

# 21 Yaba, hundi traders surrender to police

Turn in 10 locally-made firearms, 21,000 Yaba pills to cops in Teknaf

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Around 21 yaba and hundi traders yesterday formally surrendered to police with 21,000 yaba pills and 10 locally-made firearms in Teknaf of Cox's Bazar.

It was the second such surrender programme that was organised by district police at Teknaf Government College playground.

On February 16 last year, 102 yaba traders formally surrendered to law enforcers at a programme at Teknaf Pilot High School in the presence of Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal and top police officials.

Those, who surrendered yesterday, are -- Abdur Noor, Abdur Razzak, Bashir Ahmed, Abdul Amin Abu, Abul Kalam, Fazal Karim, Md Rashel, Md Idris, Md Hossain, Mohammad Ismail, Imam Hossain, Shahadat Hossain, Mohammad Saddam, Abdul Gafur, Md Taiyab, Md Zahed, Farid Alam, Imam Hossain, Mizanur Rahman, Noor Mohammad and Md Redwan.

After their surrender, two separate cases -- one for possessing illegal firearms and the other for possessing drug -- were filed against all 21, said ABM Masud Hossain, superintendent of police (SP) of Cox's Bazar.

They were shown arrested in these cases and were later produced before a court, which sent them to jail yesterday evening, the SP told reporters.

Police sources said the 21 people had been communicating with law enforcers for the last couple of months saying they want to surrender.

They surrendered to police separately in phases over the last couple of months. They were the kept at police's "Safe Home" at Kolatoli by-pass area on

the outskirts of the district town.

Yesterday morning, they were taken to Teknaf, around 87-kilometer away from the safe home, amid tight security.

There, they were initially kept at the science laboratory, adjacent to the surrender venue. Around 4:30pm, they were taken to the venue under police protection.

Senior police officials, who were on the stage, received them with flowers.

Khandker Golar Faruq, deputy inspector general (DIG) of Chattogram range, was present as the chief guest. The programme was chaired by SP Masud.

Several district police officials, members of the local administration, as well as political and religious leaders were also present at the programme.

Of the 21, Mohammad Ismail sustained bullet injuries to his leg in a gunfight with police around one year ago, after which one of his legs was amputated by doctors. He surrendered to police a few months later and was kept in the "safe house" for the last seven months, said police sources.

According to police, there are around 1,250 enlisted yaba traders in Cox's Bazar. Of them, 912 are in Teknaf.

Some 209 drug traders were killed in "gunfights" with law enforcers in the district since an anti-narcotics crackdown began on May 4, 2018, till December 2019. Of them, 56 were Rohingyas.

Last year, some 27.35 lakhs yaba pills were recovered and 98 traders were arrested in December alone. Of the arrestees, 45 were Rohingyas.

Speaking to journalists, Teknaf police station's officer-in-charge Prodip Kumar Das said police would continue the anti-narcotic crackdown.



Haphazardly parked motorcycles occupy a part of the pavement in front of the gate of Kurmitola General Hospital in the capital, preventing pedestrians from using the footpath. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Wrong test papers given at 4 centres

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17 examinees were not affected.

The chairman then formed a three-member inquiry committee.

Barishal education board decided to issue a show cause notice to those who were tasked with distributing question papers at the centre, board sources said.

A similar incident took place at Rabeya Balika Bidyaniketan centre in Nilphamari town where 98 candidates from two schools were provided with written question papers from the old syllabus (2018).

After answering the questions for around an hour, the candidates brought the matter to the invigilators' notice. Later, Mahafizur Rahman, exam centre secretary and headmaster of Rabeya Balika Bidyaniketan, communicated the matter to the authorities concerned.

On information, Azharul Islam, additional deputy commissioner (general), visited the centre and spoke to Tofazzur Hossain, Dinajpur education board examination controller, in this regard.

The controller then directed the invigilators to provide the candidates with the right question papers and give them an extra hour to complete their answer.

Talking to The Daily Star, Mahafizur said 620 students appeared for yesterday's exam at the centre. Of them, 619 were regular candidates and one was an irregular candidate.

"As per the rules, we got seven bundles of question papers for the 619 regular candidates and one bundle for the irregular candidate. Each bundle has 100 question papers," he said.

"Mistakenly, the question papers, based on the old syllabus, from that one bundle were distributed among the regular candidates," he added.

In Jashore's Chowgachha, five teachers of an examination centre committee, including the centre secretary, were relieved of their duties over providing students with wrong sets of MCQ question papers, said the upazila nirbahi officer, also the exam centre in-charge.

