Same gang, over and over again

FROM PAGE 1

Tushar, the managing director of Laili-Abed Construction Company.

They used to target coaching centre students and promised them of admission to any medical college they like.

The question sheet was handed to them the day before the test.

They took as much as Tk 12 lakh from an admission seeker.

The latest case, filed by the CID last week against the suspects, the gang leaked the medical and dental college admission quizzes for years.

"It is the same gang leaking medical admission question papers for years. They couldn't do it In the last two years. Now we will eradicate the root of the racket," Kamrul Ahsan, additional special superintendent of the Criminal Investigation Department's cyber police department, who is investigating the case, told The Daily Star yesterday.

FROM 2013-18: HOW THEY DID IT CID Official Kamrul said ringleader Jasim, who is now in custody, formed the gang with his family members.

His wife Sharmin Ara Jesmin Shilpi, brother-in-laws Zakir Hossain Dipu and Alamgir Hossain, nephews Parvez Khan and Sami Ul Zafar Situ, and cousin Abdus Salam Khan, are key suspects.

Salam used to be a machine operator at a facility where the Bureau of Health Education of the DGHS printed the questions.

During the printing, Salam managed to hand his cousin Jasim a copy of the sheets, officials said.

In 2013, the night before the exams, Jasim got hold of the sheet and gave it to Sanowar at Proshika More in the capital's Mirpur. Sanowar took a photo of the sheet and sent it to other suspects Rawshan Ali Himu, Almas and Sazzad using messaging apps.

Many admission seekers who received the leaked question sheet got admitted to the medical colleges, CID case statement said.

The other gang members are: Dr Shovon, Tusher, Rashed Khan and their accomplices.

In 2014, suspects Parvez Khan and a doctor from the capital's East Rajabazar Moyez Uddin Ahmed Pradhan gave leaked question papers to 40-50 students.

After Rab arrested Jasim in 2015, the

Turkey calls Greek reaction to Hagia Sophia prayers 'hostile'

AFP, Ankara

Turkey yesterday lambasted Greek statements against the move to convert Hagia Sophia back into a mosque after the first Muslim prayers were held in the Istanbul landmark.

other members of the racket collected the admission seeker's national ID cards, copies of their registration cards, phone numbers and the cash and gave those to Jasim's wife Sharmin and his nephew Zafar at Jasim's home, Prithi Villa, in Mirpur.

Sharmin with the help of Salam then called the admission seeker's parents the night before the exam and gave them the leaked questions.

Those students later got admitted to Khulna Medical College, Barisal Medical College, Sylhet Osmani Medical College and Ibrahim Cardiac Medical College.

Freed from jail in 2016, Jasim and other members of the racket resumed the job.

In September 2017, another gang member Mohaiminul Islam Badhan and with thelp of his father Biddyut Ali leaked the question paper of a medical college that admits students through separate tests, the case statement said.

In the morning of September 20, Jasim and the gang sent those question papers to the admission seekers, it added.

Badhan and Sanowar were accused in another case with Shahbagh Police Station in 2018 over their involvement in leaking Dhaka University admission test questions.

According to officials, printing press employee Salam had blessings from a "DGHS syndicate". Police are looking for Salam.

In primary interrogation, the CID found at least 50 people in the racket.

CID official Kamrul Ahsan suspects that at least 700-800 admission seekers got admitted through this racket over the years.

Ringleader Jasim alone has assets worth at least Tk 50 crore, including two six-storey buildings in Mirpur. The CID so far recovered 78 bank cheques, many of which are from 2015. Investigators are now looking into the assets of the other suspects.

The latest case also accuses 150-200 unidentified people and 14 people who were also accused with Mirpur Police Station over the leak of medical admission test question papers over the years.

CID officials said they are working to identify the admission seekers who benefitted from the leaks.

DU official FROM PAGE 1

During yesterday's hearing, the magistrate asked Sharmin whether she could run a business while holding the post of assistant registrar of DU, but the accused remained silent.

However, claiming herself innocent, Sharmin told the court that she was framed.

The authorities of BSMMU did not say anything about the quality of the masks in the first two consignments, she said.

