

Bangladeshi

FROM PAGE 12

Sources of the Bangladesh High Commission yesterday told The Daily Star that the officer in the mission handling consular matters was aware of the arrest but there was no official communication from the Indian authorities in this regard so far.

Bhisham Singh, Delhi's Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime), told The Times of India that a man named Sarbar helped Masoom reach India and sheltered him.

After Sarbar went missing years ago, Masoom married his wife and was using his identity as well, sources said.

A special task force under Assistant Commissioner of Police Pankaj Singh is investigating if Masoom was involved in any criminal activity in India.

During interrogation, Masoom reportedly admitted to abducting and killing Jahidul Islam of Moddho Nalbuniya Bazar in Bangladesh's Bagherhat in 2005.

According to the Times of India, Jahidul's body was found a few days after his abduction and all the accused were arrested and put on trial. Masoom was found guilty and sentenced to death in 2013.

According to Shibesh Singh, Masoom went to India after jumping parole in Bangladesh and went to Bengaluru to work at a scrap warehouse with Sarbar.

Masoom often visited Delhi and was in touch with business acquaintances in Seemapuri locality in east Delhi and Sangam Vihar area of south Delhi for the sale and purchase of scraps.

The Delhi Police was tipped off about him and kept him under watch before his arrest. A pistol and two cartridges were recovered from Masoom, added Shibesh Singh.

An FIR has been lodged against Masoom under the Foreigners Act and the Arms Act, said Bhisham Singh.

Bagerhat Superintendent of Police Pankaj Chandra Roy said they have heard that Masoom has been arrested in India, but they are yet to receive any official letter in this regard. "We are inquiring into the matter and will take all necessary steps," he told The Daily Star over phone.

Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 12

partners Climate Action Network South Asia and Bread for the World.

The study, released last week, was conducted across five South Asian countries -- Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

According to the study, a total of 63 million people will be forced to migrate if the global community fails to limit global warming within a rise of two degrees since the pre-industrial period, a goal which was set by the Paris Agreement.

The number of displaced people due to climate change in South Asia is almost as many as global migrants due to war and conflicts, the report said.

The study calls for strong leadership and ambition from developed countries to cut emissions and support developing countries to adapt to climate change and recover from climate disasters.

Most of the migration will be caused due to events like sea level rise, lack of drinking water, drought-like situations and loss of biodiversity.

Effects of extreme weather events like floods and cyclones were not included in this study.

"Bangladesh is geographically vulnerable to climate disasters and is regularly lashed with floods and cyclones, but poverty and development deficit are also determining factors in this climate migration crisis," said Sanjay Vashist, director of Climate Action Network South Asia.

The report also stated communities can be resilient to slow onset climate disasters, such as sea-level rise, drought, failed harvests and loss of biodiversity, but this takes money and political will.

"Our cities in Bangladesh do not have the readiness to deal with climate-induced migration," Farah Kabir, country director of ActionAid Bangladesh, said in the statement yesterday.

The national budget shows that there has been allocations of thousands of crores of taka as climate relevant investment, she said in her statement.

However, the effectiveness of that investment for the protection of vulnerable communities from climate related disasters remains questionable, she added.

Dr Shamsuddoha, chief executive of Centre for Participatory Research and Development, said, "Our recent study indicates that 83% of the people who live in floodplain areas are directly impacted by riverbank erosion, with the majority of people being displaced multiple times."



101 year old Gertrud Haase (C) is given a dose of the Pfizer-Biontech coronavirus vaccine by doctor Fatmir Dalladaku(R) at Agaplesion Bethanien Sophienhaus nursing home in Berlin, Germany yesterday. The European Union began a vaccine rollout, even as countries in the bloc were forced back into lockdown by a new strain of the virus, believed to be more infectious, that continues to spread from Britain. PHOTO: AFP

Investigators search home in Nashville bomb probe

AFP, Washington

Authorities searched a house in the Nashville area yesterday as they probed the large blast that ripped through the downtown of the southern US city on Christmas morning, injuring several people and damaging dozens of buildings.

The operation in Antioch came as US media reports said a 63-year-old "person of interest" had been identified in connection with the explosion, which came from a parked motorhome that blared a warning minutes before it blew up.