The incident happened at Chowgachha Government Shahadat

Pilot Secondary School centre where 19 regular candidates were given question papers based on the old syllabus and two irregular candidates with those of based on the current syllabus.

The teachers relieved of their duties are Azizur Rahman, exam centre secretary and headmaster of the school, and Abdul Jalil, Salma Khatun, Lucky Akter, and Rabiul Islam.

Talking to this newspaper, Azizur said the mistake was unintentional.

"We informed Jashore education board examination controller and Chowgachha UNO and provided the candidates with right question papers for the written test," he added.

"The controller assured us that it will not affect the examinees' results," he added.

Sixty-six students were given wrong sets of MCQ question papers at Fazilpur WB Kadri High School in Feni Sadar upazila.

Our Barishal, Nilphamari, Jhenidah, and Feni correspondents contributed to this report.

## UN medical evacuations to begin from Yemen's rebel-held Sanaa

AFP, Sanaa

Critically ill Yemenis in need of medical care were set to be flown out of rebel-held Sanaa yesterday, an airport official said, under a United Nations humanitarian evacuation plan for the war-torn country.

The internationally recognised government, backed by a Saudi-led military coalition, has been fighting the Iran-aligned Huthi rebels since 2014, when the rebels seized control of the capital.

In November, the coalition -- which controls Yemen's airspace -- said that patients needing medical care would be allowed to be flown out of Sanaa, which has been closed to commercial flights since 2016.

"Patients and families are due to arrive in Sanaa airport at 12:30 local time (0930 GMT), and the aircraft is expected to leave today," a Huthi official at the airport told AFP.

The Huthis on Sunday criticised the

evacuation plan as inadequate for the needs of thousands of people in urgent need of treatment.

"The World Health Organization said it will transport via a small UN plane only seven patients with their escorts per flight," the rebels said in a statement carried by their Al-Masira channel.

"The number of people signed up for medical evacuations are around 32,000 patients with serious illnesses."

The United Nations and the WHO could not immediately comment on whether the airlift was going ahead and how many patients would be involved.

But aid sources in the Jordanian capital Amman said they were preparing to receive Yemeni patients.

UN special envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths last month told a Security Council that "we are very close to seeing the first flight move 30 patients who are now waiting in Sanaa for their treatment".

## China virus

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to have jumped from animals at a market into humans.

The virus has since spread to more than 24 countries despite many governments imposing unprecedented travel bans on people coming from China.

The World Health Organization has declared the crisis a global health emergency, and the first foreign death from the virus was confirmed in the Philippines on Sunday.

"What China urgently needs at present are medical masks, protective suits, and safety goggles," foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a press briefing.

Authorities in provinces that are home to more than 300 million people -- including Guangdong, the country's most populous -- have made it compulsory to wear masks in public in an effort to contain the virus.

But factories capable of producing around 20 million masks a day are only operating at between 60 and 70 percent of capacity, industry department spokesman Tian Yulong said, adding that supply and demand remained in "tight equilibrium" as a result of the Lunar New Year break.

Tian said authorities were taking steps to bring in masks from Europe, Japan and the US, while the foreign ministry said countries including South Korea, Japan, Kazakhstan and Hungary had donated medical supplies.

All but one of the 57 new deaths reported yesterday were in Wuhan and the rest of Hubei province, most of which has been under lockdown for almost two weeks.

The national death toll reached 361 -- exceeding the 349 mainland fatalities from the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak of 2002-03.

The number of infections also jumped significantly, passing 17,200.

SARS, caused by a pathogen similar to the new coronavirus and also originated in China, killed 774 people -- with most other deaths in Hong Kong.

India has set up a task force to monitor the situation after third case

of coronavirus was detected in Kerala's Kasargod. Around 2,000 people are under observation in the southern Indian state.

### ECONOMIC WOES

The virus is having an increasingly heavy economic impact, shutting down businesses across China, curbing international travel and impacting production lines of major global brands.

The Shanghai stock market plunged almost eight percent yesterday on the first day of trading since the holiday as investors played catch-up with last week's global retreat, reports AFP.

In Wuhan, which has been transformed from a bustling industrial hub into a near-ghost town, residents have been living in deep fear of catching the virus.

The city's medical facilities have been overwhelmed, with state news agency Xinhua reporting yesterday that 68 medical teams of 8,300 staff had been sent to Hubei.

And amid mounting pressure, the government has been racing to build two new hospitals to treat the infected.

