

BANGLADESH UPDATE

1,544
New cases in 24hrs

3,48,916
Total cases

4,939
Deaths

2,56,565
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

962,587
Deaths

31,061,962
Total cases

ATTACK ON UNO

Suspect Rabiul confesses before magistrate

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Rabiul Islam finally gave a confessional statement before a court yesterday, admitting that he was involved with the brutal hammer attack on Wahida Khanam, upazila nirbahi officer of Dinajpur's Ghoraghat Upazila, on September 3rd.

Rabiul, a former staffer of the Ghoraghat UNO office, was brought inside the court complex on a pickup van of the district's Detective Branch of police (DB) and produced before court around 10:00am yesterday, after the end of his 9-day remand.

The Senior Judicial Magistrate's court of Ismail Hossain recorded the confessional statement, said Imam Zafar, the investigation officer (IO) and officer-in-charge of Dinajpur DB.

Rabiul confessed to his crime under section 164 before the court, said the IO after emerging from the court building around 3:30pm.

He, however, refused to answer any further questions.

Later, the DB then dropped Rabiul back at Dinajpur jail.

On September 12, Rabiul was taken on a 6-day remand after Debdas Bhattacharyya, the DIG of Rangpur Range police, told journalists that Rabiul confessed to authorities

concerned about his involvement in the attack.

As his 6-day remand ended on September 17, the DB produced him before court to record his statement, but he did not give his statement during his 7-hour long stay at court.

He was then taken into a 3-day remand, which ended yesterday.

Rahidul Islam, eldest brother of Rabiul, who was present at court yesterday, said "It seemed my brother was tortured in remand. I noticed Rabiul was walking abnormally."

Sources said Rabiul carried out the hammer attack on the UNO out of anger from his joblessness.

However, higher authorities concerned have refused to talk about the issue.

Rab had earlier arrested three people after examining the CCTV footage from September 3rd attack and claimed that Asadul Haq, a district Jubo League leader, Nabirul Islam and Santu Biwas were also involved with the attack and had confessed.

After the claim, the case was given to Dinajpur DB, whose investigation revolved only around Rabiul.

The DB has so far recorded confessional statement of five witnesses in the case since September 13, said a court source.



Pedestrians and cyclists undertaking a precarious crossing over a section of a Bailey Bridge being repaired on the Tangail-Aricha regional highway in Tangail's Nagarpur upazila. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

Back to business

FROM PAGE 1

The Daily Star, it was revealed that the surrender of these 102 narcos and arrest of others actually did little to hinder the yaba trade -- with family members and agents continuing the smuggling on their behalf.

Sources say that narcotics smuggling in Teknaf gained fresh momentum recently, while the district police stopped discharging special duties like combatting drug business and confined themselves to routine tasks following the arrest of OC Pradeep over the killing of Major (ret'd) Sinha Md Rashed Khan.

Since July 31 till September 12, there was no significant drives against narcotics by the district police while Rab and BGB had big success in seizure of yaba pills.

Around 28 lakh yaba pills were seized by Rab and BGB in separate drives in 40 days since July 31 -- which is one of the highest recoveries in recent times.

This newspaper tried to get a version of the district police but no official was found available for comment.

Md Anwar Hossain, deputy inspector general of Chattogram Range of police, however, on September 13 said they were doing everything to maintain law and order in Cox's Bazar.

During his recent visit to the district, the DIG said he instructed police officials to perform duties in line with the law and remain vigilant.

Asked about district police doing only routine jobs since July 31, he said, "I have only instructed the officials to stay alert without hampering regular work."

BACK AGAIN

Mohammad Alam was arrested by Teknaf police over his involvement in yaba trade on December 14, 2018.

But he was shown arrested in the court on January 2, 2019, and two cases --- for arms and narcotics -- were

filed against him.

Sources claimed Alam was kept in the torture cell of OC Pradeep for 17 days and he was shown arrested after he paid the official a hefty amount.

Within a year, Alam managed to secure bail and went into hiding. But recently he has come back. A local source in Teknaf, who closely knows Alam's activity, confirmed this to this newspaper.