In the remand prayer, the IO said



A farmer drying his jute on Palima Bridge in Kalihati upazila of Tangail recently. Many are worried about getting decent price for their produce due to the pandemic and recent shakeup at jute mills.

Where Covid is curiously quiet

pockets?

FROM PAGE 1

Similarly, Korail is located in Mohakhali, which is also one of the most infected areas

But perhaps what is more confusing is that there are decades of compelling scientific evidence pointing out that slum residents are more vulnerable to illnesses

For example, in 2017, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies did an extensive survey on 800 households in slums, and found several factors that should point towards higher morbidity.

The survey report, titled "Burden of Disease on the Urban Poor: A Study of Morbidity and Utilisation of Healthcare among Slum Dwellers in Dhaka City", found that a vast majority of the slum population did not use soap for washing hands.

Eighty-five percent of the respondents said they wash their hands with only water or mud/ash after defecation. While a tiny minority used soap after their own defecation, almost nobody washed hands with soap after cleaning their children's excretion, according to the report

Meanwhile, only 18 percent of slum residents reported consistently using footwear while using the toilet. This is in spite of the fact that all the households share toilets, with an average of 12 and a maximum of 25 households sharing one toilet.

About 38 percent of the toilets used were makeshift bamboo and polythene structures, erected over a canal or a skip. Only a fifth of the households used toilets linked to the sewerage system, or with a water-sealed ring slab.

More than half drank water straight from shared public taps, found the

Do these have an effect on their health? The report found that it does --95.4 percent of the households reported having experienced illness in the past

households experiencing illnesses had fever, cold and other respiratory illnesses

Then how could Covid-19 apparently

gloss over these people-packed urban

"While we don't have any study results yet, one reason could be the fact that there are some open spaces inside slums," mused Dr Flora, "but we can't say anything concrete until the survey results are finalised."

Interviews of slum dwellers taken by The Daily Star anecdotally raise questions about whether Covid-19 is not being found, because slums are not being tested.

Babu fell sick, along with his entire family, soon after a coronavirus-driven lockdown was imposed, but did not get tested. An owner of a mobile phone recharging booth in Korail's Babubazar slum, Babu was the first to become sick with the flu in his home. He was suffering for two weeks, when his three and eight-year-old sons went down with the flu as well. They each suffered between 20 days and one and a half months.

Asked why Babu did not get tested for Covid-19, he said, "Why would I? There is no coronavirus in the slums. Besides I don't know where to get tested. I don't have the money for treatment either, so why bother!" he said.

Pran Krishna Dey, proprietor of a pharmaceutical store in Bhashantek, said he was selling flu medication in droves, but none of the residents ever sought to be tested, nor did he advised anyone to do so.

"We don't know whether we have coronavirus in this slum or not," he said. A similar view was expressed by

owners and employees of several drug stores near Chalantika and other slums. Meanwhile, the muezzin of Baitul Nur Jame Masjid at Chalantika said

muezzin.

Asked. Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general of the DGHS, said there has been no dedicated testing in the slums. "We usually don't see the poorest show up at hospitals for testing either," she said.

Shipra Rani Mridha, a Brac Shashtya Karmi, said misinformation and stigma appeared to be a real challenge in the slums. "Many families I work with lack the education, awareness and income to tackle the Covid-19 crisis. They are also scared, because people have a negative perception towards people infected with coronavirus. They do not want to give out information related to their health, even if they are suffering from an illness.

"I have been a community health worker for four years now. I have never seen such fear and resistance in the community before.

"I collected the names of a few people in the area who had fever, in order to arrange appropriate support for them. Many of their family members showed up at my doorstep soon after, and begged me not to share their details with anyone. They were afraid that they would be treated as outcasts, or 'arrested' by the police. Some said they heard people are killed during quarantine. When I tried to talk to them to remove this misconception, some people became aggressive and desperate to strike their names off the list. It was

Back in May, Brac's James P Grant School of Public Health did a rapid research in slums and found that people showing Covid-19 symptoms were being harassed to leave.

"Individuals are worried about being ostracised within the community, and being accused of infecting others and spreading it in the settlements," said Prof Sabina Faiz Rashid, dean of the institute, and one of the authors of the

Malaysia

FROM PAGE 1

meet our client. We will be at Bukit Aman [police headquarters] on Monday, 27 July 2020, at 2:00pm, to meet our client," Sumitha told The Daily Star.

