

MONEY LAUNDERING CASE

Korean national's bail plea refused

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday refused to grant bail to South Korean national Youngsik Lee, a cohort of online casino “kingpin” Salim Prodhan, in a money laundering case.

The bench of Justice JBM Hassan passed “no order” on a petition by Lee, seeking bail in the case, after a virtual hearing.

The High Court’s “no order” means that Youngsik Lee has been denied bail and he cannot get released from jail, Anti-Corruption Commission’s lawyer Advocate Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star.

He said law enforcers arrested Lee on January 22 in connection with the money laundering case in which Salim Prodhan is the main accused.

Youngsik Lee’s lawyer Advocate Sharif Ahmed told this correspondent that he will move the same bail petition before a regular HC bench when the court reopens after the ongoing closure.

On September 28, Salim was arrested at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport while attempting to flee the country.

Based on information, law enforcers along with Salim conducted a 20-hour raid at his office and residence that day, and seized around Tk 29 lakh, currencies of 23 countries, cheque books, spotted deer hide and foreign liquor, along with a server, four laptops and a desktop computer used for gambling operations.



A little boy dons a raincoat as protective gear -- paired with a headcap and a mask -- featurinmg his favourite comic superheroes, almost as if for a bit of extra protection from the coronavirus. His mother, meanwhile, is happy with a plain black one. The photo was taken from Dhanmondi yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

HC forms committee to protect Halda dolphins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday formed a committee headed by the deputy commissioner (DC) of Chattogram in order to protect biodiversity, environment, fishes and dolphins of Halda river in the district.

The lawmakers elected from the areas near the banks of the river will act as advisers of the DC-led committee, and the committee will work with advice from the members of parliament, the High Court said in the order.

The High Court bench of Justice Obaidul Hassan came up with the order during the virtual hearing of a writ petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Abdul Qaium Liton, seeking its directives on the authorities concerned of the government to prevent the killing of dolphins and protect them in Halda river.

During yesterday’s proceedings, the High Court went through a compliance report submitted by the Department of Environment saying that necessary initiatives have been taken to save the dolphins of Halda river, court sources said.

The court asked the officials concerned of the court to keep the report in court records and set May 28 for further hearing on the issue.

The DoE recently submitted the compliance report to the High Court through email in line with its May 12 directives that asked the authorities concerned to immediately take necessary steps.

In yesterday’s order, the High Court asked the DC of Chattogram to include representatives from the DC, superintendent of police, naval police, coast guard, DoE, fisheries, water development board and forest office in Chattogram, upazila nirbahi officers of Hathazari and Ramnagar of the district, and representatives from Marine Science and Fisheries Facility of Chattogram in the committee to protect biodiversity, environment, fishes and dolphins of Halda River.

Abdul Qaium said in the writ petition that 24 dolphins in Halda river were killed since 2017 till date, endangering the environment and ecology, according to a report published on The Daily Star on May 8.

80pc tea workers of Sylhet give birth at home

Says survey; unavailability of midwives, poverty, superstition result in high infant mortality rate

MINTU DESHWARA

Sumita Kairi, a tea labourer at Daluchhara Tea Garden in Fenchuganj Upazila of Sylhet, gave birth at home. No trained midwife was present during the delivery of her first child. Sumita’s child was born with the assistance of two local elderly women.

“All the women in our family have given birth at home,” Sumita said. But it’s not always a choice. “The elderly at home do not like going to hospitals,” she said. In such a tradition, many women like Sumita avoid going to hospitals or calling midwives as that only increases stress during childbirth.

GM Shiblee, chairperson of tea garden owners’ association Bangladesh Cha Sangsad in Sylhet, told this correspondent that many women in the tea gardens do not take delivery services due to old ideas and superstitions. This persists even if there are midwives in almost every garden now, he added.

However, other accounts do not match his statement.

There’s the issue of money. A couple of months ago, Lakshi Gowala of Lakkatura tea garden gave birth at home. Like Sumita, she too didn’t have a trained midwife around. “If you go to the doctor, you have to pay. You also have to pay to bring a midwife. Where can we get this money?” Lakshi said.

For some, there’s simply no access to delivery services. For Ayesha, Sudipa, and Aruna -- all workers of Keramnagar Tea Gaden in Baralekha upazila of Moulvibazar -- midwifery services are simply unavailable as there are no trained midwives in or around their garden.