Some other narcotics dealers -- previously in hiding but recently seen moving around -- have been identified as Shah Alam, Md Yousuf, Sambanu, Md Siraj and Abdul Aziz.

Moja Alam, son of Abdul Gaffar of Jaliapara area of Teknaf, a narcotics dealer named in the home ministry list, has also been seen in different areas of the coastal district, sources claimed.

Contacted, Shah Alam, wanted in the police list, said his name was wrongly mentioned as a drug dealer. "I am not involved in any kind of illegal trade," he claimed.

This newspaper also tried to communicate with some other dealers but their mobile phones were either found switched off or they did not answer the calls.

RECOVERY 'ON THE RISE'

According to the database of BGB Battalion-2 of Teknaf, around 36.77 lakh yaba pills were recovered and 132 people were arrested by this border force unit in the first eight months of this year.

During this period, 13 people were killed in "gunfights" with the battalion.

Among these recoveries, the highest -- around 8.21 lakh pills -- was reported in March.

But the battalion, only in 40 days since July 31, recovered around 15 lakh yaba pills.

On August 24 alone, Rab-15 seized around 13 lakh pieces of yaba and arrested two Rohingyas from the Bay

in Cox's Bazar.

Sources claimed that one of the prime reasons of these huge recoveries is that the yaba smugglers are coming back after staying out of Teknaf for the last several months or a year.

"These smugglers are now back to their business and have started smuggling yaba again," a source, closely familiar with the smuggling route, told The Daily Star on August 20.

Lt Col Faisal Hasan Khan, commanding officer of BGB battalion-2 of Teknaf, however, said on September 12 that he did not think that the smuggling of yaba has increased.

"It looks almost similar to previous months," he said.

"We are always remaining alert and taking action against narcotics smuggling, adopting a zero tolerance policy," Lt Col Khan told The Daily Star.

He further said they were actually witnessing the use of Rohingya community members as yaba carriers, which is rising rapidly.

"As the Rohingyas are well aware of the routes of Myanmar, the smugglers are using them," he added.

Talking to this newspaper, local sources in Teknaf said the narcotics dealers do not actually bother if any yaba shipment is seized by law enforcers as they are smuggling the drug on credit.

The dealers only need to pay the money to their counterparts in Myanmar after the consignments reach their dens safely, said the sources.

They started to apply this technique last year and now it is very popular among them.

About payment, sources claimed, they use hundi operators to pay the money later.

How hills

FROM PAGE 1

Locals alleged that they patronise the activities in the ward and its adjacent areas.

Refuting the allegation, the councillor said, "In no way I am involved, rather I informed the DoE several times of taking legal actions."

"Hillock owners need plain land to sell or construct houses. They give the task to contractors to cut the hillocks. They ravage the hillocks at nights, sell the soil and even if they are fined, they pay the fine on their own. The hillock owners always stay clean," he said.

Emran Hossain, director of DoE in Sylhet, said though they have limited manpower, they remain vigilant on hillock cutting and are taking action whenever they find such incidents.

"In last one month, we conducted six drives against hillock cutting at different spots, including the Majumdar Tila, and fined those involved in the activities Tk 8.50 lakh," he said, adding that people should inform them if they notice any hillocks are being destroyed.

However, environmental activists claim that such drives and fines will not stop hillock cutting completely.

Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) Sylhet chapter, said, "After hillock cutting, prices of the land increase four to five times higher than normal. Comparing to that, the amount of fine is nothing for these people."

"The will of the DoE is also questionable. It only takes actions when any specific hillock cutting surfaces. They conduct drive, fine some people, arrest labourers sometimes, but the hillock owners remain untouched," he said.

There must be a separate department like forest or haor or river to protect hills and hillocks of the country, Kim urges, saying, "The land department knows which land is classified as hillock in the legal documents."

"The owners who cut hillocks must be identified and punished legally -- that is the way the hillock cutting may be stopped."

Court orders

FROM PAGE 1

(IO) of the case made an appeal to seize the property found during investigation.

Following appeal of the case's IO Riaz Uddin, also ACC's assistant director, the court ordered to freeze movable and immovable property of Chumki, as mentioned in the FIR, until further notice, said ACC lawyer Advocate Kazi Sanawar Hossain Lavlu.

