

Mahbubul Alam Hanif leaves country for Canada

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League joint general secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif left the country for Canada on Friday morning.

Hanif's personal assistant Tariqe Ul Islam Tutul confirmed the news to The Daily Star, saying that the AL leader went to Canada to meet his wife and two sons who are settled there, and in connection with his brother's illness.

Hanif, a lawmaker from Kushtia-3, left Bangladesh by a Qatar Airways flight that left Dhaka at 3:45am, Tutul confirmed.

A close aide of Hanif said he could not meet his family for two years due to political activities and of late the coronavirus situation, and thus he went to Canada to visit them.

He also informed that Hanif will return soon.



Even a few months ago, Rabbi's life was very different. He was just starting third grade at a local school, and with both his parents working, did not have to worry about food. Since his father suddenly died a few weeks ago, of an undiagnosed illness, he has been pushed to the deep end. Rabbi now carries water containers to roadside food stalls in return for food, which is often yesterday's stale bread. The photo was taken near Islambagh, next to the Buriganga.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Living with the dead to save the living

DMC mortuary staffer staying in morgue since mid-March to keep his family safe

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and RAFIUL ISLAM

His workplace and home are 150 yards apart, a distance that takes no more than five minutes to cover.

Yet for Sikandar Ali, a mortuary assistant at Dhaka Medical College, the morgue has been his home since mid-March.

He has not been going home to protect his family from being exposed to coronavirus.

"Sometimes I feel an intense urge to see my little grandchildren but I remind myself I should not be the source of infection for my family members," Sikandar said.

To prevent his family from getting exposed to coronavirus, Sikandar has been living in a room at the mortuary for the last three months, sometimes enduring the acrid smell of decomposing bodies.

Sikandar is well aware of the risks at his job. He knows he could be infected anytime, as he examines corpses sent from different parts of the country or while talking to relatives of the deceased.

The protective gear given to Sikandar and his colleagues are not nearly adequate enough.

They have to reuse them after a wash, increasing the risk of the infection, said some staff members.

"My wife is a cardiac patient. Her heart valve was replaced seven years ago during an open-heart surgery. Apart from this, there are also four kids in my house," said Sikandar.

Just opposite Dhaka Medical College Hospital's entrance, close to its new building, Sikandar's wife, a son, two daughters and four grandchildren live. "Whenever I talk to them, my grandchildren ask why I don't come home."

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Sand dumping on century-old lake sparks outrage



Trucks full of sand have been unloaded on side of the Sitaram-er Dighi, despite verbal warnings by the administration to stop doing so.

PHOTO: STAR

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

Filling up of a part of a century-old waterbody allegedly by a former local public representative has caused an uproar among concerned citizens and activists in Barishal.

The 2.96-acre Sitaram-er dighi is situated near Kashipur Bazar under ward 29 of Barishal City Corporation (BCC). Claiming himself to be an owner of the lake, Ali Hossain Hawlader, a former chairman of Kashipur union parishad under Sadar upazila, has been dumping sand in the waterbody for nearly a month, locals alleged.

Local administration had also verbally asked him to stop the encroachment recently, but until last week, he had been continuing dumping sand into it, said people living in the area.

Asked about it, Ali Hossain claimed that he, along with some others, bought the land and the lake from successors of its owners.

Contacted, Abdur Rahman, deputy assistant officer of Kashipur union land office, said Ali Hossain had legal documents of ownership, although it was not recorded in the land records yet. The last ownership record shows one Syed Kawsar Hossain as owner, and the land is classified as a "water reservoir for public use".

According to the Playground, Open Spaces, Gardens, and Water Bodies Conservation Act 2000, waterbodies

that are used for the greater interest of a community cannot be changed, even by its owners, without the permission of the authorities concerned, said Hasan Tareq Palash, an advocate of the Supreme Court.

Furthermore, authorities of the Barishal City Corporation (BCC) has included the Sitaram-er Dighi as a reservoir in the city's masterplan, he added.

