

Former JCD activist hacked to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

A group of unidentified criminals hacked a former activist of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) to death in Ramgarh upazila of Khagrachhari.

The victim -- Omar Faruq, 30, former joint convener of JCD Ramgarh College unit -- breathed his last at Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

Samsuzzaman, officer-in-charge of Ramgarh Police Station, said a group of miscreants swooped on Faruq around 11:00pm on Saturday and stabbed him indiscriminately with sharp weapons.

Critically injured, he was rushed to CMCH where he was declared dead. The body was sent to CMCH morgue for autopsy, he said, adding that the reason behind the murder could not be known immediately.

No case was filed in this regard as of 7:10pm today, said the OC.

Meanwhile, Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan, president of Khagrachhari district unit BNP, demanded immediate arrest of the criminals.

'Drug peddler' killed in 'gunfight'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

An alleged Rohingya drug peddler was killed in a "gunfight" with BGB members in Cox's Bazar's Teknaf early yesterday.

Syed Alam, 35, was a Myanmar national, but he had been living in Naitangpara of the upazila for the last 10 years.

On information that a large consignment of yaba pills would be smuggled into Bangladesh from Myanmar, a BGB team took position in Keyari Khal area, said Lt Col Foysal Hasan Khan, commander of BGB Battalion-2.

Around 2:00am, the team noticed two men roaming the area and another crossing the Naf river into Bangladesh from Myanmar, the BGB official said.

Seeing this, the troops asked the three to stop, but they opened fire, defying the instruction, injuring two of the BGB members, he said.

In self-defence, the BGB men retaliated, triggering the "gunfight", he added.

After the "gun battle", the BGB team found a man with bullet wounds.

The injured was taken to Teknaf Upazila Health Complex that referred him to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital.

He was declared dead after being taken to the hospital, the BGB official added.

The BGB claimed to have recovered 40,000 yaba tablets and a firearm from the spot.

Buzz gone

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or Kobita Café as well, although these places used to be a favourite hub for the literature aficionados a few months ago. Every evening, people would come to read books and have talks while sipping on their coffee.

The owners of these cafes, however, said customers hardly visited their shops after the shutdown.

Dipanpur was established on July 12, 2017, on the eve of the 45th birth anniversary of the slain publisher Faisal Arefin Dipan, and after three years of successful operation, Dipan's wife Dr Razia Rahman Jolly and his friends were planning to put an end to their endeavour last month, as the revenue plummeted to zero during and after the shutdown.

But as the news of the closure spread, some literary minds and friends gave Jolly a hand to continue to the venture. The Book shop opened on a limited scale on July 10.

Nahida Ashrafi, the owner of Kobita Café, too was about to shut her shop last month but changed her mind after being assured by the cultural affairs ministry about a stimulation package allotted for her business to survive.

"Since we got assurance from the ministry, we are hoping to open the café again in the first week of August, but I don't know how long we could survive," she said.

Jewel Redwanur, the owner of Café Nalonda, could not afford the continuous loss and closed the shop the last month.

"I applied for the stimulation package from the cultural affairs ministry, but I've heard they are providing only Tk one lakh. We need more than this amount every month to keep the café open," he said.

UN to hold crisis talks as decaying Yemen tanker risks disaster

AFP, Dubai

An abandoned oil tanker lying off Yemen's coast with 1.1 million barrels of crude on board is deteriorating badly and could rupture at any time, with disastrous results for Red Sea marine life, UN and other experts warn.

The 45-year-old FSO Safer is anchored off the port of Hodeida under the control of the Iran-backed Huthi rebels, who have blocked United Nations efforts to send a team of experts to assess its condition.



The hustle and bustle of the Gulistan area in the capital is back after months of calm since the coronavirus outbreak. Hawkers are back taking over the pavement and the buses stop in the middle of the street to pick up passengers. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Sharpest rise in virus cases

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12,736,737 infections, including 565,151 deaths, have been recorded.

Europe is the most affected continent in terms of fatalities, with 202,396 out of 3,355,128 cases while the hardest-hit country the United States has registered 134,815 deaths.

President Donald Trump appeared on Saturday for the first time publicly wearing a mask, as more than 66,000 new cases were recorded in the United States, according to the Johns Hopkins University, a new daily record.

In Florida, where nearly one in six of those new infections were recorded, the Walt Disney World theme park partially reopened after four months of shutdown prompted by the virus.

Latin America and the Caribbean is the region where the disease is surging the most, with more than 76,000 new cases registered on July 11.