Apart from that, the court also rejected Pradeep's bail prayer placed before court by his lawyer, said ACC public prosecutor Mahmudul Haque.

The court also ordered jail authorities to take necessary steps as per the jail code after his lawyer pleaded for medical treatment and family visitations, he said.

IO Riaz told the Daily Star, "We appealed before court to seize the property after we came to learn that they were trying to hand over their money and property to others."

Lavlu said the property ordered to be confiscated were: a six-storey building owned by Chumki in city's Patharghata, a semi-pacca house, a piece of land in city's Muradpur, a flat in Cox's Bazar, a microbus, a private car and Tk 17.73 lakh in a Basic bank account.

According to the case statement, Chumki showed that her father had given her the six-storey building on August 1, 2013. She has two brothers who did not get any such mentionable property from her father, said the ACC.

Chumki, a housewife, submitted income tax return for the first time in 2013-14 fiscal year. Since then, she has been mentioning that business was her profession.

In her 2013-14 and 2014-15 income tax return, she declared her capital in a commission business as Tk11.2 lakh and income as Tk3.8 lakh.

But no existence of the commission business was found and she could not provide any license or bank statement in this regard.

Chumki also declared earning Tk 1.5 crore from a fish business from 2002 to 2013 and leasing five ponds in Boalkhali in 2002 at Tk 16.5 lakh for ten years.

The couple failed to show any document about the source of Tk 16.5 lakh invested in the fish business.

"It proves that Chumki, in a bid to conceal Pradeep's illegal money, showed a fake fish business. Her income of Tk 1.5 crore from the fish business is not acceptable," the FIR reads.

Analysing documents, the commission also found that Chumki had amassed Tk 4.22 crore immovable property and spent Tk 21.7 lakh as family expenditure.

Yemen rebel attack on Saudi village wounds 5

AFP, Riyadh

A projectile fired by Yemen's Huthi rebels hit a village in Saudi Arabia's southern Jizan province, wounding five civilians, state media reported.

The civilians had been rushed to hospital after suffering "minor injuries" from flying shrapnel, the official Saudi Press Agency reported late Saturday.

DGHS official, wife

FROM PAGE 1

On June 27 last year, the ACC filed two separate cases with ACC Integrated District Office-1 of Dhaka-1.

The first case was filed against Abzal and Rubina on charges of laundering Tk 264 crore worth of money.

The other case was filed against Abzal on charges of laundering Tk 20.74 crore.

Although Abzal was a fourth-grade government employee, his five houses, including one in Uttara, several plots, and a house abroad, were inconsistent with his legal income, said a letter issued by the health ministry on January 13 last year.

The health ministry suspended Abzal on charges of corruption on January 14.

On January 21, Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court ordered confiscation of all properties owned by Abzal and his wife, a stenographer of the Medical Education and Health Manpower Development Project under the DGHS, and the freezing of all their bank accounts.

On March 18, the ACC seized Abzal's five-storey building, Tamanna Villa, located on road 11 in Uttara's sector-13.

SAMRAT CASE

Meanwhile, the ACC has found evidence against expelled Jubo League leader Ismail Chowdhury Samrat, one of the "casino kingpins" in Dhaka, of siphoning off over Tk 200 crore to Singapore and Malaysia, sources said.

He spent most of the money while gambling at casinos, source said.

Source said that between 2011 and 2019, Samrat laundered 3.65 crore Singaporean dollars -- around Tk 226.30 crore. He also laundered another 2 lakh Malaysian ringgit -- around Tk 40 lakh.

On September 13, the the Criminal Investigation Department of police filed a case against Samrat for siphoning off Tk 195 crore to Singapore and Malaysia with the help of Enamul Haque Arman, another leader of the ruling party's youth wing.

In its investigation, the CID found that Samrat, 49, had visited Singapore 35 times, Malaysia thrice, Dubai twice, and Hong Kong once between 2011 to 2019, according to the case statement.

In those eight years, Samrat's associate Arman, 56, also visited Singapore 23 times.