"Sunday is a holiday. So, on Monday when we will meet Rayhan, we can know what charges are brought against him and then see how we proceed," she said.

The Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur, which has not made any statement since the manhunt by Malaysian police began more than two weeks ago, yesterday said it was waiting for a letter from Malaysian authorities before taking any steps.

The high commission will take action regarding the arrest once the mission receives an official letter over the incident from the Malaysian government, said Bangladesh missions Labour Counsellor Zahirul Islam.

"We are dealing with the issue," he said, adding, "Steps will be taken as per the letter issued through the diplomatic channel."

Rayhan, 25, who went to Malaysia in 2014 and had been working after completing his bachelor's, became the target of Malaysia's manhunt after his criticisms against Putrajaya's undocumented of detention migrant workers in an Al Jazeera documentary titled "Locked Up in Malaysia's Lockdown", which was aired on July 3.

In the 26-minute video produced by Al Jazeera's 101 East team, he accused the authorities of racism against undocumented migrants, claiming that being an illegal immigrant in Malaysia is not a crime.

The documentary said the undocumented migrants were at risk during the coronavirus pandemic when more than 2,000 migrant workers were arrested during raids in locked down areas in Kuala Lumpur, the Malaysian capital.

After the broadcast of the Malaysian documentary, immigration issued a public announcement with Rayhan's photos and addresses, asking people to help arrest him. Rayhan also faced a barrage of hate speech on social media and had to go into hiding in fear of arrest and rights violation.

Meanwhile, police also called a number of Bangladeshis suspecting their links to Rayhan, which terrified them, some of them told this newspaper.

Rayhan's work permit has also oeen revoked.

"I did not lie. I only spoke about he discrimination against migrants. I did not commit a crime. I want the dignity of migrants and my country ensured. I believe all migrants and Bangladesh will stand with me," Rayhan told The Daily Star in a

petween Nato allies Relations Ankara and Athens have been uneasy in recent months but tensions increased over Hagia Sophia and energy riches in the eastern Mediterranean.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan joined thousands for the first Islamic prayer on Friday since Hagia Sophia was reconverted from a museum into a mosque this month.

Greek prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis on Friday said what was happening in Istanbul was "not a show of force, but proof of weakness".

The reaction to Hagia Sophia opening for Muslim worship "once again revealed Greece's hostility towards Islam and Turkey," Turkish foreign ministry spokesman Hami Aksoy said.

that the accused, in association with another accused, produced fake N95 masks and supplied those to the isolation unit of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

remanded to gather information about others responsible for such offences, the IO added.

submitted a petition, seeking bail and cancellation of the remand prayer on grounds that their client was innocent.

magistrate rejected the bail petition and granted her remand.

Ahmed filed the case against Sharmin Jahan, a member of Awami League's Central Sub-Committee on Women and Children, with Shahbagh Police Station on Thursday night.

So, the accused needs to be

On the other hand, defence

After hearing both the sides, the

BSMMU Proctor Prof Syed Mozaffar

month. For a control group of nonslum households, this figure was 87.4 percent, showing the slum residents get sicker. More than half of the slum

when an old man died all of a sudden in the slum three weeks back, he was research. not tested for Covid-19.

A couple of months have gone by "People said he died of old age, so since then, has the situation really there was no need for any test," said the changed?

Covid-19 sample collection now below 10,000

FROM PAGE 1

said 10,446 samples were tested in 80 Covid-19 labs across the country during the 24-hour period.

Of them, 2,520 tested positive for Covid-19 with an infection rate of 24.12 percent.

With this, the total number of confirmed novel coronavirus cases in the country rose to 221,178 -- around 20.08 percent of all samples tested.

As many as 1101,480 samples have been tested for Covid-19 in the country since January 21.

The DGHS official said 38 people have died from Covid-19 in the country in 24 hours till 8:30am vesterday. With the latest deaths, the Covid-19 2,874 -- around 1.30 percent of all confirmed cases. The total infection rate now stands at 20.08 percent, according to DGHS.

