

NEWS IN *brief*

2,827 mobile phone sets seized at airport: Six arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel seized 2,827 mobile phone sets yesterday and arrested six alleged members of a gang that had been getting delivery of imported goods from Shahjalal International Airport using fake documents.

The detainees are Monir Hossain alias Kamal, 36, of Feni, Mohammad Isanur, 34, Yusuf Ali, 37, Karim Hossain, 38, of Magura, Masum Billah, 28, of Barguna and Anwar Hossain, 36, of the city's Shabbagh.

Major Mohammad Sadiqur Rahman of Rab-3 said they conducted drives at Nurul Huq Tower in the city's Kotwali area and at Prembagan in Uttara and arrested the persons with 2,827 brand new mobile phone sets and two cartoons of accessories in their possessions.

The gang used to make fake documents in the name of the owners of the imported goods and took delivery of the goods, he added.

Dyeing factory fined Tk 65 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Department of Environment (DoE) yesterday fined a textile dyeing industry Tk 65 lakh and sealed off it for releasing untreated chemical and waste into the river Shitalakkha at Shiddhirganj in Narayanganj.

A DoE team found that Shah Dyeing and Finishing Mills Ltd was releasing untreated liquid waste into the river as its Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) remained out of order, said a press release.

The DoE team, led by its Director (Enforcement) Mohammad Munir Chowdhury, fined the money and ordered Mohammad Shahjahan, the industry's managing director, to keep it shut until making its ETP functional.

The industry was running without DoE approval over the last 25 years contaminating the river.

Free check-up for people with hearing problems

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hicare Society, an organisation working for hearing and speech impaired people, will arrange a free camp for examining the extent of deafness on March 7-8, says a press release.

Persons with hearing problems and intending to receive the facility have been requested to enroll their names at Hicare Society office, House No 69/D-1, Road-6A, Dhanmondi.

The society authorities can be contacted at 9119535 and 01819428428.

Six stores fined Tk 30,000

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court yesterday fined six stores of steel products Tk 30,000 for using weigh machines, which have not been verified and approved by the BSTI, says a press release.

During a drive in the city's Goolgah and Dholaikhal areas, the court filed six cases against the stores. The cases were later dropped as the storeowners paid the penalties.

Executive Magistrate Mohammad Selim Hossain led the drive with the assistance of Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI).

The penalised stores are M/S Bismillah Trading, Apon Steel Housing, Isamoti Enterprise, Gold Star Steel House, Madina Enterprise, and Roni and Brothers.

Sri Lankan team in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A high-level Sri Lankan delegation is visiting Bangladesh to learn about the disaster management system of the country and to follow it in Sri Lanka.

The six-member delegation led by Sri Lanka's Disaster Management Minister Amaraweera Mahinda yesterday visited Cox's Bazar to learn about the preparation programmes before and after a cyclone, cyclone shelters and measures taken to prevent landslides.

Earlier on Sunday, Mahinda called on Bangladesh Food and Disaster Management Minister Dr Abdur Razzaque at his residence.



A Dhaka City Corporation bulldozer evicts shops illegally occupying a road in the city's Gulistan yesterday. The High Court issued a directive on Sunday to free the roads and footpaths from Zero Point to Sadarghat in 48 hours to facilitate the movement of people and vehicles.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Hizb-ut-Tahrir man arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday arrested a suspected leader of the banned Islamist outfit Hizb-ut-Tahrir from the city's Kamalapur with a huge number of books and posters of the organisation.

Mahtab Uddin, 40, was arrested with 34 books and 455 posters in his possession from a flat located on the sixth floor of a building at south Kamalapur at around 3:00am, said Masudur Rahman, additional deputy commissioner of Media and Community Service of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

He had been involved in the publicity and regrouping of the banned organisation, Masudur added.

Amini accuses PM of plotting to destroy army

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is plotting to destroy the army in the name of detecting religious fanatics, Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) Chairman Mufti Fazlul Haque Amini said yesterday. Speaking at a discussion at his party's office at Lalbagh in the city, Amini claimed that "Sheikh Hasina herself formulated the conspiracy as she doesn't want the army anymore".

