

Crime world

FROM PAGE 1
A moment later he corrected himself and said, He is very much alive, he abandoned us and got married again so he is dead to us.

Kafrul police arrested two juveniles about a month ago as they fled from the scene after hurling two homemade bombs towards a sweet-meat shop at Shewrapara.

The boys, aged around 12 and 14 years, said a local criminal had paid them Tk 100 each to explode the bombs in front of the shop to scare its owners into paying extortion money.

Poor children living in slums remain most vulnerable as they easily come into contact with narcotics traders and criminals who also live in slums. Many end up in a life of crime. Many top criminals of the country like Kala Jahangir, Killer Abbas, Freedom Sobel and Sweden Aslam got started in this way.

Dr Mehtab Khanam, professor of psychology department of Dhaka University, says juveniles can not apply moral values and so they work without reasoning and opportunists exploit them.

Dr Abdul Hakim Sarkar, a professor of the Institute of Social Welfare of Dhaka University, says the ever-increasing poverty is one of the chief reasons leading to juveniles' involvement in offences.

Poor parents are so busy earning a livelihood that they have no time to guide children, he said.

Dr Sarkar suggests that a comprehensive child policy, parenthood training and developing parental associations could help counter this situation.

The government or other social organisations do not have any particular statistics about how many juveniles are already involved in offences in the country or how many are exposed to potential involvement.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police prepared a list of 336 professional teenage offenders from records in its 33 police stations in 2004. Experts suspect that the actual number is much higher.

At least 235 non-government organisations work on child rights in the country, but no one works specifically to protect juveniles from a potential criminal life.

The Director of the Department of Social Services Habibur Rahman said that since poverty pushes juveniles to criminal activities, the department provides loans to the poor to help upgrade their financial condition.

Some NGOs also provide micro credit to the poor.

There are 84 government run institutions in the country, 50 Shishu Paribar, 25 Shishu Sadan, three

Kishore Unnayan Kendra (KUK) and six safe homes, with a total capacity of accommodating 10,500 children, according to statistics of 2005.

The Shishu Paribar and Shishu Sadan centres are mainly for proper care and nursing of orphan or destitute children living there. The safe homes are for girls and are based in the divisional headquarters in the country. The KUKs are the remand homes for juvenile under-trial prisoners and convicts.

However, none of these homes come into the picture to protect poor children from their exposure to a criminal life.

Sarkar said juveniles from middle and upper class families usually get involved in offences due to spread of sky and cyber cultures. They try to be adventurous like the characters they watch on television.

"Children learn social norms and moral values from their guardians and peers, but nowadays they spend very little time with parents that they don't learn a lot of things," Sarkar says.

He cites an example that children learn to respect rules from playing games as all games have certain rules, but nowadays there are hardly any playgrounds for children.

Sarkar also blames private tuition based education for the situation. This type of education makes children dependent on others and a dependent child does not learn to take his own responsibility, he says.

Children do not learn how to make sacrifices or accommodate others as they grow up amid a sense of selfish relationships, the professor points out.

Respecting others' interests and moral values are relatively absent in the present society, Dr Sarkar points out. "So when any thing goes against their interest, children do not hesitate to commit a wrong."

Horror in Barisal

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Shahjahan said he has been having disputes with one of his neighbours over a piece of land for a long time, where he built a house and let her sister's family live there so he could keep the land in his possession.

He suspects that people who are in dispute with him over the land might have killed her sister and niece.

Tawfiq Mahbub, superintendent of police (SP) of Barisal, who visited the spot, said the land dispute might have been the motive for the gruesome murders.

He also said family members of the victims might also have been involved in the crime to frame their rivals.

Rental plants

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An eighth contract for a rental power plant in Ashuganj signed with yet another inexperienced local company Green Power in April has to launch operation in mid-August.

As per the contract, PDB would penalise each of the defaulting power companies with \$500 fine against each megawatt power the contractors failed to produce. Each contract is given 120 days to complete.

"This means Energy Prima should be paying \$85,000 a day and GBB-Kalimnax \$16,500 from May 15 for failing to meet the deadline," notes a PDB official.

If the contractor fails to launch the plant 60 days behind the schedule, the PDB will serve it with a notice to terminate the contract and a legal process will follow.

"In this case, Energy Prima faces a situation of contractual termination from mid-July for failing to launch operation," says a source.

The government signed seven rental power contracts with four companies in January and one in April. Of these seven, only one 10MW plant installed by British company Aggreko came into operation from the first week of June in Khulna. This plant was supposed to come into operation from Robi (December-March) season.

But Energy Prima and GBB-Kalimnax grossly failed to meet their May 15 deadline for five plants. A sixth deal signed with US power company Alstom fell flat as the power company did not take any initiative to implement it.

Energy Prima chief Moazzem Hossain is one of the accused in the Barapukuria scam case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission.

Sources say brother of former BNP lawmaker Mosharraf Hossain of Feni, Moazzem is being backed by a strong lobby.

Khaleda's release

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Ariff --are assigned to negotiate with the political parties at the government-sponsored dialogue on the issues of transition to democracy from the interim regime.

The advisers said they sat in the meeting to review the latest outcomes and the remaining process of ongoing dialogues with the political parties as they are preparing for dealing with Awami League, one of the two major parties, tomorrow.

On the question of Khaleda's release, Hossain Zillur said the caretaker government wants to proceed taking into consideration all the humanitarian and legal aspects.

Asked what happens if the BNP-led four-party alliance does not participate in the coming elections, the adviser said: "We don't think hypothetically."

He said they are making their effort to hold dialogue with the four-party alliance.

Hasina's trial

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hearing as the case documents are yet to arrive from the High Court (HC).

The HC asked for the records after Hasina filed a petition to quash the case on June 2.

After a brief hearing, the judge fixed July 10 for the next hearing of witnesses' depositions.

Advocate Sahara Khatun represented the AL chief, who had been exempted from attending court proceedings on health grounds. Former energy and power secretary Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, a co-accused in the case, was produced before the court.

Cross-examination of six witnesses has so far been completed.

Anti-Corruption Commission Deputy Director Sabir Hasan filed the case with Teigaon Police Station on September 2 last year accusing Hasina and six others of using their influence to help a foreign company and its local partners win a deal for setting up 100-megawatt barge-mount power plants in Haripur, Khulna and Shiklabaha, depriving the lowest bidder.

Hasina's co-accused are Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, former Power Development Board (PDB) chairman Noor Uddin Mahmud Kamal, Managing Director of Summit Industries and Mercantile Corporation Private Ltd Aziz Khan, its Director Farid Khan, United Group Chairman Hasan Mahmud Raja and its Director Abul Kalam Azad.

The number of women fell victim to violence in June alone is 333. A total of 73 incidents of rape and 15 gang rapes were reported in the same month.

The number of women raped and 66 killed after rape.

A total of 49 women were victims of acid violence while 22 were burnt in fire.

The report also said 55 women were abducted and 125 women and children were trafficked during this period. Out of the trafficked, 10 were sold to brothels.

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A total of 27 domestic workers were tortured by their employers and 8 women were tortured by members of law enforcement agencies.

During the same period, 135 women committed suicide due to repression and 47 women and children died in mysterious circumstances.

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Meanwhile, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWL) reported 235 incidents of violence against women last month, based on reports published in 10 national dailies.

Officer-in-charge (OC) of Paltan Police Station Farid Ahmed told The Daily Star, "The job seekers gathered at the office around noon and demanded the officials either return their money or send them to Malaysia again with jobs."

"As the officials refused to address their demands, they attacked," the OC said, adding, "Each job seeker had paid Tk 2-3 lakh to go to Malaysia."

Sources quoting the job seekers said most of the job seekers suffered imprisonment in Malaysia for not having proper employment papers and none of them managed to get any job there.

Coastal lands

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Asked if the government has any plan to give incentives to farmers, he said price of crops is the main incentive. The government will try to ensure it, CS Karim noted.

Agriculture officials said a 12-member team headed by Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council (BARC) Executive Chairman Dr Abdur Razzak has already conducted a study on fallow land for coastal districts of Barisal, Patuakhali, Bagerhat, Bhola, Pirozpur, Jhalakathi and Bangla, prepared a plan of action.

Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) has also prepared a paper identifying the unused land in Munshiganj, which will be reviewed by BARC for plan of action.

The BARC will gradually prepare such plans for other regions like Sylhet where a good amount of cultivable land remains unused, officials say.

The plan of action says of the 9.62 lakh hectares of cultivable land in the seven coastal districts, 5.13 lakh hectares or 53 percent land remains fallow during Kharif-1 (April-June) season, 57,290 hectares or 6 percent during Kharif-2 (July-September) season and 3.31 lakh hectares or 34 percent remain unused during Robi (December-March) season.

The committee has identified waterlogging during Aman harvesting from mid-December to mid-January, inundation of fields during April-June, lack of sweet water for irrigation and absentee landlords as reasons for vast fallow land in the region.

For remedies, the committee recommends production of high yielding varieties that requires short period of time, measures for irrigation, creating sweet water reservoirs, establishing dykes to check flooding for some particular period.

It also recommends a study to check feasibility of cultivation of crops and fruits that fit with the climate and soil of that region, strengthen the supply and market chain, train the farmers and entrepreneurs for homestead gardening and even arrangement of agriculture loans to farmers.

Besides such problems, agriculturalists say there is a lack of awareness among farmers on homestead gardening in the rural areas that leads to their dependence on buying vegetables and fruits from markets.

"Giving them incentives will boost production of vegetables and fruits," an agriculturalist at BARC said.

He said more contract farming could be encouraged in cases where landowners live abroad leaving their land fallow.

Centre for Policy Dialogue Research Director Dr Uttam Kumar Deb said making available to farmers irrigation, fertilisers, seeds and technologies suitable to weather and

Studies suggest that it is no longer possible to reverse the process of climate change in the coming decades but the region is still not prepared to face the disruptive effects of a warmer world, he added.

While presenting the report on Bangladesh situation, Dr Asaduzzaman proposed extending the regional action plan to manage climate change like the European Union.

He proposed best sharing of water resources for optimal use and control in hydro-power projects. He also proposed cooperating each other to develop a regional food bank and new crop varieties tolerant of climate change.

Asaduzzaman underlined the need for cooperation for disease prevention and control and early warning system for short and long-range weather and flood forecast.

The Indian representative said India is willing to share its CDM experience with other Saarc countries. He proposed holding a joint workshop with project developers, CDM consultants and industry associations of Saarc countries.

Sri Lanka proposed establishing a common regional position and criterion to assess the cost in terms of monetary values of "environmental debt" owed by developed countries to the Saarc countries.

He said the Saarc countries may curtail use of carbon and exchange the carbon credit with the developed countries for financial debts.

During the meeting, members of the AL Central Working Committee observed that Lito should be their candidate as the AL has over one lakh votes in RCC and Badsha should be nominated in the parliamentary polls as part of the AL-led 14-party alliance.

Local leaders and workers last night shuttered the office of city AL, demanding mayoral nomination for Lito.

As rumours spread that the AL-led 14-party combine had announced Workers Party politburo member Badsha as the alliance candidate, city AL rank and file gathered in front of their office and locked its doors at around 8:15pm.

"We will keep our office locked until Lito is chosen as the mayoral candidate," said Rajshahi city AL Vice-president Rafique Uddin.

A total of 120 AL leaders of Rajshahi district formally asked the AL central to nominate Lito yesterday.

Ashraf said the Presidium would sit again to finalise nominations for the elections to four city corporations and nine municipalities. He said the AL Central Working Committee would finally endorse the nominations.

The Presidium would also complete bilateral meetings with AL's allies, he added.

The AL Central Working Committee meeting observed that the government has been urging political parties to ratify all ordinances passed during its rule if elected to power but the government is not promulgating those consulting the political parties.

The meeting urged the government not to promulgate or enact any ordinance or law without consulting them.

It also demanded that the government send AL leader Mohammad Nasim abroad for treatment without further delay.

soil with support from the government and NGOs will have a positive impact on food production and price.

In cases of absentee landlords, contract farming can be a good option, but authorities should make sure that the rules and regulations remain viable for both contractors and farmers, he said.

Heated debate

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Hasina's counsels including barrister Shafique Ahmed told the court that the Attorney General could not make such submissions dictating the court.

"In my long legal professional career, I haven't heard such a submission by any lawyer dictating the High Court. This court earlier heard the petitions and fixed a date for further hearing. So, this court has the jurisdiction to hear the matters," barrister Shafique said.

The Attorney General asked barrister Shafique Ahmed whether he (Shafique) has assumed the responsibility of the court.

"Since the High Court called for records of the two corruption cases against Sheikh Hasina, the trial proceedings of the cases have been halted in trial courts. For the reconstitution of the High Court benches, this bench has no power to hear the quashment petitions. The court cannot call for the records of the cases before issuing any rule. The court has not issued any rule in the matters," he said.

The HC bench said the wisdom of any person is not determined with his or her age or ranking status. "We have taken the matters in our consideration for hearing with our wisdom. ... Asking for the records of the cases by the High Court is nothing new."

Following two quashment petitions filed by Sheikh Hasina, the High Court bench of Justice Khademul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Mashuque Hossain Ahmed earlier in June this year called for the records and documents of the cases against Hasina.

Regional fund

FROM PAGE 1
said with global temperature increase between 1.5 and 2.5 degrees Celsius, 20-30 percent plant and animal species could become extinct while crop yields in South Asian region could decrease by up to 30 percent by the middle of this century.

The cities in South Asia are also likely to face severe drainage congestion due to increased precipitation, he said.

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Non-payment

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amounts of fines on the firms for employing the workers without valid residency permits.

Both the firms, belonging to the same owner, sought extension of time as well as waiver of the fines. In the meantime, the firms filed false cases against the workers, claiming that since the workers fled their workplaces, they were themselves responsible for the expiration of their residency permits, Siddiqui said.

Waiver of fines has to be approved by finance ministry of the country after the appeal is scrutinised by ministries of social affairs and labour, and interior, he added.

"Therefore, the process is time-consuming," he said adding that the companies however are doing all they can to get away without paying the fines and the unpaid wages to the workers.

Meanwhile, the police already apprehended 30 of these workers who left their camps and the authorities are making preparations to deport them, said Siddiqui.

The police need to have a court order to arrest any worker from inside their camps for staying in the country without valid residency permits, explained the labour councillor at the Bangladesh embassy.

KUWAIT PROBES MP'S VISA TRADING
The National Assembly Human Rights Committee of Kuwait, which began an investigation into allegations of wide-spread visa trading, said they are suspicious about former and current Kuwaiti lawmakers' involvement in illegal trade of visas.

Visa trading means buying and selling visas to hire foreign workers and that involves huge amount of money and middlemen. Such trading increases the foreign workers' cost of migration and contributes to their low wages.

Bangladeshi workers are also victims of such trading in the Middle East countries.

Member of the committee MP Roudhan Al-Roudhan said the committee decided to investigate the issue seriously after hearing that some members in the current assembly and previous assemblies are suspected of being involved in visa trading," reported Kuwait Times, a leading newspaper of Kuwait, Monday.

The Kuwaiti National Assembly last week asked the committee to investigate the issue based on a proposal that requires the panel to investigate records of the ministry of social affairs and labour during the last five years.

The Human Rights Committee of the National Assembly Monday held an extended meeting with representatives for the ministries of social affairs and labour, interior, and commerce and industry in this regard.

Roudhan said the committee asked the ministries to provide certain data based on which the panel will make decisions to reduce problems related to unskilled labourers.

The panel specifically requested data on companies suspected of visa trading, especially cleaning and private security firms, which recruit a large number of foreign workers, Roudhan said.

On Dhaka-Barisal route, passengers had to pay Tk 140 to Tk 160 for travelling on deck last evening, which was Tk 100 to Tk 120 before.

Badiuzzaman Badal, acting chairman of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport (passengers) Owners Association, told The Daily Star that the fare increase was not announced officially because the authorities had yet to approve their proposal for a 50 percent fare increase.

About charging extra without a government decision, he said, "The price hike of fuel oil is compelling us to do that."

At Gulistan bus terminal in the city, passengers and bus crews were seen brawling around 11:00am. A passenger pulled a ticket counter staff by the collar on Gulistan-Chittagong Highway route, resulting in a chaos for about half an hour.

Passengers alleged that bus operators were not only charging extra but also turned all local buses into non-stop direct ones to legitimise unusually high fares.

CNG-run human-hauler service, Rajdhan Paribahan, was also seen charging Tk 1 more than usual on a short route between Babubazar and Jurain, taking the opportunity of the chaos in the city. They were charging Tk 7 instead of the usual fare of Tk 6.

In Lalmonirhat, all Dhaka-bound buses increased their fares by Tk 50 yesterday. The owners said they will hold a meeting today and might raise the fare by Tk 70.

Bus operators charged extra in all districts yesterday.

Talking to reporters in Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday

On BNP's five-point demand, the US envoy said the government and BNP should talk about it, stating that the people of Bangladesh have strong opinion on that.

Asked if the local elections might hamper the general election, the ambassador said it is the people of Bangladesh to decide and hoped that there would be successful national and local elections.

About speculations on an electoral college to elect the president, Moriarty again said it is obviously something the people of this country will have to decide. He said the US is probably the only democracy that has an electoral college electing its president.

"We think it works well. We have been playing for over 200 years now. But there are lots of other ways to elect a president. Again we leave it to the wisdom of the people of Bangladesh," added the US envoy.

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Govt hikes bus fares

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But the government has yet to officially re-fix the fares of goods carrying motor vehicles and launches.

Meanwhile, operators of all modes of transport were in a frenzy of increasing fares immediately after the government's announcement of increasing fuel oil prices, resulting in heated debates and scuffles between passengers and transport crews.