

'Rab trying to frame' trader

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"A few minutes later, the Rab members came back and said Nasir was arrested as his partner Mizan lodged a complaint against him with Rab. They then took my brother to his house."

He added, "My brother's residence was locked from outside as his wife had gone out for shopping. On hearing the news, she rushed to the spot."

At the press conference the day after the arrest of Nasir, his wife Sharmin said, "The Rab members entered our house and sent me to another room during the search."

"With the Rab team, a young man in civil dress and carrying a bag entered our house. We had nothing in the room but Rab said they found the arms under our bed."

"It's a drama to frame my husband so that Mizan can take over my husband's fish farming project. The young man placed the bag under the bed."

Nazim added, "Mizan is a land grabber and because of his suspicious behaviour, my brother had become alert while doing business with him."

Mizan told this newspaper yesterday, "It's true that he was my business partner earlier. He had leased out the fish project from me but resorted to fraudulence."

"As I tried to take over the project after the leasing period ended, he threatened me with his goons and that's why I filed complaints with Rab and Anwara police. Nasir is a Jamaat man and the allegation brought against me is false and baseless."

But Md Emon, Anwara upazila Shwechhasebak League's joint secretary, said, "Nasir is a good man. We do business at the same building,

Imam Shopping Centre, but never found him involved in criminal activities."

"I also went to the arbitration as the president of local union Awami League told me to represent him."

Talking to The Daily Star, Additional SP Sohel Mahmud of Rab-7, who conducted the raid, said, "Nasir is a criminal and his business partner Mizan has lodged a complaint against him, saying Nasir threatened to drive him out of the fish farming project."

"When we arrived at Nasir's residence, it was locked from outside. We called two shopkeepers of the market and the owner of the building as the witnesses. The owner managed to get a key to the house by calling one of Nasir's relatives. Within minutes of opening the door, his wife arrived."

Sohel also said, "We found the arms and sharp weapons under the box bed of his bedroom. It is quite impossible for outsiders to lift the box bed and put arms under it."

The official added Nasir was accused in a case filed with Anwara Police Station in 2013 and "he has long been involved in criminal activities and using the weapons."

Nasir's family members said the 2013 case was filed by a neighbour over a land dispute.

Contacted, Anwara Police Station's Officer-in-Charge (OC) Dulal Mahmud told The Daily Star, "Rab handed over a man with a firearm and sharp weapons to the police station. Now we will investigate the case."

Rab has filed an arms case over the recovery of the weapons.

Nazim said his brother is innocent and the family will go to court to set his brother free and demand justice.



PHOTO: ARMAN HOSSAIN

Ignoring road safety guidelines, a man try to cross the Mirpur Road through a blocked central reservation. A footbridge was there within 100 meters. The photo was taken near Shishu Mela intersection yesterday.

Rayhan returns, head held high

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that led to his homecoming.

On July 3, Al Jazeera published an investigative documentary titled "Locked Up in Malaysia's Lockdown". In the documentary, along with citizens of many other countries, Rayhan gave an interview, which angered the Malaysian authorities.

A warrant was issued against Rayhan Kabir. He was arrested by Malaysian police on the evening of July 24. After 14 days of interrogation, police produced him in court on August 6 and it granted a 13-day remand which ended on August 19. Police said there were no charges against him. Immigration police then decided to send him back to Bangladesh.

Rayhan was informed on Friday morning that he would be sent to Dhaka on a night flight. Then the preparations for return home began. First the lawyers and then the High Commission officials came.

Immigration officials took him to Kuala Lumpur International Airport at 9pm. After completing all procedures, he waited for the flight at around 10:30 pm.

A DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE AT KL AIRPORT

Rayhan had a strange experience while waiting for his flight at the airport in Kuala Lumpur.

"I had been wearing the same shirt for 30 days after my arrest. The shirt was torn in many places, in awful condition and dirty. I was wearing a face mask. No one recognised me. When I took the mask off for a brief period, someone recognised me and shouted, 'Rayhan Kabir!'"

