

Nowshin's father applies

Army collecting voters' data

Foreign chapters of AL demand

FROM PAGE 16
Meanwhile, Law Adviser barrister Mainul Hossain during a council of advisers' meeting on law and order at home ministry yesterday directed the investigators to carefully investigate the death of Nowshin although the viscera report mentioned that Nowshin had committed suicide.

Law enforcers are yet to trace prime accused Zahidul Haque Rintu, Nowshin's uncle. Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and police yesterday collected a photograph of Rintu from the victim's family.

"Now investigation is being conducted with its focus on two different points. Firstly, if suicide, why would Nowshin commit suicide and secondly, if homicide, how was she killed and why," said Kazi Didarul Alam, sub inspector of Ramna Police Station and investigation officer of the case.

Shamsunnahar, mother of Nowshin, told The Daily Star that even though Nowshin was found lying on the floor face down and the law enforcers did not find any sign of hanging in the room, doctors in the autopsy report mentioned that she had died "as a result of hanging" and it was "suicidal in nature".

"If she had hanged herself and later fell down on the floor, then the scarf must have signs of tearing or Nowshin would have injuries to her body. But we did not find any such

sign," Shamsunnahar said sobbing.

Besides, there were signs of foul play in the room where Nowshin was found. A Dao (chopper), supposed to be in the kitchen, was found near her body, the bed sheet was crumpled as if tussles took place on it and clothes were piled up on the floor near a clothes rack -- all suggesting that someone else rummaged through the room, added the mother.

Nowshin's family also suspect that a few of their relatives might be sheltering Rintu -- the prime accused.

Her father complained, "The pace of investigation has slowed down following the autopsy report suggesting that Nowshin had committed suicide."

Police, however, said different teams have been assigned with the task to capture Rintu.

"We are investigating [the case] carefully and trying to capture the person/s accused in the case. The application for redoing Nowshin's autopsy has been sent to court," said AKM Daulat Akbar, officer-in-charge of Ramna Police Station.

Nowshin, a brilliant student of Viqarunnisa Noon School and College, was found strangled to death on July 18. Her father filed a murder case accusing his brother-in-law Rintu and security guard of the building.

FROM PAGE 1
have asked the district election offices to provide them with the information based on the highly controversial voter list that was prepared for the stalled ninth parliamentary election, said sources.

"The Election Commission and the Bangladesh Army have already started planning for the project to prepare a voter list with photographs and national identity cards.

The numbers of voters in your areas [upazila/ municipality or city corporation ward/union] according

to the voter list of 2006 is needed to be known to complete the task properly," a source quoted from a letter sent to a district election officer.

Contacted, several field-level election officials yesterday told The Daily Star that they have already sent the information in line with the directives.

The last year's voter roll triggered a huge controversy over its authenticity and became one of the causes of the political crisis centring the parliamentary election.

In response to a writ petition

filed by a voter in the capital, the High Court on March 27 declared the electoral roll null and void.

It also observed that the electoral register was prepared without complying with the Representation of the People Order (RPO) 1972 and the Supreme Court directives.

Asked about relying on statistics from a voter list invalidated by the HC, field-level election officials said the information would be used only to estimate the number of prospective voters.

Charges pressed against Huda

FROM PAGE 1
he adopted illegal means and abused power to allocate a piece of Bangladesh Railway land to an organisation -- Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR) -- run by his wife Sigma Huda.

In the first information report (FIR), the ACC deputy director mentioned that Huda took Tk 2.4 crore in bribe for giving the land to BSEHR, where Sigma is the secretary general.

EXTORTION CASE
Metropolitan Magistrate Mir Ali Reza placed Huda on a three-day remand in the case after Dhanmondi police produced him before the court and sought a seven-day remand for interrogation.

Huda was produced before the court at 12.40pm amid tight security.

The defence lawyers submitted a petition for adjournment of the remand prayer as Huda was sick.

Opposing the defence plea, the prosecution argued that since Huda could not be produced before the court earlier, the hearing on the remand prayer had already been delayed for three consecutive times.

In the forwarding report, the investigation officer (IO) of the case said Huda extorted the money threatening the complainant and he needs to be quizzed to trace the extorted money.

On July 5, Matiur Rahman,

managing director of Uttara Motors Ltd, filed the case against Huda with Dhanmondi Police Station complaining that Huda had forced the company to pay Tk 1 crore.