The first of those, a 1,000-bed facility, was due to open yesterday, just 10 days after construction began.

About 1,400 military medics will treat patients at the hospital, dubbed "Fire God Mountain", according to state media.

However with the death toll surging in Wuhan and other areas of Hubei, it was not immediately clear what overall impact the hospitals would have on containing the epidemic.

The eastern industrial city of Wenzhou, 800 kilometres (500 miles) to the east, was placed under a similar lockdown to Wuhan on Sunday and its nine million people ordered to stay indoors.

China's foreign ministry yesterday criticised the US for being the first to evacuate nationals without providing "substantial assistance" to China.

The US actions had caused "panic", said spokeswoman Hua Chunying.

Mongolia, Russia and Nepal have closed their land borders, while semi-autonomous Hong Kong announced yesterday it was closing all but two land crossings.

## Int'l payment system now slower

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down from four days initially.

As a result, the BB processes international payments with the help of a foreign bank on other days, resulting in an additional cost.

In 2017, the SWIFT, the Fed and the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) designed a permanent payment instructions system for the BB. The system is secure, said a central banker.

The SWIFT sent the design in June 2016 and it was reviewed by the BUET. The Fed also examined the design.

Accordingly, the central bank purchased necessary software and hardware by the end of 2017 to make the system up and running.

But they have not been installed yet as SWIFT officials keep pushing back their Bangladesh visit fearing they will face legal actions in the hacking case filed with the Criminal Investigation Department.

Until December last year, no SWIFT official visited Bangladesh fearing that they might face legal actions in the hacking case filed with the CID.

The government high-ups assured that they would not face any sort of hassle or questioning from the law agencies. Convinced, a team of the SWIFT met with the BB governor in Dhaka on December 19 last year.

A SWIFT team will visit Bangladesh in order to install the hardware and a third party will audit its effectiveness. Once the SWIFT and the Fed give their green light in favour of the new system, it will be put in place.

The team that visited Bangladesh in December proposed two more initiatives that would make the payment instructions more secure.

One of them is Global Payment Initiative (GPI), which SWIFT is calling the new standard in global payments.

Another is payment control service (PCS). In case of any irregularities during the transaction such as higher-than-usual fund size or uncommon transaction timeframe, the channel can block the transaction and notify the bank.

A team from the SWIFT has to come to install the system. It has sent a list of the officials to Bangladesh, but the date for their visit could not be known.

Once the SWIFT installs the system, the BB would float a tender for a third-party audit of it. If the SWIFT and the Fed vet the audit report, the system will be fully up and running.

"If the officials of the SWIFT cooperate with the BB, we would be able to move to the new system within three to four months," Debdulal Roy, executive director of the BB, told The Daily Star.

The delay has been largely caused by the time being taken by the SWIFT officials, he said.

In November last year, a team from the Fed also visited the country.

NEW SECURITY SYSTEM IN CENTRAL BANK

Although the BB has not taken any measure in line with the

recommendations made by the Farashuddin-led probe committee, the central bank and the government have taken high-level security measures to safeguard the BB's IT infrastructure.

A censor has been installed at the BB in association with the Computer Incident Response Team (CIRT), the national body under the ICT ministry, Roy said.

The CIRT now monitors the activities of every computer of the BB and reports to the central bank every month.

It reports every suspicious activity, he said, adding that some 4,000 BB officials have been given training on IT and cyber security.

The IT management and the security system of the dealing room that manages the SWIFT messaging with the New York Fed are being handled separately, Roy said.

The Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) provides a network that enables financial institutions worldwide to send and receive information about financial transactions.

### BB CASE IN NEW YORK

On February 1 last year, the BB filed a case with the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York against the Philippines' Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation (RCBC) and others, including several top executives, for their involvement in a "massive and multi-year conspiracy" to steal its money.

The court heard the statements from both Bangladesh and the Philippines in the last week of December last year.

"We are awaiting the court verdict on whether it would accept the case or not," Abu Hena Mohd Razee Hassan, head of the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit, told The Daily Star.

### LEGAL PROCEEDING IN MANILA

The Philippines has filed 12 cases against the RCBC.

The Department of Justice has ordered the filing of charges for four counts of money laundering against the owners of local remittance firm Philrem Service Corp. in connection with the heist, reported the Inquirer of the Philippines on January 9.

In a 23-page resolution dated December 12, 2019, Justice Undersecretary Adrian Ferdinand Sugay reversed an earlier department ruling dismissing the charges against the remittance firm's owners.