"At that time, around 150 people standing in line for the plane started crowding around me. They started taking pictures with me and said 'you have spoken truth that we can't say'. I cannot describe this love shown to me. All the troubles I had endured for a month were gone," he recounted.

LANDING IN DHAKA

Rayhan landed in Dhaka on a Malaysia Airlines flight MH-196 at 1am on Saturday (August 22). Expatriates also greeted him at Dhaka Airport. Police officers at the airport also took pictures with him, including the officer who completed his immigration process.

His father Shah Alam broke down in

tears after seeing his beloved son at the airport. Their reunion touched everyone around them.

At the airport, Rayhan's father told The Daily Star, "We were eagerly waiting for our son to come to us. He's here now. We have the Eid moon in our hands!"

His mother had sent food in a tiffin carrier. Rayhan was ecstatic to find rice, hilsa and shrimp as soon as he opened the box. After a quick meal, Rayhan started his journey to Narayanganj, where his mother was eagerly waiting.

ON THE WAY TO NARAYANGANJ

From Dhaka airport to Narayanganj's Bandar upazila where Rayhan's family lives -- he was looking at everything on both sides of the road with fascinated eyes. As if he wanted to absorb everything about this country, his motherland. In the meantime, he answered some questions.

What was his reaction to the Al Jazeera interview? Rayhan replied, "I gave a very simple interview. I only expressed my views, spoke about what I saw in Malaysia during the pandemic. But Malaysians did not like it. Police have repeatedly asked me why I said what I said."

Why did he say that? Rayhan said, "I was in Malaysia for about six years. I often saw drives against migrant workers. They would be handcuffed, chained and humiliated. Often, this was done to Bangladeshis. This is not how citizens of other countries are treated. You won't find Europeans, Americans and Chinese being tied up. This is how Bangladeshis are treated. It deeply hurt me. I said the same to Malaysian police."

"I didn't think Malaysians would be outraged by this," Rayhan said. "And I didn't want to hurt anyone. But a summons was issued against me. Then my work permit was revoked. I was arrested on July 24 and interrogated for 27 days."

What did they ask him for 27 days? Rayhan's answer: "Mostly they asked, whether I have any involvement with the Malaysian opposition party. Sometimes they woke me up late at night. Some days, from 7am to 7pm, I was interrogated. Repeatedly, they asked if anyone paid me to say what I said in the documentary. They asked me to apologise and say I'm wrong. I said, I cannot lie."

How was their attitude? Rayhan said,

"They had treated me incredibly well, except for the first day. There were 14 detainees where I was. They provided good food for all. I urged them to not stop this kind behaviour when I leave. When I was leaving on Friday, they said, 'Rayhan, you didn't lie'. They praised me in front of the people of the High Commission."

Was he aware what was happening outside the prison? "I didn't know what was happening in Malaysia or Bangladesh when I was in prison. I could only listen to the radio. I heard some statements from different countries about me. I heard news on CNN and BBC. But I could not hear any news from Bangladesh," he said.

What did he miss most about Bangladesh while in jail? "I missed everything about my country. I wondered when I would return to my beloved country," he said.

During conversation, a bus was coming from the opposite direction while crossing the Signboard area of Narayanganj. Rayhan shouted, "Oh my God! As someone who drives, there needs to be discipline!"

However, he was fascinated by the new bridge in Kancharpur. "What a beautiful bridge!" he said.

When the lawyer went to see him, he asked for some books on Bangabandhu, especially the unfinished autobiography. Why did he ask for those books? Rayhan responded, "If anyone stays in jail day after day, he will become mentally weak. I too felt like that at times. Then I thought, Bangabandhu had been in jail for 14 years for the country and for the people. If I can read books on him, I will get inspiration and mental strength."

Does he have a message for people of the country? "I have forgotten all the hardship because of the people of Bangladesh, millions of expatriates, journalists, the government -- everyone who stood with me. I am grateful to everyone," he said.

What is his future plan? "My demands are very few. I can do something based on my qualifications. But I want to work for migrants. These people are oppressed in various ways that are not always highlighted. But first, I want to take rest for a few days," the young man said.