Meanwhile, 1,114 Covid-19 patients have recovered during the same 24hour period, taking the total number of recoveries to 122,090 -- around 55.20 percent of all confirmed cases.

Among the dead yesterday were 29 males and nine females. Thirty-four of them died at hospitals, three at home and one was brought dead to a hospital. Dr Nasima said three of the deceased

were aged between 31 and 40 years, six between 41 and 50, seven between 51 and 60, eight between 61 and 70,

death toll in the country went up to nine between 71 and 80, four between 81 and 90 and another was above 100

> division, four each Chattogram and Khulna divisions, one each from Sylhet and Rangpur, three from Mymensingh and eight were from Rajshahi division. In the same 24 hours, a total of 649 people with Covid-19-like symptoms

> As many as 4,302 novel coronavirus patients were undergoing treatment in general beds of the hospitals and 283

> There are 10,880 general beds and 533 ICU beds in the Covid-19 hospitals across the country

'Crossfire deaths'

Rab claimed they recovered three firearms and 13 rounds of bullets from the spot

In Kushtia, a person charged with narcotics cases died in a "crossfire" that took place in an empty brick-field in Daulatpur upazila.

He was accused in six cases -- four for drug trading, one for arms smuggling and one related to a clash over drug smuggling, said Officer-in-charge of Daulatpur Police Station SM Arifur Rahman.

He said Kudrat was a listed drug dealer and was involved in drug smugglings at various points of Daulatpur border for almost two decades.

Police arrested him twice earlier but he walked out of jail on bail, the OC said.

Around 2:00am yesterday, police received a tip-off that two groups of drug traders have gathered in Center More area of Dangmarka village, and raided the spot. But sensing their presence, the drug dealers opened fire at police, the OC said.

Police also fired back, triggering a "gunfight", he said.

After the criminals fled the scene, police found Kudrat's body there, he added.

Police also recovered a foreign made pistol, three bullets, one magazine, a sharp weapon and 43 bottles of Phensidyl from the spot.

Superintendent of Police in Kushtia SM Tanvir Arafath PPM (Bar) said police have zero tolerance against drugs.

"Operations would continue in the border areas of the district where drug Dhaka, Cox's Bazar and Feni.

smuggling is going on", he said, "and no drug dealer will be spared." Meanwhile in Teknaf, two Rohingya

refugees were killed in a "crossfire" with Border Guard Bangladesh in Hnila union of Teknaf upazila around 11:00pm on Friday.

The deceased -- Md Ferdous, 30, and Md Abdus Salam. 35 -- were residents of Block-H of Balukhali Rohingya Camp in Ukhia upazila.

A BGB patrol team took position in Mochoni Lobon Math area on receiving information that a large consignment of yaba will enter Bangladesh from Myanmar through the Naaf river, said Lt Col of BGB-2 Battalion in Teknaf Mohammad Faisal Hasan Khan.

Soon, they saw two or three persons swimming ashore and they were asked to surrender.

The drug peddlers opened fire at them and the "gunfight" ensued when BGB men retaliated in self-defence, the official said.

At one stage, the drug traders fled the scene leaving behind bullet-hit Ferdous and Abdus Salam.

The duo were rushed to Teknaf Upazila Health Complex and then to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital where doctors declared them dead, the BGB official said.

Police claimed to have recovered 2.1 lakh pieces of yaba from the spot.

A total of 17 alleged yaba smugglers, including 12 Rohingyas, were killed in "gunfights" with law enforcers in Cox's Bazar since July 1.

On Friday, five more alleged drug peddlers were killed in "crossfires" in

In the name of the father and freedom

FROM PAGE 1

He says he cannot look at the eves of his mother and sister anymore. It has been a long since they shared a laugh in their house

'IMAGINE THE REST'

Kajol, also the editor of Daily Pokkhokal, went missing on the evening of March 10 after leaving his office in Hatirpool. Several days after his disappearance, his mobile phone was found active in Benapole, Sub-Inspector Munshi Abdul Lokman, investigation officer of his disappearance case, told The Daily Star earlier.

Soon after being found, he was arrested by Benapole police -- initially on charges of trespassing, and then later in the evening under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure -and sent to Central Jashore Prison to await trial.

