

Over a month later, probe report not turned in

The investigation was launched on August 17 over alleged misappropriation of Tk 8 lakh stipend money

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Investigation report has yet to be submitted after more than one month into the launching of an investigation over alleged misappropriation of Tk 8 lakh government stipend money for students of a madrasa in Rangabali upazila.

Guardians of seven students and the land donor of the secondary level educational institution -- Sajirhawla Akbaria Dakhil Madrasa, in Chhotobaishtia union -- made the complaint, in writing, with the upazila nirbahi officer's office on August 16.

In the complaint, they alleged that Maulana Sultanur Rahman, the superintendent; Maulana Abul Kalam, the managing committee chairman; and Kabir Uddin, an assistant teacher of Arabic, of the madrasa have been involved in the embezzlement since 2017.

On August 17, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mashfaque Rahman directed Anadi Kumar Bahadur,



Protesting unauthorised withdrawal of their stipend money from their accounts, a number of aggrieved students of Sajirhawla Akbaria Dakhil Madrasa, in Chhotobaishtia union of Rangabali upazila, gather at the playground of the institution.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

the guardians of stipend recipients into handing over their SIM cards, registered with bKash, to the accused.

Using the SIM cards, the accused have been withdrawing the stipend money from the bKash accounts since 2017. Till date, they withdrew more than Tk 8 lakh, out of which, about Tk 5 lakh is stipends for the first six months of this year.

When the guardians found out about the theft and put pressure on the three accused, the latter returned some of the stolen money on August 9 to a handful of locally influential guardians through the local union parishad chairman.

Monir Munshi, guardian of one of the victims, said after the accused returned his SIM card, he checked account transactions of the bKash account and found out that stipend money of Tk 6,360, disbursed for his daughter, was withdrawn from the account when the SIM card was with the accused.

Another guardian, Monir Khan, said before they returned his SIM card, stipend money of his son had also been stolen in a similar fashion.

Abu Hanif Madbar, a former chairman of the institution's

managing committee, said the madrasa superintendent, the present managing committee chairman and the Arabic teacher -- all are involved in various irregularities, including misappropriation of stipends given to students of the madrasa.

Contacted, Superintendent Maulana Sultanur Rahman however claimed that they had withdrawn stipend money from accounts of several students under special circumstances due to the Covid-19 and they were in the process of handing the money over to the respective recipients.

Managing committee chairman Maulana Abul Kalam said they were also examining the accusations and, so far, according to evidence, assistant Arabic teacher Kabir Uddin has taken possession of Tk 4 lakh of stipend money of the students.

Assistant Arabic teacher Kabir Uddin could not be reached for his comments as his cell phone was found switched off during repeated calls made by this correspondent.

UNO Mashfaque Rahman said they would take necessary legal action upon receipt of the investigation report.

JAMALPUR MURDER 2 to die, 7 get life term

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A court here yesterday sentenced two siblings to death and seven others to life term imprisonment in connection with a case for killing a rickshaw-puller in Islampur upazila in 2007.

The death sentence convicts, Bhuttu, then 30, and his elder brother Khalek, then 45, are sons of Budu, while the lifers are Samiul, then 30, Jahijal, then 30, Rashid, then 45, Md Kashi, then 50, Babul, then 25, Fulu Miah, then 30, and Bidyut, then 25. They all hail from Purbo Shashariabari village in Islampur upazila.

The court also fined the death row convicts Tk 50,000 and the lifers Tk 10,000 each.

According to the prosecution, Bhuttu and his friends had an altercation with their neighbour Russel over gambling in the area on December 26, 2007.

As a sequel, Bhuttu and his cohorts called Russel out of his house on the night of December 27, 2007, strangled him and dumped his body at a sugarcane field.

Civil surgeon warns of stern action

31 clinics and diagnostic centres in Nilphamari failed to apply for license renewal in time.

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The government is going to take stern action against the authorities of 31 private clinics and diagnostic centres in the district as they failed to apply online for their license renewal in time.

Amid the pandemic, the government took an attempt to regularise activities of private clinics and diagnostic centres by applying online for license renewal. Health directorate in a directive on August 9 asked all private clinics and diagnostic centers throughout the country to apply online for renewal of licenses by August 23 after gross irregularities were detected in this sector. The government is now struggling to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

Civil surgeon (CS) office in Nilphamari revealed that out of total 106 private clinics and diagnostic centres in the district, only 75 have applied for license renewal before the deadline while the rest ignored the directive.