He said Philrem, a covered institution under the Anti-Money Laundering Act, failed to report to the Anti Money Laundering Council (AMLC) the series of suspicious transactions that paved the way to conceal the money stolen from the BB almost four years ago.

Last year, the Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 149 found former RCBC branch manager Maia Deguito guilty of eight counts of money laundering in connection with the heist and sentenced her to a jail term ranging from 32 to 56 years. The case is currently on appeal, the Inquirer said.

## KILLING RAPISTS IN CROSSFIRE

### JP MP Kazi Firoz backtracks on his stance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party senior lawmaker Kazi Firoz Rashid yesterday in parliament backtracked from his earlier position regarding the killing rapists in crossfire.

Participating in the discussion on the thanksgiving motion on the president's speech, the JP MP yesterday demanded that the government completes trials of alleged rapists within 90 days in a special tribunal.

He also demanded capital punishment of rapists by amending the existing laws.

Firoz and several other senior MPs on January 14 demanded that law enforcers kill rapists "in crossfire" to stop rape incidents, which have recently increased at an alarming rate.

Different quarters, including rights activists, strongly condemned such a demand.

About his previous comment of killing rapists in crossfire, Firoz yesterday said he was emotionally charged when he said it.

The JP MP also demanded that the government form a judicial commission to investigate widespread corruption and looting of public money from different banks.

Criticising Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu, Firoz said Bangabandhu would not have been killed had they not announced war against Bangabandhu or loot police stations.

## Mudslide traps

### 500 tourists in

### Canadian ski resort

AFP, Montreal

Some 500 tourists were trapped inside a ski resort in western Canada on Sunday after a mudslide destroyed the access road, local media reported.

Heavy rains knocked loose mud and debris, and the ensuing mudslide washed out about 0.6 miles (one kilometer) of the only access road to the Sasquatch Mountain Resort, the British Columbia transportation ministry said in a statement.

## Govt has taken

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Speaking at the programme, IEDCR Director Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora also said they had taken all sorts of preparations in line with the WHO guidelines to prevent any possible outbreak of the virus.

Urging all not to panic, she said in around 80 percent coronavirus cases in China, patients recovered without needing any hospital admission.

"Most of the patients who had been taken to hospitals also recovered after a certain period," she said.

"We have analysed the coronavirus cases and found that most of the victims who died either had other infections or were infants or elderly people," she said.

Less than three percent of those infected died, she said, adding that the mortality rate was lower than that of the outbreaks of SARS or MERS.

The new type of coronavirus has already claimed more than 300 lives and all the victims, except for one, died in China.

"The man who died in the Philippines had co-infections. It will be wrong to say he died only of coronavirus," she said.

Prof Flora then said the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) tested samples taken from 34 people, and found none of them carried the virus.

She urged all not to panic and maintain hygiene. "If you have symptoms of cold, it does not mean you are infected with coronavirus. But if anyone has been to China recently and have symptoms of flu, they require special care."

Citing different studies, Prof Nazmul Hasan, assistant professor of BSMMU's internal medicine department, presented the "Clinical Features and Management of 2019 n-CoV" and described the source and spread of the virus.

"It is believed the novel coronavirus has spread from bat to snake and then to humans. Later, it spread through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes," he said.

Speaking as a special guest, former BSMMU vice-chancellor Prof Nazrul Islam said, "It is the seventh new strain of coronavirus, which is usually carried by bats."

Prof Dr ABM Abdullah, a former dean of BSMMU's internal medicine department, suggested that people stay clean to prevent the spread of the virus.

### EIGHT RETURNEES

### NOT INFECTED

Meanwhile, the IEDCR yesterday confirmed that none of the eight Bangladeshis, suspected of contracting coronavirus, was infected with the virus.

They were among the 312 Bangladeshis who returned from Wuhan on Saturday. Of the eight, seven were sent to Ashkona Hajj Camp while the other was at a hospital.

## GP faces crisis

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multiple restrictions on the company's business operations.

When GP launched its service in the country, its numbers began with 017. After the company exhausted the allocated 10 crore connections with the prefix, the BTRC in October 2018 gave it permission to sell 2 crore new connections that would begin with 013.

The company has almost sold out the connections it was allocated at the time, the CEO said yesterday.

GP wrote to the BTRC several times seeking permission to sell new SIMs and resell the unused ones, but the regulator had not responded, he added.

"There are 30 lakh unused connections, that can be sold again," he said, adding that the company sold around 50,000 SIMs every day.

As of last December, the carrier had 7.64 crore active subscribers.