

HC grants bail to mother of two children crying on court premises

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Following media reports on two children crying at a lower court premises in Dhaka for their detained parents, the High Court yesterday granted bail to their mother Washima Akhtar (41) for six months in a criminal case and asked authorities to release her immediately from jail custody.

It also issued a rule asking authorities of the state to explain in four weeks why Tofail Ahmed (41), father of the children, and Washima should not be granted bail.

The HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman came up with the order and rule on a suo moto (voluntary) move following reports on Channel 24 and Shomoy Television on December 22 on the plight of the children.

Supreme Court lawyers Moniruzzaman Asad, Mohammad Shishir Manir and Cumar Debul Dey placed the written version of the reports along with relevant documents before the HC bench for necessary order on this issue.

Shishir Manir told The Daily Star that Tofail Ahmed and his wife used to live

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Vendors have once again stationed their stalls and brought back the Santa hats, indoor decorations and confetti ahead of Christmas, and people are busy deciding which items to get for the big celebration. Usually, Christmas brings with it many programmes across the country, however, the pandemic will surely affect this year's festivities. This photo was taken on Tuesday from the capital's Holy Cross Road.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Open dorms before exams: DU students

UNB, Dhaka

A group of Dhaka University students yesterday demanded ensuring residential facilities for them before hosting exams for honour's final year and masters from December 26 amid the coronavirus pandemic.

They put forth six demands from a human chain held at the base of Raju Memorial Sculpture on the campus, including reopening dormitories; taking review classes of every course for those who couldn't join online classes; and ensuring transportation facilities for non-residential students.

They also urged authorities not to hold two semester final exams at the same time, and to give students enough time to prepare for exams.

Mehedi Hasan, a final-year student of Islamic studies, said, "Where are we going to stay in Dhaka if the dorms remain shut? We come from low- and middle-income families and can't afford to stay in hotels during exams."

"The risk of a second Covid-19 wave is looming. Many of us can't afford to pay the security deposit that most landlords demand," he said.

Atik Morshed, another student from international business department, termed the university's decision to hold exams without ensuring residential facilities "illogical". He said, "It's a matter of shame that our vice-chancellor says he doesn't know where students will stay. It's the university's responsibility to ensure residential facilities for its students."

The students threatened to intensify their protest if the university authorities fail to manage accommodation facilities.

Meanwhile, some leaders and activists of Bangladesh Sadharan Chhatra Odhikar Parishad held a separate protest at the base of Raju Memorial Sculpture to press home four demands, including reopening dorms maintaining health guidelines, ensuring security for examinees and setting up a separate Covid-19 unit at Dhaka University medical centre for students.

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal also gave a memorandum to Vice-Chancellor Prof Akhtaruzzaman with similar demands.

DUMMY EXPLOSIVE RECOVERED FROM US EMBASSY

Security guard staged it for reward: police

He was awarded in 2015 for recovering crude bomb

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The recovery of a bag with a dummy explosive from US embassy earlier this month was staged by a security guard of the embassy, police said yesterday.

Two youths supposedly threw a "black bag" at a security guard of the embassy following an altercation and ran away on December 2. Later, the bomb disposal unit of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of Dhaka Metropolitan police found a matchbox, a cup wrapped with black tape, some wire and a knife inside the bag.

Law enforcers yesterday said the whole incident was staged by security guard Zakir Hossain Mollah, who apparently did it for reward.

Seeking anonymity, an official of CTTC said the bag was kept there by Zakir himself.

"He wanted reward from the authorities," the official said, adding that earlier in 2015, Zakir had received 'Guard of the Year' award for recovering a crude bomb from the premises during the political unrest going on at the time.

Zakir was sent to jail yesterday after police produced him before a court showing him arrested under section 54.

According to police, law enforcers were looking at the footage of closed-circuit cameras installed at the embassy where they saw a security guard opening the window of the guard's room, removing the curtain and throwing the bag.

Zakir was on duty at the station at that time.