In the FIR, the CID mentioned that Samrat earned money through various illegal activities in Motijheel, Fakirapool, Paltan, and Kakrail areas.

On October 6, 2019, Rapid Action Battalion arrested Samrat, who was the president of Dhaka South unit Jubo League, and Arman, former vice-president of the same unit, from Cumilla after raiding a house near the Indian border.

He came under the spotlight after Rab busted his illegal casino business at different sporting clubs in Dhaka. Following the incident, he was expelled from the Jubo League.

A battle brewing over Hefajat

FROM PAGE 1

Porwar, were seen at Shafi's namaz-e-ajanaza. Jamaat men were seen carrying Shafi's coffin during burial.

Pro-Hefajat Islamic intellectuals have already started campaigning on social media in favour of Hefajat and its 2013 anti-government movement.

Sources in the ruling Awami League and its electoral ally Jatiya Party said they are keeping a close watch on every development at Hathazari madrasa and also their political opponents' efforts to gain Hefajat's support.

Some AL leaders had maintained relations with Shafi after Hefajat changed its stance following its failed movement in 2013, they pointed out.

Shafi, who often drew controversy for opposing women's empowerment and education, passed away on Friday evening, a day after he resigned as the director general of Hathazari madrasa.

He was forced to quit the post he had held since 1986 following an unprecedented student unrest at the madrasa. The unrest was fuelled by Babunagari and several others who were not on good terms with Shafi since he leaned towards the AL after the failed 2013 movement, said Hefajat sources.

Shafi's son Anas Madani, who reportedly has good relations with the AL government, was also removed from the post of assistant director of the madrasa on Wednesday night.

Shafi, who was chairman of the Qawmi Madrasa Education Board, founded Hefajat during the tenure of the AL government in 2009, protesting a draft national women development policy that gives equal inheritance rights to women.

A year later, Hefajat demanded cancellation of a proposed national education policy, saying it has a secular curriculum for schools and colleges.

In 2013, the Islamist outfit emerged as a force, countering the Shahbagh movement, initiated by bloggers and online activists who demanded

death penalty for war criminal Abdul Quader Mollah.

As Hefajat activists turned increasingly violent and kept the capital's Motijheel occupied for nearly 12 hours after their rally there on May 5, 2013, law enforcers swung into action and drove them away.

Things changed in the following years, and Shafi and the AL government got closer. Earlier, Hefajat and its chief had leaned towards the BNP. A faction of the Hefajat, led by Babunagari, was totally against the Hefajat's "soft approach" towards the government, according to several Hefajat leaders.

SHAFI'S SUCCESSOR

Following Shafi's death, there have been a lot of speculations about who would be his successor.

Talking to journalists, Babunagari said, "As Hefajat's secretary general, I will convene a meeting of the organisation's council to elect the new supreme leader. The council will decide on this matter."

"Ahmad Shafi's death is an irreparable loss. But we will try to recover from it. As Shafi's soldiers, we will work following his footsteps," he added.

Asked about Shafi's son Anas Madani's allegation about his links to the student unrest, Babunagari said, "It was an orderly demonstration. I have no involvement in it. I learnt about the demonstration after it started on Wednesday."

INTERIM BODY

The Hathazari madrasa has announced an interim body to run the largest Qawmi madrasa in the country.

At a meeting yesterday, its Shura committee entrusted a group of three with the responsibility of running the madrasa for the next six months. The committee will monitor their activities and decide on the next course of action.

The three are madrasa teachers Maulana Sheikh Ahmed, Mufti Abdus Salam and Maulana Yahya.

'Winter is coming'

FROM PAGE 1

She joined the function through a videoconference from her official residence Gano Bhaban as the representatives of the organisations handed over cheques to PM's Principal Secretary Dr Ahmad Kaikaus at the Prime Minister's Office.

Of them, 34 commercial banks, led by Bangladesh Association of Bank (BAB), provided total Tk 164 crore as donation.

Sheikh Hasina said everyone has been working with utmost sincerity to fight Covid-19 pandemic in the country. "That's why we've been able to face it."