According to the case statement, Huda had 'threatened to kill' the complainant and shut down his business if he failed to make the payment.

A scared Rahman paid Huda Tk 50 lakh at the latter's office by three cheques on three dates -- December 1, 2002; Feb 19, 2003; and March 11, 2003. Another Tk 50 lakh was paid in cash at Huda's residence.

Joint forces arrested Huda from his Dhanmondi residence on February 4 on charges of corruption.

Textbooks printed on poor quality papers

FROM PAGE 16
"These unscrupulous businessmen sell the 'security paper' and Karnaphuli white print paper for high prices and use the Indian low quality paper for the textbooks," said Abu Taher, president of Bangladesh Publishers and Booksellers Association.

A huge amount of low quality Indian paper is still stored in different printing presses, said a former leader of the printing industry association.

The prices of security paper and Karnaphuli white paper are Tk 800 and Tk 700 per rim while Indian low quality paper costs only Tk 500 per rim. The real security paper does not lose its original colour when it is torn but the false security paper shows white colour inside if it is torn.

Annually around 9.5 crore textbooks are printed for the primary level and around 2.5 crore books for the secondary level, NCTB sources said.

But, around ten crore textbooks for primary level and around three crore textbooks for secondary level are needed, leaders of BPIA said.

In the absence of proper statistics of NCTB, the unscrupulous group printed much higher number of books against the quantity allocated in the tender and supplied the additional books to the market before official publication of the NCTB books. The malpractice has continued for years.

Inside the cover pages of children's textbooks, four harder

sheets of paper are conventionally used, which is meant for protection of the content pages.

But the harder sheets, called 'end paper', have not been used since 2002 while the printing press owners backed by the BPIA's present committee embezzled around Tk 3.5 crore annually by showing the cost for that.

It is almost impossible to get work order without negotiating with the BPIA's present committee and the syndicate allegedly compels a printing press owner to pay Tk 14,000 for getting the job, several printing press owners said.

The press owners concerned are too hesitant to protest as they do not want to take the risk of losing the tender.

The syndicate also persuaded the NCTB to introduce a new rule in 2002 where a printer has to deposit 75 per cent as earnest money whereas a printing press owner deposited only 10 per cent before 2002 for getting a work order.

"Most of the printing press owners do not have the capacity to pay 75 per cent earnest money and they have to seek help from BPIA for getting work order for printing. But the present committee have been taking Tk 14,000 from each printing press owner in the name of guarantee for the earnest money. But the huge amount of money is not deposited to the BPIA fund," said a press owner.

The BNP-backed present BPIA committee also cancelled membership of many honest printing

press owners and entered the names of many fake members to maintain their control over BPIA.

"In 2001, the number of BPIA members was 1147 but now there are only 437 members, around 50 of whom do not have any printing press," a printing press owner told The Daily Star.

Even the committee Vice-president Humayun Kabir and Joint Secretary Mostaq Hossain do not have any printing press, said former leaders of BPIA and Publishers & Booksellers Association.

BPIA President Rabbani Jabbar denied the allegations against the association and said some of the former leaders of the association and printing press owners are bringing false allegations against him and the BPIA committee.

Every year, 240 printing press owners are given the work order for printing and binding the textbooks meant for free distribution among primary school and ebtedayee madrasa students while around 239 press owners are given the task for NCTB's secondary level textbooks.

Among around 7,000 printing presses across the country, nearly 5,000 are in the capital, mostly in Arambag-Fakirapul, Islampur-Naya bazar-Babu bazar, Banglazar-Sutrapur and Nilkhel printing zones'.

Govt to form body to build awareness

FROM PAGE 16
very soon, rendering support to emotionally distressed adolescents.

He however claimed that the prevalence of the illness has reduced.

The seminar on 'Mass Psychogenic Illness' was held at Dhaka Medical College Hospital in line with the government's plan to launch the awareness programme. For the last two weeks, mass seizures swept through 14 districts afflicting mostly girls.

The health adviser urged the people not to panic since no one died of the seizures. The disease has no long-term complication and remits almost automatically after few hours of the appearance of symptoms, he added.

Citing Bangladesh's success in containing HIV/AIDS and the recent outbreak of bird flu, the adviser laid emphasis on the role of spiritual leaders. At the same time counselling, nutritious food and proper health care for the patients are also important, he said.

"Spiritual leaders have access to the people even at the furthest corner of the country...they can enlighten the people. The environment of schools and treatment of adolescents should also be considered," he observed.