The writer is a freelance journalist.

Import of 20 products drop

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Customs House and National Board of Revenue (NBR), the total import volume of these 20 items came down to 2.09 crore tonnes totaling Tk 32,544 crore in 2019-20 from 2.89 crore tonnes totaling Tk 49,630 crore in 2018-19.

Speaking on the issue, Mahbubul Alam, president of Chattogram Chamber of Commerce and Industry, told The Daily Star, "Most factories in the country remained closed for months due to the pandemic. Even though many of those reopened, their production went down. Due to such reasons, import of raw materials by the industry has reduced."

He also said, "Import volume of others products has declined due to price hike in the international market and hike in dollar rates."

According to the customs and NBR data, around 39 lakh tonnes of high-speed diesel were imported in the last fiscal year while the figure was 29 lakh tonnes in the previous year.

Import of petroleum oil came down to two lakh tonnes from 13.56 lakh tonnes while import of crude oil fell

to 6.87 lakh tonnes from 11.12 lakh tonnes.

Similarly, around 13,044 recondition cars were imported in 2018-19, but last fiscal year the number was only 5,223. A total of 95,123 motorcycles were imported last year compared to 34,1234 in 2018-19.

Also, businesses brought in 141 lakh (14.1 million) tonnes of cement clinker in the last fiscal year, down from 165 lakh tonnes a year ago.

Import of scrap vessel decreased to 15 lakh tonnes compared to 34 lakh tonnes the previous year, finished ceramic products to 82 thousand tonnes from 1.35 lakh tonnes.

Customs officials said import of some items dropped due to the pandemic. Besides, prices of alternative or similar products rose in the international market, resulting in the decline in imports.

Customs data shows drop in the import of the 20 products caused the authorities a loss of Tk 5,554 crore in revenue compared to 2018-19 when they earned Tk 13,950 crore. In 2019-20, the amount was Tk 8,396.

Pandemic may be over

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country starting today to try and control a growing outbreak, with 332 new cases reported in the past 24 hours -- the highest daily figure since early March. The latest deaths took the country's tally to 309 with 17,002 cases.

The expanded measures include restrictions on gatherings and activities including professional sports, which will be played behind closed doors again, while beaches nationwide will close.

But WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus sought to draw favourable comparisons with the notorious flu pandemic of 1918.

"We have a disadvantage of globalisation, closeness, connectedness, but an advantage of better technology, so we hope to finish this pandemic before less than two years," he told reporters on Friday.

By "utilising the available tools to the maximum and hoping that we can have additional tools like vaccines, I think we can finish it in a shorter time than the 1918 flu", he said.

The WHO also recommended children over 12 years old now use masks in the same situations as adults as the use of face coverings increases to stop the virus spread.

With no usable vaccine yet available, the most prominent tool governments have at their disposal is to confine their populations or enforce social distancing.

In total, since the new coronavirus emerged in China late last year, 800,004 fatalities have been recorded globally, out of 23,003,079 declared infections.

Latin America and the Caribbean is the region the most affected with 254,897 deaths. More than half of global fatalities have been reported in four countries: the United States with 175,416, Brazil with 113,358, Mexico 59,610 and India 55,794.

The number of deaths has doubled since June 6, and 100,000 have been recorded in the last 17 days alone.

The Americas have borne the brunt of the virus in health terms, accounting for more than half of the

world's fatalities. Still, new daily cases of the coronavirus have been dropping sharply in the United States for weeks -- but experts are unsure if Americans will have the discipline to bring the epidemic under control.

After exceeding 70,000 confirmed infections per day in July, the country recorded around 43,000 cases on Friday.

Further south, Latin American countries were counting the wider costs of the pandemic -- the region not only suffering the most deaths, but also an expansion of criminal activity and rising poverty.

But the WHO said the coronavirus pandemic appeared to be stabilising in Brazil -- one of the world's worst hit countries -- and any reversal of its rampant spread in the vast country would be "a success for the world".