Some US media outlets reported Saturday evening that the bomber may have been killed in the blast, but authorities have not officially confirmed anything.

Friday's explosion in historic downtown Nashville, the United

States' country music capital, damaged about 40 buildings and injured at least three people, with the streets largely abandoned at that hour.

Authorities were examining tissue found at the blast site that they believe could be human remains.

Police say the blast was an "intentional act" but the motive remained unclear, and FBI behavioral analysts were involved in the investigation.

"The damage is shocking and it is a miracle that no residents were killed," Tennessee Governor Bill Lee said on Twitter on Saturday.

Media reports said neighbors had previously spotted a motorhome outside the residence that was being searched Saturday by authorities, and that it appeared to be similar to the one that exploded in Nashville.

No one has been arrested, but "information developed during the course of the investigation led us to this address," an FBI spokesman said in an interview with the Nashville Tennessean newspaper outside the home being searched.

At a separate press conference, authorities declined to provide details or discuss the reports of a person identified.

They said they were sifting through more than 500 leads and tips and that sweeps of the area found no further explosive devices.

Federal prosecutor Don Cochran said the scene was "like a giant jigsaw puzzle created by a bomb that throws pieces of evidence across multiple city blocks."

The investigation included about 250 FBI agents, analysts and other staff, said the agency's Doug Komeski.

"We have over 500 investigative leads and we're following up on every one of those," Komeski told reporters.

"So there are a number of individuals that we're looking at. So at this point, we're not prepared to identify any single individual."

He added, however, that "at this point we don't have any indication that we are looking for another subject."

The governor toured the site on Saturday and said he had asked President Donald Trump to declare a state of emergency, a technical move that triggers federal assistance in repairing damage.

"These buildings, many of which are historic, and others will need to be assessed by an engineer for structural integrity and safety," Lee said in his request.

Bangabandhu meets Irish relief team

FROM PAGE 12

GOVT URGED TO HELP ALLAY PROBLEMS OF BANGALEES IN UK

Dr AFA Sayeed, member of Community Relation Commission of the United Kingdom, says in Dhaka today that racial discrimination still exists in Britain and all efforts are being geared up to changing the persisting attitude towards immigrants. He gives a detailed account of the problems of the Bangalee immigrants in the

UK and seeks cooperation from the Bangladesh government to help assuage those problems.

GOKHALE LAUDS BANGLADESH CONSTITUTION

Indian Minister for Law and Justice H R Gokhale, who is currently visiting Dhaka, appreciates the Bangladesh Constitution as a "good document" ensuring enough scope for enabling people to move forward towards progress.

"You have done a lot to have sufficient elasticity in the Constitution while protecting basic rights," he adds. Replying to a question, the minister refers to the provision in the Bangladesh Constitution putting curbs on the floor crossing in the parliament and says they themselves are contemplating in India to have such legislation.

PLAN FOR MERCHANT NAVY
The Bangladesh Shipping Corporation

has drawn up a comprehensive plan for building up an effective Merchant Navy of its own as early as possible. Under this plan the corporation has proposed to acquire 43 ocean-going vessels including three oil-tankers with approximately a total tonnage of five lakh by 1978.

Source: December 29, 1972 issues of Dainik Bangla, The Bangladesh Observer and Ittefaq.

Freeze their 670 bank accounts

FROM PAGE 12

Court of Dhaka passed the order for freezing 617 bank accounts and seizing the 92 deeds after Anti-Corruption Commission Deputy Director Mohammad Salahuddin, also investigation officer of the graft case, submitted a petition, said ACC Public Prosecutor Mahmud Hossain Jahangir.

Meanwhile, the court granted bail to Selina and her daughter Wafa in the graft case after they surrendered before the court yesterday afternoon and appealed for bail.

After the hearing, the court granted them interim bail on condition that they submit their passports, the public prosecutor added.

Jesmin was yet to obtain bail from any court or surrender before it.

Earlier, the High Court ordered Papul's wife Selina and daughter to surrender before the lower court concerned by December 28.

On November 11, the ACC filed the graft case against Papul and three others with its Integrated District Office-1 of Dhaka.

In the case statement, the ACC said Papul, an independent lawmaker from Laxmipur-2, deposited Tk 148.41 crore black money to different bank accounts of his sister-in-law Jesmin to cover his tracks.