He added the media has a very important role to play in making the people aware, "We sought assistance from the media and we got it. The pro-active and positive role of the media has reined in the spread of the disease. The media should not publish any report that might give rise to fear among vulnerable adolescents."

He cited studies that say media reports with puzzling information about such outbreaks usually aggravate the situation.

Dr Abdullah Al Mamun, the keynote speaker reconfirmed the

disease as a 'mass psychogenic illness' and said the same thing had happened in many developed and developing countries in the past and there is nothing to worry about.

"This illness occurs in closed communities, like schools and factories and it tends to occur more frequently among adolescent girls.

Emotional factors sometimes make adolescents, with low level of tolerance for stress, to feel headache, nausea, convulsion, pain in the chest and abdomen, and difficulty in breathing," he said.

During his power point presentation he showed a written statement of the first affected student of Adiabadi Islamia High School, who had fainted after he had lost a competition. Later, similar physical symptoms spread rapidly among the students, starting with his three female friends.

Director General (DG) of the Health Directorate Dr MD Shahjahan Biswas, and Director of DMC Brigadier General Abdus Shahid Khan also spoke. Principal of Dhaka Medical College MA Foyez presided over the seminar.

Meanwhile, in the first outbreak of the illness in the capital, eight female students of Hazrat Shah Ali Model High School in Mirpur fainted yesterday morning during their tiffin break.

Rebeca Afroz Ali of class vii, one of the affected students, told The Daily Star that two women in burkas threw water on her during the tiffin hour and soon she started to feel headache and fainted. As her friends were trying to help her, they also fainted seeing her lose consciousness.

Rejecting Rebeca's claim that two women in burkas threw water on her, Head Master Md Mustafiz Billah said, the students had come to school without having their breakfast and perhaps that caused them to faint.

FROM PAGE 16
Asked whether he was ready to take AL leadership now, Joy said he never wanted to be AL leader.

"But in the case of freeing my mother and facing the challenges before the Awami League, I'll not keep silent," said Joy, a software engineer.

After the demonstration, AL leaders handed over various documents and video clips over Hasina's arrest and actions of the caretaker government to Marcella B Szymanski, country desk officer, the Bureau of South Asian Affairs.

"We have submitted various documents over hostile behaviour of the caretaker government with Awami League President Sheikh Hasina," said President of US unit of AL Khalid Hasan.

"We have told the State Department that the process in which Sheikh Hasina has been arrested was not proper. It is unlawful, so she should be released," said the AL leader.

Marcella B Szymanski told the AL workers that they are closely monitoring the overall situation in Bangladesh. The US always has been asking the Bangladesh caretaker government to ensure rule of

law so that no one is deprived of justice, said the official.

US' Texas unit of AL also staged a similar demonstration to press home the demand for Hasina's release.

CANADIAN MP'S CALL

Canadian parliament member and President of Bangladesh-Canada Parliamentary Association Maria Minna yesterday urged the caretaker government not to misbehave with Sheikh Hasina and harass BNP chief Khaleda Zia.

The Canadian lawmaker, who has already sent letters to President Iajuddin Ahmed and Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, met acting Bangladesh High Commissioner in Canada Mahmud Khandaker and expressed her anxiety in this regard.

She urged the caretaker government to act in such a way that the democratic practice in Bangladesh is not hampered anyhow.

PROTEST IN UK, AUSTRALIA & CANADA

AL and Jubo League brought out separate processions and held rallies in London demanding immediate release of Hasina.

Meanwhile, House of Commons held two separate meetings to

discuss Bangladesh situation. Both the meetings viewed Hasina's arrest was violation of human rights.

After the protest rally in Canberra, the AL workers handed over a memorandum to the chief adviser to the caretaker government through the Bangladesh High Commission. The memorandum demanded withdrawal of state of emergency and holding a free and fair election as early as possible, says a press statement sent to The Daily Star.

AL leaders and workers in Ottawa and Vancouver in Canada at separate protest meetings also demanded immediate release of Sheikh Hasina, according to a report faxed to The Daily Star.

Protesting the arrest of Hasina, both the meetings said it is part of a conspiracy to destroy her image as well as her party. The meeting also demanded holding the elections as early as possible to restore democracy in Bangladesh.

Vancouver AL formed a committee with Mahabubul Islam as its convenor to pressure the caretaker government to free Hasina.