India reported a record daily jump of coronavirus infections yesterday, bringing the total near 3 million and piling pressure on authorities to curb huge gatherings as a major religious festival began.

The 69,878 new infections - the fourth straight day above 60,000 - take India's total cases to 2.98 million.

In Thailand, authorities plan to extend its state of emergency till the end of September to stave off a potential second wave of coronavirus infections, despite not recording any local transmission for close to three months. Thailand so far has detected 3,390 infections, including an additional imported case reported on Friday. New outbreaks in erstwhile regional front runners like Vietnam and New Zealand have put Thai officials on their guard.

Meanwhile, the Nepal government yesterday decided to resume international flights from September 1. Earlier, the country had planned to resume the services from August 17, but it was extended till August 31 amid the resurgence of coronavirus cases.

The country has reported 30,483 COVID-19 cases so far, while 137 people have lost their lives and 18,214 have been recovered.

Sultan of swindle

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borrower of the leasing company on June 15, 2016.

Four days later, about Tk 9.4 crore was transferred to Hal International's account at Bank Asia's Dhanmondi branch. Two days later, the money landed on PK Halder's personal account.

Another Tk 11.4 crore was used to reconcile loan of Deya Shipping Limited that borrowed from Reliance Finance.

Managing Director of Reptile Farm Rajib Som received Tk 10 lakh.

Analysing a bank account history of Anan Chemicals with Shahjalal Islami Bank, investigators found that about Tk 15 crore was transferred from ILFS on November 15, 2015.

The money was later transferred to Borno Neutral and Arbi Enterprises' accounts with Shahjalal Islami Bank and misappropriated.

Another Tk 7 crore was transferred to the bank on November 17, 2015 from ILFS. The money was also transferred to Sukhada Ltd, another client of Shahjalal Islami Bank.

The money was eventually transferred to accounts associated with PK Halder. Amitav and Uzzal then used the money to buy shares of PLFS and they became its director and chairman respectively.

They borrowed more money from ILFS using fake borrowing identities, source said, adding that in the same way they then borrowed loan from People's Leasing and ran the company to the ground.

Documents show that PK Halder transferred Tk 104 crore to his friend and Mercantile Bank Director AKM Shaheed Reza's five organisations.

Another Tk 74 crore was transferred to the owner of JK Trade International and former managing director of Bank Asia Irfan Ahmed Khan from seven accounts of businesses that exist on papers only.

To misappropriate the loans, PK Halder used 14 name-only business organisations. He used two addresses

for these organisations. One of the addresses is 56, Purana Paltan Lane.

"He misappropriated money by giving loans to only paper-based organisations through fraudulence, irregularities and graft. To dodge investigators, he then transferred the money to different accounts from where the money flowed to him," an official said.

At a board meeting of International Leasing on January 30, 2017, about Tk 60 crore was sanctioned to MTB Marine Ltd.

"But the money did not reach MTB Marine's account."

About Tk 5.5 crore was transferred to the accounts of Padma Weaving Ltd, Padma Bleaching and Dyeing Limited and Fashion Plus Ltd. The companies are owned by AKM Shaheed Reza, director of Mercantile Bank.

About Tk 26.65 crore working capital loan was sanctioned to Konika Enterprise but the money was not also transferred rather it went to different accounts.

On March 8, 2016 about Tk 11.5 was transferred through three cheques to Total Transportation Ltd's account at Standard Chartered Bank.

Through three cheques another Tk 6.7 crore were transferred to Sandip Corporation's Bank Asia account on March 10 and March 15 of 2016. Swapna Kumar Mistri was the owner of Sandip Corporation.

On February 8, 2016 about Tk 1.65 crore landed at one Sadab Hossain's account at Meghna Bank.

About Tk 3.3 crore was transferred to Mercantile Bank's client Denim Processing Plant Ltd on March 8, 2016.

Another Tk 2 crore was transferred to the bank accounts of Hal International and Moon Enterprise at Dhanmondi Branch of Bank Asia on September 21, 2016.