Elsewhere, French officials warned of rising cases in metropolitan France as the death toll there topped 30,000.

Hungary's government barred travel from Africa, most of Asia apart from China and Japan, and restricting entry from several European countries after worldwide spikes in cases.

Australia's Victoria state marked a week of triple-digit increases in new infections yesterday, while a community outbreak in neighbouring New South Wales (NSW) has put the state on high alert.

LANKA CANCELS RALLIES

Sri Lanka's ruling party yesterday

called off its rallies ahead of upcoming parliamentary elections and delayed the international airport's reopening over a surge in virus cases.

The South Asian country of 21 million lifted its lockdown in late June after declaring there was no longer any community spread of the virus.

But a swathe of cases emerged last week, including an outbreak at a drug rehabilitation centre that saw 253 patients tested positive in a single night.

India yesterday registered a record increase in the number of cases, taking the total number of affected people in the country to nearly 850,000, the world's third-highest, and prompting authorities to re-impose partial lockdowns in some densely populated areas.

Federal health ministry data showed that more than 27,100 new cases were reported in the previous 24 hours, while the death toll increased to 22,674, after 551 people succumbed in a day.

Iran's supreme leader yesterday called the resurgence of the coronavirus in the country "truly tragic" and urged all citizens to help stem what has been the region's deadliest outbreak.

"Let everyone play their part in the best way to break the chain of transmission in the short term and save the country," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in a video conference with lawmakers, according to his office.

INDONESIA OUTBREAK

Nearly 1,300 people at the Indonesian Army Officer Candidate School in the country's most populated province of West Java were tested positive and quarantined, with 30 initially hospitalised with mild symptoms, an official said.

Of the 1,280 confirmed infections, 991 are cadets and the rest are staff and their family members. Most have no symptoms.

On Friday, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called on countries to adopt an aggressive approach to tackling the virus, citing successful mitigation efforts in Italy, South Korea and elsewhere.

"Only aggressive action combined with national unity and global solidarity can turn this pandemic around," he said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu admitted a decision to allow bars and other businesses to reopen may have come "too soon" after his country reported a record 1,500 new infections on Friday.

In Hong Kong, a spike has marked a setback for the city after daily life had largely returned to normal, with restaurants and bars resuming regular business and cultural attractions reopening.

Schools in the city will be closed from today after the city recorded "exponential growth" in locally transmitted infections.

other charges. Most of the cases were filed under Section 420 of the Penal Code.

NO EXPLANATION FROM DGHS
Following the raid, the health service division on July 7 asked the DGHS to cancel the MoU with Regent immediately and to explain how Regent got permission to run as a Covid-19 hospital when it didn't have proper licence.

The division also asked the DGHS to launch an investigation into the allegation regarding the fake Covid-19 test results and the collection of samples from people's homes violating the MoU.

Contacted, Muhibur Rahman, additional secretary (hospital) of health division, said they had yet to receive the explanation from the DGHS.

Positivity rate soars

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recovery rate is 50.93 percent.

Speaking on the positivity rate, experts said data suggest that the transmission of the virus is declining in the urban areas and is increasing in the rural areas.

The latest testing data from multiple labs in Dhaka and Narayanganj show a stable trend in the transmission of virus infection in these two major hotspots.

"When we started, we found around 40 percent positivity rate. It declined over the time and it was between 12 and 18 percent during the last seven days [as of Saturday]," Prof Saif Ullah Munshi, chairman of Virology at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) who heads the BSMMU Covid-19 testing lab, told The Daily Star.

Prof Ridwanur Rahman, an infectious disease specialist, said it was tough to measure the reality with inadequate testing.

"But transmission seems stable in Dhaka and Narayanganj, because most of the people are maintaining health guidelines," he said.

In Narayanganj, the average positive rate was 19.5 percent during the first 10 days of June, according

to Narayanganj Civil Surgeon Dr Mohammad Imtiaz.

The rate has dropped to around 12 percent in the first 10 days of this month, he said.

The number of Covid-19 tests has dropped significantly in recent weeks after the government imposed fees on the tests from the beginning of July.

DAILY BRIEFING

Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general of DGHS said 43 of the deceased died at different hospitals while four died at home.

She said 50 percent deaths were reported from Dhaka division and 26.28 percent from Chattogram division and 2.34 percent from Mymensingh division.

Of the dead, she said, 36 were male and rest were female.

She said 23 of them were from Dhaka, six from Chattogram, six from Khulna, four from Sylhet, four from Rajshahi, two from Rangpur and two others from Barishal divisions.