Amini also referred to the Prime Minister's recent remark on Khaleda Zia attempting to use the army to return to power as "childish".

"Political parties never used army to come to power, then how can Khaleda come to power by resting guns on the shoulder of the army", he added.

BDR CARNAGE

Lance nayek Ekram vowed to kill army officers, Maj Ishtiaq tells court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hurling abusive words at slain BDR chief, Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed, on loudspeaker, lance nayek Ekram had declared that the DG (director general) had been killed, and now every army officer would face the same fate.

Maj Ishtiaq Ahmed, who witnessed the incident during the Pilkhana carnage on February 25, 2009, said this in a Dhaka court yesterday. The witness said the soldiers held him hostage and attempted to kill him several times.

As soon as the mutiny broke out, Ishtiaq took shelter at the house of sepoy Uzzal. He stayed there for about 20 hours along with five other armed soldiers of record wing.

On the night of February 25, he saw his runner sepoy Rahim on television, laying down his weapons.

Speoy Rahim called Maj Ishtiaq's wife over phone several times on that night and asked her furiously and indecently for his location.

The next day, some BDR soldiers caught him as he left the house. They took him to quarter guard. At that time, some soldiers beat him up and took away his belongings.

He was freed from captivity at about 4:30pm on February 26.

A metropolitan sessions judge's court, set up at the playground of Alia Madrasa of the city's Bakshibazar to try the accused in the carnage case, recorded Ishtiaq's deposition yesterday.

Another army officer, Maj Ismot Ara,

who worked as gynecologist at BDR hospital during the mutiny, told the court that she fled the hospital, wearing a veil.

She said subedar Torab Ali, nayek Wazed, sepoy Matin, and nayek subedar Fazlul Karim, under the command of subedar Monoranjan, buried the bodies of the slain army officers beside the mortuary.

Sepoy Kamruzzaman and cook Abdul Kuddus also gave depositions before the court.

The defence counsel later cross-examined them. The court was adjourned till February 29.

A total of 74 people, including 57 army officers, were killed by the mutinous soldiers of defunct BDR (now Border Guard Bangladesh) on February 15-16, 2009.



(From left) Shujan Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar, former election commissioner M Sohul Hossain, former adviser to a caretaker government M Hafizuddin Khan, Dr Kamal Hossain and former election commissioner M Sakhawat Hussain at a discussion on "The challenges before the new Election Commission" organised by Shujan at Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 20)

PHOTO: STAR

Teacher suspended over corporal punishment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An assistant teacher of Keraniganj Teghoria High School in Keraniganj was temporarily suspended yesterday for caning a class VI student of the school.

Sheikh Jardish Ahmed assaulted student Shum Akther with a cane on February 19, severely injuring her in the eyes.

The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) also suspended his monthly payment order facility.

DSHE Director General Prof Noman-ur Rashid, who investigated the incident and found the teacher guilty, submitted a report in this regard to the education ministry yesterday.

The ministry directed the school managing committee to suspend Ahmed and to take action against the school headmaster for not taking prompt steps in connection with the incident.

Police arrested Ahmed Sunday night following a case filed by the student's father Yousuf Ali with Keraniganj Police Station.

Same day, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid asked Prof Noman to investigate the incident immediately.

Over 100 RMG workers gripped by hysteria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

More than hundred female garment workers of two garment factories fell sick due to mass hysteria in Katherpool area of Fatullah Industrial area yesterday.

On Sunday, a female worker of Liberty Knitwear factory died of cardiac arrest and the factory remain closed for the rest of the day following the death.

The workers joined their duty yesterday morning and around 9:30am Hasina of sewing section fell sick and collapsed.

Within 10 minutes another 15 to 20 female workers became sick.

Their sickness started with contractions.

Later, they were rushed to Narayanganj 200-bed hospital, Narayanganj General Hospital and Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Meanwhile, more than hundred female workers of Midland Knitwear factory also fell sick with the same symptoms.

Dr Mahabub Haidar Shamim, medical officer of Narayanganj 200-bed hospital, said the patients were affected by mass hysteria and all of them were suffering from the same symptoms.

Seriously affected Hosna, 25, Rehana, 30, Farida, 45, Rashida, 27, Parveen 25 and Hajera were sent to DMCH, police said.

WAR CRIMES TRIAL

Arguments on SQ Chy's four petitions end

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The defence counsels yesterday finished their arguments on four petitions for BNP lawmaker Salauddin Quader Chowdhury before the International Crimes Tribunal.

After the counsels finished their lengthy arguments, which continued for the last three days, the prosecution yesterday began its reply on the petitions.

The detained BNP leader filed the petitions seeking bail in a case filed on crimes against humanity charges, transferring him from Gazipur's Kashimpur Jail-2 to any other prison, and conducting the proceedings against him following international standards.

The fourth petition sought discharge of the Chittagong lawmaker from the charges of crimes against humanity he is facing at the tribunal.

In the discharge petition, the defence counsels appealed for withdrawing six out of a total of 25 crimes against humanity charges against Salauddin Quader.

Defence counsel Ahsanul Haq Hena said the BNP leader was already facing those charges in other cases filed under the

Collaborators Act of 1972, which could lead to "double jeopardy", meaning nobody could be tried twice for the same offence according to the constitution.

Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, a six-time lawmaker, was produced before the court for yesterday's proceedings.

He was also given an opportunity to address the court briefly after his counsels finished their arguments.

The Chittagong lawmaker used the opportunity to express his "unqualified apology" to the court for "unknowingly breaking" the court's rules in the past.

He then proceeded to answer some of the questions the judges asked when his counsel Fakhru Islam was submitting the discharge petition.

Later, prosecutor Zead Al Malum said he would answer each of the 47 points the defence counsels had mentioned in their arguments.

The prosecutor is scheduled to continue his reply today.

Salauddin Quader is among two BNP and six Jamaat-e-Islami leaders facing charges of crimes against humanity at the tribunal.

RECRUITMENT OF WORKERS IN S ARABIA

Joint body to monitor situation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia have agreed to set up a joint working group to supervise the issues regarding recruitment and welfare of Bangladeshi workers.

The official-level working group comprised of members of the relevant ministries of the two countries will take stock of the situation periodically and find out remedial approach, according to a release issued yesterday by the expatriates' welfare ministry.

The two sides also agreed that a Saudi delegation led by its labour minister would soon visit Bangladesh to see for themselves the measures put in place and explore possibilities of cooperation.

The decision was reached during a recent visit to the Arab state by a Bangladeshi delegation led by Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Khandker Mosharraf Hossain.

The six-member delegation had meetings with Saudi Labour Minister Adel Fakeih, Governor of Riyadh Prince Sattam Bin Abdul Aziz and Deputy Minister for Interior Dr

Ahmad Alsalmi.

Saudi Arabia remains the largest labour importer from Bangladesh employing over two million workers. However, it significantly cut the recruitment since 2009.

Besides, the kingdom has also stopped allowing Bangladeshis transfer their jobs from one company to another, landing many of them in trouble.

During the meeting -- the first in three years -- with Adel Fakeih, Mosharraf informed him that Bangladesh has adopted measures for electronic registration of the jobseekers and sending them abroad on better terms.

Appreciating the contribution of the Bangladeshi workforce, Saudi Deputy Interior Minister Dr Ahmad Alsalmi, however, noted that a few of them are indulging in some "legally and socially unacceptable activities."

The Bangladeshi minister hoped the two countries would soon embark on a new vista of cooperation with the establishment of the joint working group.

The Bangladesh delegation is due home tomorrow.



No change in temperature

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country in 12 hours till 6:00pm today.

Light to moderate fog may occur over the river basins of the country during late night till morning, Met Office said.

Day and night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 06.00pm today and rises at 6:21am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 35.5 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rangamati and lowest 09.9 degrees Celsius at Srimongal.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max:	Min:	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	29.8	15.8	32	19
Chittagong	30.6	20.0	96	60
Rajshahi	29.2	11.4	47	36
Rangpur	25.8	13.0	53	53
Khulna	30.0	17.5	29	43
Barisal	31.5	17.0	49	43
Sylhet	32.2	15.4	42	32