Reza's Padma Weaving also received a chunk of the loan. About Tk 1.5 crore was transferred to Padma Weaving's account on November 2, 2016.

One Milon Kumar applied for loan

Daily deaths rise again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The daily death toll from Covid-19 rose again yesterday.

In the past 24 hours till 8:30am yesterday, 46 people died due to coronavirus, according to the health directorate.

This is the second highest number of daily deaths in August. The highest number of deaths was 50 on August 4.

In the previous day, the number of deaths was 39.

The total number of deaths due to this highly infectious virus rose to 3,907 -- 1.34 percent of all confirmed cases.

As 2,265 people tested positive for the virus in the same 24 hours yesterday, the total number of confirmed cases rose to 292,625.

The positivity rate was slightly less than 20 percent. The overall positivity rate was more than 20 percent.

Yesterday, 2,952 new patients recovered from their illness. With this, 60 percent of all infected people recovered from their illness.

According to reference website worldometers.info, Bangladesh is now the sixth highest number of actives cases (113,151).

Besides, in terms of total confirmed cases, Bangladesh is currently on the 16th position in the list of the worst affected countries in the world.

The position is one step behind Pakistan and one step ahead of Italy.

Of the yesterday's deceased, one died in home and 45 died in hospitals.

Ten of them were females and 36 were males.

One of them aged between 31 and 40, six between 41 and 50, six between 51 and 60 and 33 over 60.

Nearly half of the dead were aged over 60 years, according to the press release of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

One each of the dead yesterday was from Rangpur and Khulna divisions, two each were from Barishal and Sylhet while five from Chattogram, eight from Rajshahi and the highest 27 were from Dhaka division.

So far, the highest number of deaths -- nearly half -- due to Covid-19 were from Dhaka division.

In the same 24 hours, 550 people were put in isolation, according to the press release.

3 undocumented Bangladeshis held in Malaysia

THE STAR, Alor Setar

Three Bangladeshis men, allegedly with no travel documents, and a female private taxi driver were arrested at a roadblock in Jalan Napoh, Changlun, near Jitra in Malaysia.

Kubang Pasu OCPD (officer-in-charge of police district) Mohd Ismail Ibrahim said police stopped the vehicle driven by the 33-year-old woman with the three men, aged between 30 and 36, at 5:10pm on Thursday.

"According to preliminary investigations, they were heading to Kateri, Perlis, from Sentul in Kuala Lumpur. The woman claimed she was asked by an acquaintance, a Bangladeshi man, to drive the three men to the location for a fee of RM450 per person," the OCPD said in a statement.

He added that the woman left Sentul with her passengers at 10:00am on Thursday.

He said the three men, who had been in the country for almost three years and had worked as labourers at construction sites and at furniture factories in Kuala Lumpur, had fake work permit cards and were going to Perlis to look for new jobs.

The woman, who had no prior criminal record, was remanded for 28 days to facilitate the investigation under Section 26A of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants Act 2007.

"The three foreigners are on a 14-day remand for investigations under Section 6(1)(c) of the Immigration Act 1959/1963 for staying in the country without travel documents," the police official said.

8 killed

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The injured people took treatment at Bhaluka Upazila Health Complex.

Billal's niece Ritu Akter said Billal lived in Joydevpur area of Gazipur. He and his neighbour Hasna's family were going to see a healer in Billal's village home in Darirampur area of Trishal. They were travelling in a rented car.

Hasna's brother-in-law Jewel Mia said her husband, who lives in Malaysia, and her two-and-a-half-year-old daughter, who was not in the car, are the only ones alive.

Her nephew Abdus Samad urged the authorities to properly investigate the crash. If the people responsible for such crashes are not brought to book, lives will continue to be lost on the roads, he said.

In the other crash on Mymensingh-Kishoreganj road in Jashora area of Nandail, cattle traders Saidul Islam, 42, and Mustakim Hossain, 20, of Kishoreganj's Pakundia died when their truck rammed another truck parked on the road, said Monsur Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Nandail Police Station.

The driver driver managed to flee the scene, he added.