Later, he was made accused in three cases filed under the Digital Security Act, a controversial law that journalists and activists say curbs freedom of press and human rights. In total, five cases have been filed against him.

Asked about the cases, Mir Modasser Hossain, deputy commissioner of the serious crime unit of DB, told a reporter of this paper yesterday that there was no progress yet to disclose.

Nur Khan Liton, adviser of Human Rights Support Society, said, "This is very unfortunate. During this pandemic, a journalist was abducted and despite calls from all quarters for his rescue,

there were no visible efforts from law enforcers

"Later he was shown rescued near the India-Bangladesh border, which looked staged."

Whatever it was, Kajol could have been released on bail but now the question arises whether an innocent person is being framed, he added.

The rights activist observed that whenever someone powerful files a case against a journalist, there comes a possibility of such "drama" because of over-enthusiasm of law enforcers.

Polok says he understands the cases against his father are politically driven. "After my father disappeared under questionable circumstances, the authorities did not produce a single statement. Now you can imagine the rest.

He said he needed to take the court's help to even be able to file a missing person's case.

Talking to The Daily Star vesterday, he said it was heartbreaking to see his father in handcuffs, sent to jail, and denied bail. "He has done journalism most of his life and now he is in prison." He, along with his mother and sister, went to see Kajol in Keraniganj jail recently but could not meet him. The last time he could see his father

was in Jashore in mid-May. "I do not know what my father has been going through," he said. Cultural activist Amal Akash, who

took part in protests to free Kajol, said,

years old.

Of the dead, 17 were from Dhaka were put under isolation.

were in ICU beds.

"When the government doesn't have faith in the people, it fears freedom of expression. It tries to suppress protesting voices. But is it hundred percent possible? History doesn't say so.

The state doesn't know that if the Kajols are jailed, their sons will speak up, said Akash, a singer and performance artist.

'Now our duty is to overcome fear and let all know that not only Polok, today most of the children of this country are Kajol's sons. The youth have shown courage at every point of history. If they stand by Polok, the equation is

bound to change. Polok says he is really thankful and grateful to everyone as he is still able to do this campaign to free his father. "I have only one demand -- that is my father's freedom and nothing else. This campaign ends when he returns home." He thinks the strength of this campaign, unlike any other protest, is this one is intimate and "you really get a picture of what oppression does to a family".

"I am trying to do so much for my father, yet nothing seems to be enough," he also said. "When he returns, at least he will be able to comfort himself by seeing this protest.'

Polok wants to go by the rules always also when it comes to the protest against his father's detention. "Every day, I am one step closer to my father's freedom," he said

"I am heartbroken but hopeful."

WhatsApp message shortly before his arrest on Friday.

Meanwhile, rights activists have demanded Rayhan's release.

Expressing deep concern over the arrest of Rayhan Kabir, 21 civil society organisations, including Refugee and Migratory Brac, Research Movements Unit, Manusher Jonno Foundation, and Ain O Salish Kendra, in a joint statement demanded the immediate release and protection of Rayhan Kabir in Malaysia.

"We demand his immediate release and protection," read the joint statement, adding that Rayhan did not commit any crime.

"The evidence shown in the documentary on Malaysia's crackdown on immigrants is reprehensible and deeply troubling. There have been similar allegations in the past against Malaysian law enforcement agencies," it said.

They requested the Bangladesh high commission in Malaysia, foreign and expatriates' welfare ministry and the international organisations concerned to take necessary action to protect Rayhan's rights.

While Malaysian officials and national television criticised the report, claiming it was inaccurate, misleading and unfair, Al Jazeera Media Network has strongly rejected allegations made by Malaysian authorities over the documentary.

Malaysian police announced an nvestigation of Al Jazeera staffers over potential sedition, defamation and violation of the country's Communications and Multimedia Act.

In a statement, Al Jazeera said it stands by "the professionalism, quality and impartiality of its journalism", and warned of "serious concerns about developments that have occurred in Malaysia since the broadcast of the documentary".

Govt alone

FROM PAGE 1

A professor at the surgery department of Dhaka Medical College, Khurshid was made DGHS director general on Thursday following the resignation of Dr Abul Kalam Azad.