One of them was aged between 11 and 20 years, two between 21 and 30, three were between 31 and 40, four between 41 and 50, 15 between 51 and 60, 14 between 61 and 70, six within 71 and 80 and two were between 81 and 90 years, Dr Nasima also said.

Major sex-work racket busted

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(three stars), City Tower Hotel (four stars) and Fortune Royal Hotel (four stars).

DIG Imtiaz said Azam has around 50 brokers in different districts of the country.

The brokers would lure girls with the hopes of a job that would pay Tk 50,000 thousand per month, he said.

Once the girls would agree, Azam took support from some agencies and managed tourist visas for these girls and would send them to Dubai in cooperation with two foreign airlines, he added.

"We have found the involvement of two airlines company that would take these girls out of the country," the DIG said.

Without disclosing the names of the airlines, he further said they are investigating the roles of those and the recruiting agencies.

The brokers would get Tk 10,000 for managing each girl, said DIG Imtiaz.

About the syndicate, he said they have come to know that Azam's two brothers are in Dubai and they also help him operate the syndicate.

"Besides, we have also found the involvement of two Indian and several Pakistani nationals," he said.

"We often face problem to investigate transitional crimes as the accused are found to be staying in different countries," he said.

Azam, from Chattogram's Fatikchhari, was wanted in 15 separate cases, including six for murder, said the CID.

Dr Sabrina arrested over

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missioner of DMP's Tejgaon Division around 1:00pm yesterday.

"During the three-hour questioning, she could not give any satisfactory answers. We showed her arrested in the fraudulence case," Harun-Ur-Rashid, the DMP deputy commissioner, told journalists at his office yesterday afternoon.

Sabrina had earlier talked to the media as a spokesperson for the private organisation. As a government official, she cannot be the chairman of any such entity, the official pointed out.

She, however, has denied holding the post since the scam surfaced.

"All the arrestees in the case said Sabrina is the chairman of JKG Health Care. She cannot avoid her responsibility for what happened ...," the DC mentioned.

Asked why it took so long to arrest her, he said the investigation officer was gathering information on her.

Police said they would produce Sabrina before court today and seek her remand for questioning.

Earlier on June 24, police had arrested her husband and JKG Chief Executive Officer Ariful Chowdhury and four others for their alleged involvement in issuing fake Covid test reports.

The four are -- Humayun Kabir and his wife Tanzina Patwary, Sayeed Chowdhury and Al Mamun.

Humayun and Tanzina are former employees of JKG Health Care while Sayeed and Al Mamun still work there.

Md Mahmud Khan, assistant commissioner of DMP's Tejgaon Zone,

said Humayun, a graphic designer, prepared fake Covid test reports by duplicating official pads of the DGHS and the IEDCR.

"We have found fake IEDCR pads on JKG Health Care's laptops," said the police official.

If the coronavirus patient was a local, he or she would have to pay Tk 5,000 for a fake report. For a foreign national, the charge was \$100, Mahmud said.

Four cases have already been filed against JKG Health Care on various charges including fraudulence.

Earlier on Saturday, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) cancelled the permission for JKG Health Care to collect samples over allegations of irregularities and corruption.

Yesterday, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said Regent Hospital owner Mohammad Shahed, allegedly involved in Covid test report scam, has no way to flee the country.

"Shahed has to surrender, otherwise he will be arrested... There is no way he can flee the country as his passport has been seized," he told reporters after a meeting at his ministry.

NBR'S DIRECTIVE

The National Board of Revenue yesterday directed banks to freeze the accounts of Shahed, Ariful, Sabrina and Regent Hospital Director Ibrahim Khalil.

It also ordered freezing the accounts of Regent Hospital, Regent KCS Ltd and JKG Health Care.

The tax authority asked the banks concerned to provide it with information on all those accounts.

Britain pledges £705m to prepare post-Brexit borders

AFP, London

Britain yesterday pledged £705 million (\$890 million, 788 million euros) to prepare its borders for cutting ties with the European Union on December 31, amid concern within government that it is not ready.

The money will fund new border posts, IT systems and 500 new staff to both ensure security and handle new customs controls after Britain leaves the EU's single market and customs union, the government said in a

statement.

Britain ended its EU membership on January 31, almost four years after the historic Brexit vote, but agreed a standstill transition period until the end of the year while it tries to negotiate a new trade deal with Brussels.

The talks are moving slowly, sparking alarm among businesses that almost half a century of economic integration with the EU will end abruptly in a few months' time.