kerman on Monday after days of national mourning.

"We do not seek escalation or war, but will defend ourselves against any aggression," he wrote on Twitter.

Trump again vowed that he would not allow Iran to obtain a nuclear weapon and urged world powers to quit a 2015 nuclear accord with Iran that Washington abandoned in 2018 and work for a new deal, an issue that has been at the heart of rising tensions between Washington and Tehran. Iran has rejected new talks.

There was no immediate reaction from Iranian officials to Trump's comments. The semi-official Fars news agency described the US

president's remarks as a "big retreat from threats." Trump's reaction in the immediate aftermath of yesterday's attacks had been to say on Twitter that "All is well!" and that Washington was assessing damage.

That tweet and the comment by Iran's foreign minister had acted to soothe some initial concerns about a wider war and calmed jittery financial markets. Oil prices slipped back after an early spike.

US and European government sources said they believed Iran had deliberately sought to avoid US military casualties in its missile strikes to prevent an escalation.

But an Iranian army spokesman had denied "foreign media reports" suggesting there had been some kind of coordination between Iran and the United States before the attack to allow bases to be evacuated, Fars news agency said.

The US president, who was impeached last month and faces an election in November this year, had at the weekend threatened to target 52 Iranian sites if Iran retaliated for Soleimani's killing.

Iranian state television said Iran had fired 15 ballistic missiles from its territory at US targets in its neighbour Iraq early yesterday. The Pentagon said al-Asad air base and another facility in Erbil in Iraq were struck.

Iranian television reported an official in the supreme leader's office as saying the missile attacks were the "weakest" of several retaliation scenarios. It quoted another source saying Iran had lined up 100 other