Later, during interrogation, Zakir, who has been working at the US embassy for 17 years as an employee of a security agency, admitted his involvement.

Prioritise hiring consultants with local expertise

Says JS body on railways ministry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday recommended discouraging foreign companies or individuals to be hired as consultants for various rail projects, and encouraging selection of qualified companies or individuals with domestic experience.

The parliamentary standing committee on railways ministry came up with the recommendation at its meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Awami League MP and chairman of the parliamentary watchdog ABM Fazle Karim Chowdhury presided over the meeting. Committee members and Railways Minister Md Nurul Islam Sujan, Md Shafiqul Azam Khan, Gazi Mohammad Shah Nawaz and Nadira Yasmin Jolly, among others, attended the meeting.

Different issues including action taken against lease-holder for violating the condition of parking in front

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Body cameras for police need of the hour: experts

Say it will ensure transparency, accountability; no decision yet to implement across country, says home minister

MUNTAKIM SAAD

In the wake of "gunfight" incidents involving law enforcement agencies and instances of lethal use of force, equipping police with body-worn cameras can ensure transparency and accountability, according to criminologists and rights activists.

A body camera is a wearable audio, video, or photographic recording system used to record events in which law enforcement officers are involved. They are typically worn on the torso, attached to the officer's uniform.

Law enforcers in the country at present use such cameras for traffic control at some places, but it is not mandatory. Besides, there are many check-posts where CCTV has not been installed, according to a home ministry official.

Every time a "gunfight" or any incident involving law enforcement agencies takes place, police give their own versions, which often contradict reality, said rights activists.

They said the recent killing of Maj (ret'd) Sinha Mohammad Rashed Khan by police and

subsequent narrative of the shooting once again exposed the lack of public trust and confidence in law enforcement.

After the incident at Shamlapur check-post on the night of July 31, police claimed that their officer had to open fire on Sinha as he tried to raise his gun.

However, Rapid Action Battalion, the agency investigating the incident, stated the complete opposite, saying that Sinha had no gun in his hand at that moment.

The probe committee formed by the home ministry to investigate the killing could not confirm whether it was premeditated or an instant action.

It recommended use of body cameras for on-duty police officers and CCTV at check-posts, according to a home ministry source.

An effective source of record, the device can also help connect the dots in the course of an investigation, as it offers real-time information when used.

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Rab arrests 6 with cocaine worth Tk 60cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab claimed to have arrested six drug peddlers with two kgs of cocaine in their possession in separate drives at Dhaka's Jatrabari and Gulistan areas on Tuesday.

The arrestees are Sultan Hasan (50), Hannan (35), Uzzal (28), Uday Das (52), Palash Dey (58), and Firoz Alam Khan (50).

A team of Rab first arrested three of them from Jatrabari's Konapara area around 4pm and recovered one kg cocaine, Maj Shahrier Ziaur Rahman, second-in-command of Rab-10, told The Daily Star.

Later, based on their information, Rab conducted another drive at a hotel in Gulistan and arrested three others with another one kg drugs, he added.

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SYLHET TRANSPORT STRIKE CONTINUES

Commuters left helpless

OUR CORRESPONDENT, SYLHET

Commuters of Sylhet continued to suffer, as road communication of the division with rest of the country remained suspended for the second consecutive day yesterday.

Greater Sylhet Stone-related Traders and Workers Union along with transport workers reportedly enforced the strike on Tuesday at 6am, demanding resumption of stone extraction.

Since that morning, transport workers blockaded all important roads around Sylhet city, district towns and other major upazila towns of the division. They were seen blocking ways of private vehicles too.

Sobibur Rahman, a vegetable trader, said a covered truck carrying his vegetables could not enter the city, as protesters blocked Humayun Rashid Chatter, one of the entry points.

"I needed to hire push-carts to take the vegetables to the depot. That will raise prices of vegetables and consumers will have to bear the brunt," he said.

Visiting several kitchen markets in the city, this correspondent witnessed shortage of necessary daily perishable commodities. Their prices had gone up as well.