Veteran lawyer of the city Manabendra Batabyal said the lake must be at least a hundred years old, because it was recorded in CS Khatiyon documents. If it is classified as a water reservoir in land documents, there is legally no scope for anyone to fill it up.

Sourav Mahmud, an environmentalist, said the large reservoir plays an important role in balancing eco-diversity in the city.

Anwar Zahid, a renowned citizen, said the lake was dug as a water source for common people, and must be protected. Asked about the issue, Ali Hossain Hawlader said he did not fill up the lake, but dumped sand to reinforce its banks.

Contacted, Mehedi Hasan, assistant commissioner (land) of Barishal sadar upazila, said he sternly warned Ali Hossain Hawlader not to fill up the lake.

Following this warning and outrage from local environmental activists, the encroachment activities stopped for a while, before beginning again a few days later.

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6,047 granted bail by lower courts last week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The lower courts across the country granted bail to 6,047 people in five working days last week.

With these bail orders, a total of 39,202 people including 536 children, accused of criminal charges, secured bail from the lower courts in the last 25 working days.

Among the 536 children, 471 were handed over to their guardians after they had got released from three Shishu Unnayan Kendra (children development centres), Supreme Court sources said yesterday. More than 300 courts granted bail to the accused through holding virtual hearings.

The subordinate courts disposed of total 73,116 petitions filed by the accused seeking bail in the cases against them.

The courts disposed of total 12,697 bail petitions and granted bail to total 6,047 accused in five days last week (June 14 to June 18) in connection with the cases filed against them, according to the sources.

Most of the accused people, who were granted bail, already got released from jail.

The virtual court functions started on May 11 after a gap of 46 days, to deal with the urgent cases. Regular activities of courts across the country including Appellate and High Court Divisions of the Supreme Court remained suspended since March 26 due to ongoing coronavirus outbreak.

103 judiciary personnel infected with Covid-19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty lower court judges, 24 Supreme Court staff and 59 staff members of subordinate courts across the country have so far been infected with Covid-19.

Six lower court judges with Covid-19 symptoms are receiving treatment in isolation, Supreme Court sources said yesterday.

Besides, Md Kausar, a staff of Madaripur District Judge Court, died with Covid-19 symptoms on June 18 and Mohiuddin Mohan, an office assistant of Naogaon District Judge Court, died with symptoms the next day.

Their samples for Covid-19 test were collected but the test results were yet to be received.

District and Sessions Judge of Netrokona, Shahjahan Kabir, and Chief Judicial Magistrate of Munshiganj, Begum Rokeya Rahman, who were the first among the judges to have been infected with the virus, have already recovered and joined their offices.

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DMP's traffic dept, DB get four new divisions

15 new SP-ranked posts created; 28 get new roles

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With an aim to keep a closer eye on Dhaka's traffic movement and crime detection, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) authorities have increased four new Superintendent of Police (SP)-ranked officers' posts each, in Traffic Department and Detective Branch (DB).

Earlier, the DMP's traffic and DB had four separate divisions -- North, South, East and West -- and deputy commissioner (SP rank officer) used to take care of a each division's work.

Now, there will be eight SPs in eight divisions of traffic and DB police -- Uttara, Motijheel, Wari, Lalbagh, Tejgaon, Ramna, Mirpur and Gulshan, according to officials.

Walid Hossain, deputy commissioner (Media) of DMP, confirmed about creating new division.

"We hope that we will get more effective results as some more police officials will start working in DB and traffic departments," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Besides eight SP-rank new posts in DB and traffic department, DMP will also get three more SP-ranked posts in the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit.

DMP has also created three new departments -- Supreme and Special Court department, secretariat department and ICT department. An SP-ranked officer will monitor activities of these departments.

Along with it, the DMP headquarters has divided its state and development department into two new sections -- the state department and development department.

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Penniless, sex workers ending up homeless

NILIMA JAHAN

The life of sex workers on the streets, hard as it is during normal times, has taken a worse turn after the coronavirus pandemic hit the country.