In fact, most tea gardens do not have trained midwives, and the work is taken over by older women of the area. As a result, maternal and neonatal mortality rates are higher in tea gardens, said Dr Anisur Rahman,



Mithila Nayek with her one-month-old baby in her mud house. She had suffered four miscarriages before.

PHOTO COURTESY: PHILIP GAIN

assistant director (disease control) of Sylhet divisional health office.

Fifty five of every 1,000 newborns in tea gardens die at birth. The number is 26 in Sylhet division, he added.

The results of a survey conducted by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (in collaboration with Unicef) confirms this. The survey, conducted and published last year, showed 80 percent of the women in tea gardens in three districts of Sylhet give birth at home.

The study showed that only 16 percent go to health centres while the other four percent go to tea garden health centres. Only 43 percent of the women receive any sort of health care at home or hospital within two days of childbirth.

Worrisome numbers also came up in another survey. “We interviewed 60 mothers from the tea gardens, we found eight who had multiple miscarriages and stillbirths in the past,” says Philip Gain, executive director of Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD). “Bear in mind that the mothers we surveyed were from areas that were close to the upazila health complex. The rate might be higher in remote

areas.”

Sanjana Shirin, a nurse at Camellia Hospital, a hospital for tea workers in Kamalganj of Moulvibazar, said giving birth without a trained midwife poses various risks for mothers and newborns. Problems such as excessive bleeding and infection may occur when giving birth at home without the help of trained practitioners.

She spoke of a spatial disparity in location of midwives. Although there are midwives working in gardens around town areas, they are unavailable at tea gardens located in remote areas.

She also said due to the low rate of use of birth control methods, women in tea gardens resort to the use of a type of tree root.

This correspondent learned that in 2007-08, a development organisation provided training to some women of different tea gardens in Sylhet as midwives. However, only one or two of the trainees took it up as a profession.

Parash Gowala, of Lakkatura Tea Garden, is one of the few who took up the profession. Parash said since the norm is to not call midwives during childbirth, it is not profitable to be a midwife in tea gardens.

Looking out for the less fortunate

ACC official feeds over 5,000 people in Bogura, Gaibandha

MOSTAFA SHABUI, Bogura

Surviving with everyone else is Wahid Manjour Sohag’s motto. And this led him to distribute one cooked meal among the poor every day since April 19, when shutdown was enforced in Bogura.

The 32-year-old deputy assistant director of the Anti-Corruption Commission, Bogura, till date, distributed a meal among more than 5,000 street children, day labourers, rickshaw pullers, beggars and physically challenged people in Bogura and Gaibandha.

Wahid started this initiative, after seeing some physically-challenged people begging on an empty road near a market in Bogura during the shutdown.

“They looked very hungry. After I returned home, I decided to give them cooked food, spending money from my own pocket,” he related.

Initially, he ordered 100 packets of khichuri every day from a restaurant at a cost of Tk 2,500 and distributed

those among the poor people on the street.

Along with a friend, Manjour would ride his bike to different areas of Bogura town and hand over the meal packets to those who needed it.

“I don’t stop at one place for a long time,” he said about his strategy to avoid overcrowding.

When he posted pictures of the meal distribution on Facebook and some media outlets published his story, many people from home and abroad started donating to Manjour’s cause.

“At least 50 people from home and abroad have sent Tk 500 to Tk 15,000 to keep the initiative going,” he said.

“The finansupport has been inspirational for me to carry on with my activities,” he added.

Since the beginning of Ramadan, Manjour has added an egg and some vegetables to his meal, and has been distributing it as iftar in the evening instead of daytime.

Since April 26, he has also been distributing food among 150

poor people in his home district Gaibandha, through the volunteers of a Facebook group.

In total, Wahid provides iftar to 250 people in both districts every day, spending Tk 7,000 - Tk 8,000 per day.

Besides, with the help of the Facebook group, he and some other wealthy individuals in his network have been providing financial assistance to 500 destitute families in Gaibandha for Eid shopping every year since 2015.

Thanking all the volunteers and the financial supporters, the ACC official said, “I want to continue this meals distribution work among starving people as long as the epidemic lasts in our country.”

Even after the pandemic, Manjour wishes to continue this initiative among helpless and marginalised children of Bogura, if he gets financial help.

“If the world starts to depopulate due to the food crisis during the pandemic, what should I do surviving alone?” he ponders.

Tk 10CR GRAFT AT FMCH 2 contractors’ bail appeals denied

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday denied bail to two contractors accused in a corruption case involving Tk 10 crore in supplying machines and equipment to Faridpur Medical College Hospital (FMCH).