Moreover, his wife and daughter have transferred their ill-begotten money to Jesmin's accounts.

The ACC also brought charges against the main accused, Jesmin, for illegally accumulating Tk 2.31 crore.

According to the case, Jesmin's national identity card mentioned that she was born on August 20, 1995, but her passport said her date of birth was November 4, 1997.

She opened an e-TIN account on October 25, 2017, when she was a student, but she had never submitted her income tax returns.

Between October 6, 2016, and August 20, 2019, different individuals and she herself deposited and withdrew about Tk 135.22 crore, reads the FIR.

The allegations surfaced after newspapers in Kuwait reported in

February that Papul was running a human trafficking racket in the Middle Eastern country.

The reports said the two Bangladeshi lawmakers and their daughter held key positions in three major companies that sent over 20,000 Bangladeshi workers to Kuwait in exchange for an amount believed to be at least Tk 1,391.6 crore.

Papul, now behind bars in Kuwait, was arrested in the Gulf country in early June. He faces trial on charges of human trafficking and money laundering.

He was accused of taking up to 3,000 Kuwaiti dinars (around Tk 8 lakh) from migrant worker, mostly Bangladeshis, each for sending them to Kuwait.

On February 16, the ACC opened an enquiry into the illegal wealth of Papul and his family members.

In another development, the same court of Judge KM Emrul Kayesh yesterday ordered the authorities concerned to freeze 53 bank accounts and fixed deposit receipts (FDRs)

of Papul, his family members and associates following a money laundering case filed by the Criminal Investigation Department with Paltan Police Station.

According to CID findings, Papul and his family members amassed more than Tk 355 crore. Over Tk 130 crore is still in these accounts.

CID officials said they have found evidence that at least Tk 38.22 crore was amassed mainly through human trafficking since 2016.

The accused in this case are -- Papul, his daughter Wafa, brother Kazi Badrul Alam Liton, sister-in-law Jesmin, associates Sadiqur Rahman Monir and Golam Mostafa, and two overseas employment agencies owned by Badrul and Jesmin.

A Dhaka court on Tuesday fixed January 31 for submitting an investigation report of the case.

Apart from the two cases, a human trafficking case was lodged against the Laxmipur-2 lawmaker with Motijheel Police Station, which is being investigated by the CID.

Stop drugs, ensure order, security in jails: HC

FROM PAGE 12

"Jail authorities are directed to strictly carry out body and apparel searches of the visitors and if any narcotics, drugs or contraband items are found from their possession, the jail authorities shall take necessary and appropriate legal action against that person," the HC said.

The bench ordered the inspector general of prisons, jailors, deputy jailors of all jails to maintain a register of names and addresses of all convicts and under-trial prisoners, including the respective case numbers, sections and names of courts in which the case is pending and by which the accused is convicted and sentenced in accordance with the law.

"The jail authorities must also include the dates of when the convicts and under-trial prisoners of any case are coming in and going out," the HC judges.

In the shorter version of the verdict delivered earlier, the bench directed Md Mizanur Rahman Kanak, an accused in a corruption case involving Tk 5.44 crore, to surrender to the lower court concerned in four weeks after receiving the verdict.

During hearing of Kanak's bail petition, the HC earlier found that the deputy jailor of Keraniganj Jail Md Khandaker Al Mamun had approved the power of attorney for the accused to seek bail in the case although he went out of jail on bail granted by a virtual HC bench on June 15 this year. Mizanur was released from jail on June 25.

Khandaker Al Mamun appeared before the HC bench on October 11 following its summon order and apologised to the court for approving the power of attorney for accused Kanak to seek bail again from the HC although he was not in jail.

The deputy jailor said he wrongly approved it without putting any signature and seal on the power of attorney, said Khurshid Alam, lawyer for the Anti-Corruption Commission, while speaking to The Daily Star yesterday.

He said Mizanur Rahman Kanak will have to surrender to the lower court in four weeks in connection with the corruption case following the HC verdict, while Khandaker Al Mamun was pardoned with caution and directives.

In the full verdict, the HC bench directed jail authorities or officers to only put sign and seal the power of attorney after proper confirmation that the convicts or under-trial prisoners concerned are in jail at that time.