Many floating sex workers have been pushed into begging, as their regular means of income has almost disappeared.

They are also facing assault and harassment at the hands of local goons, law enforcers and other people, living on the streets.

Mukta, 40, a floating sex worker, shared how she was attacked and wounded while looking for clients near Golap Shah Mazar at Gulistan in the first week of April.

She said three young men availed her service and were about to leave without payment. When she asked for money, they berated her for sex work amidst the shutdown and then beat her mercilessly. One of them hit Mukta on her nose with a shard of blade.

"The wound required six stitches and I think the scar will never heal," said Mukta, who now begs on the streets.

At least five other sex workers shared similar experiences with this correspondent.

They said they are compelled to come out on

the street risking coronavirus infection as many of them have children to feed and families to support.

Mukta said for the last three months she could not pay the monthly fee of Tk 2,000 for her two kids, who live at a private shelter for sex worker's children.

"The shelter in-charge has been calling and yelling at me for the money. How can I make her understand that I'm in such a condition that I am having to skip most of my meals?"

Aleya Begum Lily, general secretary of Sex Workers' Network (SWN), a platform for 29 sex workers' organisations, said, most of the around 1,02,000 sex workers including the 5,000 registered in the 10 brothels of the country are jobless now.

In the capital, there are almost 20,000 sex workers, of whom 8,000 sell sex on the streets, hotels and rented apartments, she added.

Those who lived in hotels or failed to pay house rent are now living on the streets, in the parks, mausoleums, railway stations or under the bridges, Aleya said.

A large number of sex workers, who work under brokers, have also been suffering due to a sharp decline in their clientele.

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COVID-19 CASES

Recovery rate 56pc at police hospitals

Drastic increase in new infections in last five days among law enforcers

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Amidst the gloomy mood of the coronavirus pandemic, a beacon of light can be found in the recovery rate of Bangladesh Police members, who got infected with the virus while working as frontliners during the countrywide shutdown.

As of yesterday, around 8,520 members of the force have tested Covid-19 positive. Of them, 27 have died so far.

On the other hand, around 4,893 police members have already recovered, and a majority of them have rejoined work, according to officials of Police Headquarters (PHQ) operation unit.

The recovery rate stands at 55.92 percent, surely a cause for much-needed optimism for those working in the force.

Officials attribute the decent recovery rate to timely steps of the police administration, which includes ensuring standard treatment for infected members and preparing suitable medical facilities to keep up with the surge of infections since the early days.

Md Sohel Rana, assistant inspector general of PHQ, told The Daily Star yesterday that the rapidly rising recovery rate comes down to the successful implementation of advanced treatment facilities for infected members.

AIG Rana said they have also launched awareness programmes among force members along with providing safety equipment to on-duty personnel.

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Halda sees second spawn cycle of carp in a month

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Ctg

Halda River, the lone breeding ground for natural spawning of carp fish in South Asia, has seen second spawning within a month after having first laying of eggs by brood fish on May 22.

The spawning is assumed to have occurred thanks to an increase in brood fish stock. Around 150 to 200kg of eggs were collected early yesterday at Baroighona and Chayarchar, two points adjacent to Halda.

Manzoorul Kibria, noted Halda researcher and professor of zoology at Chittagong University, said it is truly a promising sign for the river, which he thinks was enriched with stock of brood fish following a drop in pollution and other manmade hazards.

"When a waterbody has a large amount of brood fish, some of them take time to get matured enough to release eggs. This is what exactly happened in Halda," he said, adding that this is the first time he had seen such second spawning.

Half of the egg collectors did not go to the river as they could not sense the spawning, Prof Kibria said. Halda has around 500 egg collectors.

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A man spends some quality father-daughter time with his baby in one hand and talking to the elder right beside him at Barishal city's Januki Singha road yesterday. Since losing his left arm in a road accident, he has had to put in a little extra effort every day to provide and care for his children. On Father's Day today, we celebrate the spirit of sacrifice and selflessness every father holds close to their heart.

PHOTO: TITU DAS