Since the pandemic started in Bangladesh, private clinics and diagnostic centres unofficially stopped their regular services, causing immense sufferings to people.

In the challenging time, even some private hospitals in the capital and big

cities like Regent Hospital in Dhaka indulge in malpractice to make money taking opportunity of the unusual health situation.

Dr Mujiburul Islam Shahin, general secretary of the district unit private practitioner association, said a good number of private clinics and diagnostic centres in Nilphamari are now running illegally as there are no infrastructural facilities in the clinics and centres.

A written complaint was even lodged to CS a few months ago against a private clinic in Domar upazila bringing allegation that a ward boy in absence of a gynecologist conducted seizure operation on a pregnant woman, leading to her death, he added.

Vice President of Nilphamari unit of private clinics and diagnostic centres Golam Mostofa said the government's decision to apply for license renewal is a positive step to regularise health service in private sector.

Contacted, CS Alamgir Kabir said as per higher authority's directive, he was visiting private clinics and diagnostic centres to see their practical condition.

They are going to take stern action against the authorities of 31 private clinics and diagnostic centers in Nilphamari as they ignored the directive of health directorate, he said.



academic supervisor at secondary education office in the upazila, to investigate into the allegation.

Contacted, Anadi Kumar Bahadur said, he collected statements from aggrieved students and guardians on September 20, when he visited the madrasa, where 98 out of about 400 total students are enrolled under government stipend programmes.

As to when he would submit his report to the UNO, he said "soon".

Zakir Hossain, who donated land for the madrasa, in the written complaint said the government stipend money is disbursed to bKash -- a mobile financial service -- account of the guardian of each stipend recipient.

However, the accused individuals, conniving with each other, duped



Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA), Bagerhat unit, and Pashur River Waterkeeper jointly organised a human chain programme on the bank of Pashur river in Bagerhat's Mongla upazila yesterday marking the World River Day.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Democrats blast

FROM PAGE 12

youngest Supreme Court nominee since conservative Clarence Thomas was 43 in 1991.

During the event, Barret pledged to become a justice in the mold of the late staunch conservative Antonin Scalia.

Scalia, who died in 2016, was one of the most influential conservative justices in recent history. Barret previously served as a clerk for Scalia on the high court and described him as her mentor, citing his "incalculable influence" on her life.

"His judicial philosophy is mine too: a judge must apply the law as written. Judges are not policymakers," Barret said.

On the court, Scalia voted to curb abortion rights, dissented when the court legalized gay marriage and backed broad gun rights, among other positions.

Barret, a devout Roman Catholic who earned her law degree and taught at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, was appointed by Trump to the Chicago-based 7th US Circuit Court of Appeals in 2017 and is a favorite of religious conservatives, a key Trump voter bloc.

She also praised Ginsburg, saying the late justice was "a woman of enormous talent and consequence" and mentioned Ginsburg's long friendship with Scalia.

Biden noted that even as Trump's administration is seeking to strike down Obamacare in a case the Supreme Court is due to hear on Nov. 10, Barret has a "written track record" criticising a pivotal 2012 ruling authored by Chief Justice John Roberts preserving the law formally known as the Affordable Care Act.

Biden, seeking to defeat the Republican president on Nov 3, called on the Senate not to act on the court's vacancy caused by the death of Ginsburg until after the Nov. 3 election, allowing the winner to make the appointment.

"The United States Constitution was designed to give the voters one chance to have their voice heard on who serves on the court. That moment is now and their voice should be heard," Biden said.

Senate Republicans refused to consider President Barack Obama's 2016 Supreme Court nominee, saying the winner of that year's election should make the pick.

Democrats said Barret would vote to dismantle healthcare during a coronavirus pandemic that already has killed more than 200,000 Americans.

"This nomination threatens the destruction of life-saving protections for 135 million Americans with pre-existing conditions together with every other benefit and protection of the Affordable Care Act," House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi said.

Obamacare has helped millions of Americans obtain medical insurance.

Trump wants Barret confirmed before the election. Republicans hold a 53-47 Senate majority and have committed to moving quickly on confirmation. They cheered Trump's choice.

"President Trump could not have made a better decision," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said.

Senator Lindsey Graham, chairman of the Judiciary Committee that will conduct confirmation hearings, added, "We move forward on this nomination knowing that the president has picked a highly qualified individual who will serve our nation well on the highest court in the land."

Trump critics also have expressed concern that a hasty confirmation process so close to an election risks further eroding the court's reputation as independent.

But Christian conservative and anti-abortion activists, who praised the choice, urged senators to move quickly and warned Democrats not to attack Barret's religious faith.

Abortion rights groups said Barret's addition to the court could jeopardize the landmark 1973 ruling that made abortion legal nationwide.

Aid for war-torn

FROM PAGE 12

a democratic framework.

'BANGLADESH FULLY QUALIFIED FOR UN MEMBERSHIP'

Australian Foreign Minister Sir Nigel Bowen says today, "We believe that Bangladesh is fully qualified for membership of the United Nations."

Participating in the debate of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the Australian foreign minister says they remain hopeful that the Security Council, upon recommendation of the matter might recommend in favour of Bangladesh's application and that the assembly would as a result still be able to admit this new state as full members to the world body during its present session.

SOURCES: September 29, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.

4 of a family

FROM PAGE 12

sleeping in one room at the night heading westwards.

On information, Shahbaz Mithun Munni, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) of Parbatipur, Hafjur Rahman Pranik Upazila, chairman of Parbatipur upazila parishad, and high officials of Parbatipur police visited the spot.

UNO Shahnaz Mithun Munni said the villagers were arranging their burial at the village.

Remains

FROM PAGE 12

Pliosaurus reined the region, with their large skull, elongated face, short neck, menacing teeth on a hydrodynamic body and fin-like limbs.

Scientists found jaw, tooth and limb fragments of the creatures "ecologically similar" to killer whales at two sites in the Loa river basin near the mining city of Calama.

The find helps scientists fill gaps in evolution, said Rodrigo Otero, a University of Chile paleontologist who led the research.

The complete fossil, under excavation since 2017, is likely to measure six to seven metres (19.7 to 23 feet). The skull is around a metre (3.3 feet) long, with teeth each around eight to 10 centimetres (3.1 to 3.9 inches) long, Otero said.

The study was published in the Journal of South American Earth Sciences in early September.

Covid death

FROM PAGE 12

The overall positivity rate stood at 18.85 percent.

Bangladesh is currently ranked the 15th in the list of worst affected countries in the world in terms of the number of confirmed cases.

The position is one step ahead of Iraq and one step behind the United Kingdom, according to worldometers.info.

At least 1,714 Covid-19 patients have recovered in the same 24 hours, bringing the number of recoveries to 2,70,491. The overall recovery rate was 75.31 percent.

Of yesterday's 32 deceased, 22 were males and 10 were females. All of them died in hospitals, according to the release.

Two were aged between 31 and 40, six between 51 and 60, one was aged between 41 and 50, while the highest 23 were over 60 years old.

One was from Rajshahi division, two were from Sylhet, four from Khulna, and five from Chattogram, while the highest 20 were from Dhaka division.

Flood situation worsens in two northern

FROM PAGE 12

deteriorated yesterday as water level of the Dharla river further increased.

The river was flowing 26cm above the danger mark at Shimulbari point of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila and 28cm above the danger level at Dharla bridge point of Kurigram Sadar upazila yesterday morning.

Other rivers in the two districts were also showing rising trends due to incessant rain and the onrushing water from the upstream, said officials of Water Development Board.

Over 40,000 families of 120 villages have been affected by the flood. Most of them are residents of low-lying areas and shoals.

Many of them have left their homes and taken shelter on roads, embankments and at flood centres. Aman paddy and vegetables on about 12,000 hectares of land are now submerged by floodwater, according to local agriculture offices.

"The flood-hit people are facing a crisis of food and drinking water. We have to fetch water from far away travelling on boats," said Adu Mial, 65, of Shiberkuti village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

"We are having a food crisis. Children and elderly persons are the worst sufferers," said Nurmahar Begum, 30, of Shimulbari village in Phulbari upazila of Kurigram.

[Our correspondents in Lalmonirhat contributed to this report].

Ramna Park reopens after six months

FROM PAGE 12

writ petition with the HC seeking its directive on the secretary to the ministry of housing and public works to reopen the Ramna Park in Dhaka in 24 hours so that people can walk and move in the park.

During the hearing on September 17, the HC wanted to know why the authorities concerned are not reopening the park in Dhaka.

DAG Noor-Ul-Sadik on September 24 informed the HC that the government has closed the park for the safety and security of the people during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The authorities will reopen the park if the HC orders doing so, he said.

The HC bench on Thursday fixed yesterday to pass the order on the petition.

Citing the writ, Eunus Ali Akond earlier told The Daily Star that the Ramna Park has been launched since the Mughal regime of Emperor Jahangir for peoples' movement.

The government has closed the park in March this year in order to contain the spread of coronavirus.

Locals have not had the change to take walks or exercise and run in park as it is still closed, even though all offices and streets have already been reopened, he said.

Students go to HC for deferral

FROM PAGE 12

prayed to the HC to direct the authorities concerned of the government to formulate a guideline to run the English medium education in the country.

The HC may hold a hearing on the writ petition any day this week, the lawyer said.

Two UK boards -- Cambridge Assessment International Education and Pearson's Edexcel -- arrange O-and A-level exams internationally. British Council Bangladesh administers the exams in the country.

A-level exams under Cambridge are scheduled to start on October 1, and those under Pearson on October 5. Pearson's O-level exams are set to start on November 2 and Cambridge's on November 5.

The government on September 23 given approval to the British Council to administer the exams with some conditions.

Meanwhile, a group of candidates formed a human chain in front of Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education office in the capital.

Rawnak Chowdhury, an A-level candidate, said the government should cancel the approval of administering exams taking the coronavirus situation and safety of the students into consideration.

English medium students also sought Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's intervention for the cancellation of the upcoming O-and A-level exams.

Faiyaz Mashnoon, an A-level candidate, said that almost all students are tensed and they are not in a position to sit for a board exam.

Some students said that online education was insufficient to prepare for a board exam. They said have been continuing their protests on various online platforms.

The students formed a human chain in front of the National Press Club on September 20 and 22 to press home their demands.

They also held a press conference on September 23, reiterating their demands.

British Council Bangladesh in a statement on September 23 said in the upcoming October-November 2020 exams, UK exam boards would base results on students' performance in the exams alone and not on any non-exam assessment, except for art and design qualifications.

UK boards in May-June session decided not to stage exams due to the coronavirus pandemic. The results were prepared based on the predicted grades and previous academic records submitted by schoolteachers.

English-medium students can sit for these exams either through schools or as private candidates. Approximately 5,200 students in Bangladesh have registered for the upcoming October-November session of exams, according to the British Council.

Jaswant Singh

FROM PAGE 12

the Indian Army, Singh had a bitter falling out with his party in 2014 when he was denied a Lok Sabha ticket of his choice from Barmer in Rajasthan.

He contested the 2014 general election, which was his last as an independent, but lost.

Singh -- considered close to Vajpayee and veteran BJP leader LK Advani -- was twice expelled from the party; in 2009, the parliamentary board of the BJP expelled him after his book Jinnah - India, Partition, Independence was published.

He rejoined the party after 10 months, but faced a second expulsion in 2014 when he defied party orders and challenged the BJP's decision of not fielding him as a contestant from Barmer.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoned his death yesterday, tweeting that Singh served the nation diligently, first as a soldier and later during his long association with politics.

"...During Atal Ji's Government, he handled crucial portfolios and left a strong mark in the worlds of finance, defence and external affairs. Saddened by his demise," the PM wrote.

In separate tweets, he also said true to his nature, Jaswant Singh fought his illness with immense courage for the last six years.

"Deeply pained by the passing away of veteran BJP leader & former Minister, Shri Jaswant Singh ji. He served the nation in several capacities including the charge of Raksha Mantri. He distinguished himself as an effective Minister and Parliamentarian," Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh tweeted.

Singh -- a four-time member of the Lok Sabha and elected to the Rajya Sabha five times -- was the external affairs minister during the Kandahar hijacking case, and had escorted Mulana Masood Azhar and two other terrorists in lieu for the release of hostages on board Indian Airlines IC-814 that was hijacked on December 24, 1999.