They must also write their full names and official phone numbers in the power of attorney beside the signature and seal of the authorities or

officer concerned of the jail so that the affidavit commissioner or responsible person or officer of the court, in case of any dispute and doubt, may contact the jail authorities, the bench said.

The HC also directed the authorities concerned to strictly comply with the provisions of the Prisons Act, 1894, the Prisoners Act 1900, and Bangladesh Jail Code (Revised Edition), 2006, along with other laws relating to prisoners.

At the same time, it also ordered authorities concerned of jails to submit affidavits of compliance with these directives after every three months to the office of the Supreme Court Registrar General.

Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik represented the state while Md Ali Azam appeared for Khandaker Al Mamun and Md Ruhul Quddus Kazal stood for accused Mizanur Rahman Kanak.

7 Pak paramilitary troops killed in militant attack

AFP, Islamabad

Seven Pakistani paramilitary troops were killed by militants in an attack on a check post in the country's restive southwest, the military said yesterday.

The incident took place Saturday night in the town of Harnai, around 170 kilometres (105 miles) east of Quetta, capital of the Balochistan province which borders Afghanistan and Iran.

The Pakistani military has been fighting a low-level insurgency for decades in the province.

"During the intense exchange of fire, seven brave soldiers embraced shahadat (martyrdom) while repulsing raiding terrorists," the military said in a statement.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

Ethnic Baloch separatists have been waging an insurgency for years in the region, which is also riven by Islamist and sectarian violence.

Pakistan has long blamed India for backing Baloch separatists.

Balochistan is also a major part of a Beijing-backed multi-billion-dollar infrastructure drive known as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Baloch separatists have also previously claimed attacks on CPEC projects, and thousands of Pakistani security personnel are deployed in the region to counter the violence.

It has winning

FROM PAGE 12

and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Approval is expected to be granted to roll out the jab on January 4, The Sunday Telegraph newspaper reported.

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was the first coronavirus shot to be authorised for use by the UK's independent medicines regulator and has been given to 600,000 of the country's most vulnerable people since last month.

Earlier trials had shown varying outcomes in the AstraZeneca shot's efficacy. The vaccine initially showed an average 70 percent effectiveness but that level jumped to 90 percent depending on dosage.

"STORM" OVER DATA

Behind this average figure from large-scale trials in the UK and Brazil was a 62 percent effectiveness for those who were vaccinated with two full doses of the shot.

For volunteers who received a half-dose first and then a full dose one month later, however, the vaccine was found to have 90 percent efficacy.

Soriot said he was "surprised" by the initial findings. "We would have preferred a simpler set of results," he added.

The lack of clarity and transparency over the discrepancy in the results was widely criticised. Soriot said he had not expected the pushback that followed.

"We assumed people would be a bit disappointed, that's for sure," he said. "But we didn't expect that storm".

Great hopes have been placed in the AstraZeneca shot, originally based on a weakened version of a chimpanzee virus, because of its low cost.

AstraZeneca's vaccine also enjoys a logistical advantage over the Pfizer-BioNTech alternative, as it can be stored, transported and handled at normal refrigerated conditions of between two and eight degrees Celsius (36-46 Fahrenheit) for at least six months.

That is a far cry from the -70C needed for Pfizer/BioNTech's offering and could allow use of the existing refrigerated supply chain to cut costs.

In a vote of confidence for its homegrown vaccine, the bulk of Britain's requirements are expected to be met by the jab.

The government has ordered 100 million doses, with 40 million doses scheduled to be available by the end of March.

UK officials will hope that confidence is rewarded, not least because the country has been one of the countries most affected by the pandemic with more than 70,000 deaths.

A surge in cases has hit nationwide over the past week, falling especially on the southeast of England and blamed on a new strain of the virus believed to be more infectious, which was first identified in the UK.

According to one British study the strain is 50 percent to 74 percent more contagious.

In an effort to contain the spread of the disease, millions across Britain were placed under tougher lockdown restrictions that came into force on 26 December.

Dozens of countries have also imposed travel restrictions on the UK to stop the spread of the new strain.

Writing in the Mail on Sunday newspaper, Finance Minister Rishi Sunak acknowledged it had been "a tough year for everyone in this country".

However, he added that "the early roll-out of vaccines – and the incredible work of our scientists and NHS – means we can now see light at the end of the tunnel".