Bangladesh has so far recorded 347,372 cases with 4,913 fatalities. The first cases were reported on March 8 and the first death on March 18. So far, 254,386 patients have recovered, pushing the recovery rate to 73.23 percent.

Currently, there are 88,073 active cases in the country.

Globally, the coronavirus caseload reached 30,673,633 on Sunday, according to Johns Hopkins University (JHU) tally with 955,404 deaths.

Coronavirus cases were first reported in China in December last year. The World Health Organization declared it a pandemic in March.

There is currently no vaccine for coronavirus but a number of promising candidates are in the final stage of trial.

"Want banks to run properly" Talking about the banks, she hinted that the weak banks will be merged following proper assessments, if necessary.

"There are some banks that became very weak. In many cases, merging is essential. In that case, it'll have to be considered which bank is functioning properly or not. It'll be done considering these things. Keep trust [on government] that nothing will be done without consideration [assessment]," she said.

Sheikh Hasina said her government

had taken the decision to permit banks in the private sector and it gave the permission to the highest number of the private banks, which created huge employments and expanded trade and business.

She said her government had taken measures to make the people habituated to the banking system up to the rural level so that they can make transactions using the banking channels.

In this context, the prime minister mentioned that her government created scope for the farmers to open a bank account with Tk 10.

"So, we want that the banks to run properly ... We always consider all of your logical demands that you bring [before me]," she said.

Other organisations that made donations are Food Ministry, Foreign Officers Spouse Association (FOSA), Rajshahi Medical University, Institute of Architects Bangladesh, Bangladesh Judicial Employees Association and Minister Group.

Alongside the cash money, Minister Group provided 100,000 surgical masks.

The 34 banks are -- AB Bank Ltd, Al-Arafah Islami Bank Ltd, Bank Asia Ltd, BRAC Bank Ltd, City Bank Ltd, Dhaka Bank Ltd, Dutch-Bangla Bank Ltd, Eastern Bank Ltd, EXIM Bank, First Security Islami Bank Ltd, Islami Bank (Bd) Ltd, Jamuna Bank Ltd, Mercantile Bank Ltd, Midland Bank Ltd, Modhumoti Bank Ltd, Mutual Trust Bank Ltd, National Bank Ltd, NCC Bank Ltd, NRB Bank Ltd, NRB Commercial Bank Ltd, NRB Global Bank Ltd, One Bank Ltd, Padma Bank Ltd, Prime Bank Ltd, Pubali Bank Ltd, SBAC Bank Ltd, Shahjalal Islami Bank Ltd, Social Islami Bank Ltd, Southeast Bank Ltd, Standard Bank Ltd, Trust Bank Ltd, Union Bank Ltd, United Commercial Bank Ltd and Uttara Bank Ltd.

The prime minister thanked the organisations for their contributions to the PM's Relief and Welfare Fund.

SC keeps four

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her lawyer AM Mahub Uddin Khokon told The Daily Star.

Yesterday, a three-member bench of the Appellate Division of the SC headed by Justice Muhammad Imman Ali gave the orders after virtually hearing four separate leave to appeal petitions filed by the state seeking stay on the HC orders.

Additional Attorney General Momtaz Uddin Fakir appeared for the state while Mahub represented Khaleda during the virtual proceedings.

The HC will hold hearings on the rules for their disposals, Mahub said, adding that Khaleda is on bail in these cases.

He said Khaleda is accused in 37 cases and she is on bail in 35 and has been convicted in two.

The BNP chairperson was released from jail through an executive order issued by the government on March 25 this year.

Following four separate petitions filed by Khaleda, the HC on different days in 2017 stayed the trial proceedings against her in three separate vandalism and arson cases and a defamation case and also issued four rules asking the government to explain as to why the proceedings of the cases should not be scrapped.

The vandalism and arson cases were filed with Darus Salam Police Station and the defamation case was filed with a Dhaka court after Khaleda made a statement on the number of martyrs of the Liberation War.

The cases were filed during anti-government agitations by BNP-led alliance in 2015.

The defamation case was filed after Khaleda at a discussion on December 21, 2015, at the Institution of Engineers said, "There are controversies over how many were martyred in the Liberation War. There are also many books and documents on the controversies."