As no public transport vehicles, including CNG-run auto-rickshaws, are plying the

roads, city dwellers are being forced to use rickshaws and ride-sharing motorcycles to reach their destination.

Rickshaw-pullers raised fares significantly and ride-sharing bikers are charging extra over the base fare, adding more trouble for regular commuters.

Nagar Express, a dedicated bus service initiated by Sylhet City Corporation, remains suspended, as they are in fear of protesters beating people and vandalising.

Moklisur Rahman Kamran, convener of City Bus Owner Group and a city councillor, said, "We are not part of the strike, but our bus drivers and helpers were intimidated, and in some areas beaten, for plying on the roads. That's why we are not being able to provide the service."

Abdul Jalil, convener of the union that called the strike, said, "The 72-hour strike will continue till Friday morning, if the government does not meet our demand. There are lakhs of people in need and we must think of them."

Till this February 10, several HC and government orders were issued to stop stone extraction, and during the first months of the pandemic, the administration started enforcing laws in this regard. The Bureau of Mining Development also stopped leasing out quarries.



Vegetable traders are being forced to hire rickshaw-vans, incurring extra costs, to take the products to their destinations, as the transport strike in Sylhet division continues. Many reported seeing protesters blocking all kinds of vehicles, and roads looked almost deserted. This photo was taken yesterday from Humayun Rashid Chatter, on the outskirts of Sylhet city.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR



Since her husband, a tailor, became paralysed, Farida Begum has been struggling to survive. She used to make some money through selling food to offices and shops, but that income stopped during the pandemic. Recently she has begun selling cooked food in front of Engineering University School in the capital. She makes around Tk 300-400 per day in profit after buying groceries worth Tk 500 for the business and her family. She manages rent and living with this income.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

SIX-YEAR-OLD'S MURDER IN COX'S BAZAR

SC stays three death row convicts' acquittal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday stayed for eight weeks a High Court verdict that acquitted three who were sentenced to death by the trial court in a case filed for abducting and killing a six-year-old schoolboy in Cox's Bazar in 2013.

Chamber judge of the Appellate Division Justice Hasan Foez Siddique passed the stay order following a petition filed by the state seeking a stay on the HC judgement.

Deputy Attorney General Dr Md Bashir Ullah told The Daily Star that the three convicts of Hridoy abduction and killing case will have to remain in condemned cell following the apex court's stay order.

He said the Appellate Division passed the stay order considering his arguments that the three convicts had given confessional statements to the magistrate concerned and two witnesses had seen them abduct Hridoy.

The state will move a leave to appeal petition before the Appellate Division challenging the HC verdict, DAG Bashir Ullah added.

The HC on December 7 acquitted convicts Abdul Khaleque, Bahadur Miah and Abdus Shukkur of the charges of abducting and killing Md Hridoy, saying that the allegations brought against them were not proved beyond reasonable doubt.

The HC bench of Justice Krishna Debnath and Justice ASM Abdul Mobin delivered the verdict after hearing the appeals filed by accused Khaleque and Bahadur, death reference (lower court record) of the case and examining relevant documents and evidence.

Khaleque and Bahadur are now in the jail while Shukkur is now on

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POST-COVID LABOUR MARKET

Govt training workers for skilled manpower: minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is training workers to send skilled Bangladeshi workforce to the post-Covid global labour market, said Expatriates' Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad yesterday.

The ministry has taken different initiatives during the pandemic for the wellbeing of migrant workers and their family members while more initiatives will be taken in future, he said.

The minister was addressing a views exchange meeting with migration sector stakeholders at Prabashi Kalyan Bhaban in the capital, said a press release of the ministry.

Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited organised the meeting to inform stakeholders about its services and activities, marking the International Migrants Day 2020, said the release.

Addressing the event as chief guest, Imran Ahmad said a specialised technical training centre (TTC) was under construction in Manikganj's Singair to provide modern and practical skills training to the workers.