The bench of Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim passed the order after virtually hearing a petition by Abdullah Al Mamun, proprietor of Anik Traders, and his brother Munshi Sajjad Hossain, seeking bail.

The HC bench said the accused may move the bail petition before a regular bench once courts reopen, Deputy Attorney General Dr Md Bashir Ullah said.

The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case against the two with its integrated district office in Faridpur on November 27.

The accused were arrested in the case on February 20, said DAG Bashir Ullah.

4 die in road crashes

STAR REPORT

Four people died in two road accidents yesterday.

In Sirajganj, a couple and another person died and three others were injured in a fatal road mishap after their truck fell into a roadside ditch. The accident occurred on the Dhaka-Bogura highway at Nokla area in Raiganj upazila early yesterday morning, reports our Pabna correspondent.

The deceased were identified Nurjahan Begum (20), her husband Md Ali Akbar (28), and Sohel Rana (20).

They were headed to their home at Rampura in Nababganj upazila of Dinajpur during the lockdown, evading eyes of law enforcers and locals.

Officer-in-Charge of Hatikumrul Highway Police Station Md Akeruzzaman said the victims got on the oil-laden truck secretly and hid on its cabin. When the truck reached Nolkla, another truck coming from the opposite direction almost collided with it. As drivers of both vehicles lost control and slid into the ditch, all three were killed on the spot, the highway OC said.

In Tangail Sadar upazila, a day-wage worker was killed and five others were injured when a pick-up van carrying them fell into a ditch by the Dhaka-Tangail Highway at Tangail Sadar upazila yesterday.

Deceased Bimol Haider (19) hailed from Sherpur upazila in Bogura district. The injured were admitted to Tangail General Hospital.

Quoting the injured workers, Shafiqul Islam, senior station officer of Fire Service and Civil Defence in Tangail, said the accident occurred as the pick-up’s driver lost control over steering and drove the vehicle into a 30-foot deep ditch at Dorun Saitta area around 3pm. Bimol was killed on the spot, Shafiqul added.

Al Musabbir Sadi’s 9th death anniv

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the ninth death anniversary of Al Musabbir Sadi, a noted sports journalist and former general secretary of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF).

Sadi, also a senior member of Bangladesh Sports Journalists’ Association, breathed his last on this day at the age of 44 at a private hospital in the capital in 2011. He was suffering from cancer.

After completing his master’s in sociology from Dhaka University, Sadi started his journalism career at The Independent in 1995, and later joined The Daily Star in 2004. He joined BFF in 2009.

Sadi wrote two books on cricketers Sachin Tendulkar and Brain Lara in 1999 and 2002, respectively, during his journalism career.



ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF COVID-19

Business institutions launch initiative to support recovery

STAR REPORT

Four leading private business organisations of the country and an economic policy think-tank yesterday launched an initiative -- titled “Resurgent Bangladesh” -- to support execution of a number of plans to recover from the economic shocks of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The institutions are Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE), Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD), and Policy Exchange, according to a DCCI statement.

The initiative seeks to help the overall economic recovery in Bangladesh by assessing the impact on the private sector and develop recovery strategies for key economic themes.

The newly launched body will provide the government organised, evidence-based and actionable inputs for preparation of national economic recovery strategy, and facilitate public-private dialogue on necessary government policy actions for private sector recovery.

For instance, inputs into budgetary process, enabling voices of smaller and

individual firms and providing them support will be some of the goals of this initiative.

The platform will help stimulate resurgence of a dynamic private sector using analytics, advocacy, and policy dialogues initially in seven economic themes, including manufacturing, services, international trade and exports, SMEs, financial sector, private investment, and agriculture.

The work will be undertaken under guidance of a steering committee, comprising Syed Nasim Manzur, adviser of Leather Footwear and Goods Manufacturers and Exporters Association; Nihad Kabir, president of MCCI; Shams Mahmud, president of DCCI; Abul Kasem Khan, chairperson of BUILD; Asif Ibrahim, chairperson of CSE; and Masrur Reaz, chairperson of Policy Exchange.

Policy Exchange will work as technical secretariat, while Deloitte and several other international institutions will provide support as knowledge partners, the statement said.

The coronavirus pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on the global economy, and businesses in Bangladesh have been grappling with massive repurcussions.



With the temperature hovering in the high 30s over the last few days paired with high levels of humidity, humans are not the only ones suffering. This rooster trying to drink from a tap serves as a reminder to keep out drinking sources for animals in this intense heat. This photo was taken on Monday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN