

Koko not involved in money laundering

Claims his lawyer
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Arafat Rahman Koko's lawyer Mahub Uddin Khokon yesterday said Koko was not involved in laundering money as he does not have any foreign bank account or company abroad.

The attorney general's statement that a Singapore court on Tuesday directed the authorities to send back to Bangladesh around Tk 8 crore laundered by Koko, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's younger son, is not true, he said.

"The government staged this drama to tackle the present political situation," he told journalists at the Supreme Court Bar Association.

Koko was in jail when the alleged laundered money was deposited in the account of Lim Siew Cheng, a Singaporean businessman, at United Overseas Bank in Singapore, he said.

The money was laundered by Habibur Rahman, a Bangladeshi living in Dubai, but he was not made an accused, he said, adding that the "false" case was filed to damage the image of Khaleda and her family.

Attorney General Mabubey Alam yesterday told journalists that the money was laundered by Koko and Ismail Hossain Saimon, son of former BNP minister Akbar Hossain.

Koko set up a firm, Fairhill Consulting Ltd, in Singapore with the help of Cheng, who admitted to the Singapore court that he had deposited the money laundered by Koko, he said.

ANTI-WAR CRIMINAL MOVEMENT
Ctg people rally at Pahartali

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Responding to the call of Gonojagoron Mancha, Chittagong, several thousand people of the port city yesterday gathered at Pahartali Badhyabhumi, one of the biggest war-time killing fields of the country, to demand death penalty for war criminals.

The programme started with the patriotic song, "O amar desher mati, tomar pore thekai matha", performed by Udichi Shilpi Gosthi around 3:30pm. Within thirty minutes, the whole Badhyabhumi turned into a human sea, buzzing with anti-war criminal slogans.

Many elderly people, freedom fighters, and children were also seen shouting slogans. Many rendered patriotic songs to inspire the movement against the communal forces of Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir.

Locals from Pahartali and Khulshi, students from different schools and colleges, pedestrians, cultural activists, and people from all walks of life joined the rally and many socio-cultural organisations expressed solidarity with it.

One minute's silence was observed there to show respect to all martyrs of the Liberation War and the blogger Ahmed Rajib Haider, an activist of the ongoing movement.

Taj Nahar Ripon, one of the girls shouting anti-criminal slogans, said, "We don't want to see life term jail for war criminals. Our only demand is that they be given death penalty. We would not go back home until their death penalty is executed."

Led by Nirjhar Majumder, coordinator of Blogger and Online Activist Network, Chittagong, the demonstrators took the oath to continue the movement until hanging of the war criminals. Riaz Haider, general secretary of Chittagong Union of Journalists, and Sharif Chauhan, coordinator of "Sampradaikata Birodhi Tarun Uddyag", conducted the programme.



People from all walks of life gather at Pahartali killing field to demand death penalty for war criminals yesterday. The rally was called by Gonojagoron Mancha, Chittagong.

PHOTO: STAR

Fire guts 140 shanties in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 140 shanties and 10 shops were gutted in a fire at a slum in the capital's Kalyanpur area yesterday.

Zahirul Amin, deputy director of the Fire Service and Civil Defence, said the blaze broke out at Notun Bazar slum around 11:30am.

Ten firefighting units from Mohammadpur and Mirpur fire service stations extinguished the blaze after an hour long effort, he said.

The firefighters, however, could not ascertain the reason behind the fire.

But, locals said the fire might have been originated from an electric short circuit.

Sayema Begum, a resident of the slum, said the fire originated from a shanty near her house.

She lost valuables worth around one lakh taka in the fire, she claimed.

As the fire broke out, the slum's residents including women and children managed to come out of their houses, but could not save their belongings, she added.

Most of the people living in the slum are from the lower income group, and work at different garment factories.

BETAR CTG CENTRE
Golden jubilee tomorrow amid stagnation

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chittagong

The historic Bangladesh Betar, Chittagong centre, the glorious Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra during Liberation War, steps into its golden jubilee tomorrow, but beset with problems and decreasing number of listeners rather than being a modernised radio station.

The centre is faced with shabby premises, insufficient manpower and shortage of equipment. It is broadcasting with outdated transmitter and analogue operation system. Introduction of modern digital system seems a far cry.

In the last fifty years, the centre has not got an auditorium. So the officials are organising the golden jubilee programmes in an auditorium outside the centre. Live programmes involving audiences cannot be broadcast due to lack of this facility.

Established in 1954 at Kalurghat in the city's Agrabad as a centre of the then Radio Pakistan, it started trial run in 1962 and formal transmission on March 1, 1963. The present building of the station was built at that time, in 1954, and so were the studios.

The declaration of the country's independence came from this very transmission centre in 1971.

Sources said since 1954 the centre had not undergone any renovation work. It broadcasts through amplitude modulation (AM) at 873 kilohertz (KHz) and frequency modulation (FM) at 105.4 KHz. The 100 kilowatt transmitter of AM covers Chittagong, Feni, Noakhali, Laxmipur, Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban.

But listeners complain that they are unable to listen to programmes clearly at different upazilas for a long time. Many say they cannot listen to programmes

clearly even in parts of the city. Rantisa Haider, a listener from the city's Bibirhat area, said she tried several times to listen to programmes but failed as the sound was not clear.

Aminul Islam, regional engineer of Bangladesh Betar, Chittagong, said the 100KW transmitter was installed in 1988. A transmitter can run in full swing for ten years at best, he said. "The transmitter has gone outdated and is unable to deliver quality service anymore."

Lack of proper digital studios is another hindrance to delivering quality programmes. All the six studios are in a shabby state. There is no separate newsroom and news studio too, said the official, adding that the news room was operating with an analogue editing panel.

About digitalisation of the centre, Aminul said a powerful digital transmitter of 500KW and a digital broadcasting console were required immediately for uninterrupted services.

Acute shortage of manpower, including deputy regional directors, assistant directors, deputy regional controller of news and assistant controller, deputy regional engineers and assistant regional engineers, make it very difficult to run the station properly, said officials.

They said honorarium of artistes, news presenters and other performers were so nominal that an artiste could hardly bear the costs of conveyance with it.

Syeda Shammi Ara Chowdhury, regional director of the Chittagong centre, said she had written to the higher authority to fill the vacant posts. She said she had also written to the high-ups several times for digital equipment and an increase of honorarium of artistes.

"With all limitations, we are trying to deliver the highest quality service to the listeners."

PUBLIC HEALTH SECTOR
BIDS study finds plethora of problems

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inadequate supply of drugs and equipment, and frequent absence of doctors from their offices are the major problems of the country's public health sector, according to a study.

With support from Asia Foundation, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) conducted the study at 70 health centres including hospitals at district levels and health complexes at upazila level in seven divisions.

Using different methods including interviews, surveys and focus group discussions, the study also found that staff show unfriendly attitude toward service seekers at the centres.

The findings of the study were presented at a workshop titled "Public Service Delivery Systems in Bangladesh: Governance Issues in the Health Sector" at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in the capital yesterday.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr AFM Ruhul Haque, as chief guest, Asia Foundation's PRODIP Programme Chief of Party Russell Pepe and BIDS Senior Research Fellow Dr MA Mannan, among others, were present at the event moderated by BIDS Director General Dr Mustafa K Mujeri.



Russell T Ahmed, CEO of champs21.com, and AFM Salimullah, principal of SOS Hermann Gmeiner College, among others, at the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the college premises yesterday. Champs21.com, the country's pioneer e-learning service provider, launched The Daily Star English Club at the college. The club is an initiative to help Bangla medium students with their English.

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