

Show him

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front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Questioning the minister's sanity, Abdul Hai Sikdar, president of a faction of Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ), said, "We will go to court for legal action in this regard".

Later, they brought out a procession that paraded different adjoining streets.

"The minister's remarks reflect his mean mentality. These also tarnish the image of the government and the cabinet," said the other faction of the BFUJ in a statement yesterday.

BFUJ President Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul and Secretary General Abdul Jalil Bhuyian, DUJ President Altaf Mahmud and General Secretary Quddus Afrad in the joint statement said the minister's repeated offensive remarks are provocative, and question education, taste and political and family culture.

"It is shocking that Mohsin Ali used the name of the prime minister [in doing these] which is embarrassing for all," the statement said. The journalist leaders called upon the prime minister to take initiatives so that Mohsin Ali withdraws his comments and apologises.

"Remarks of some MPs or ministers about journalists create scope for others to wonder if these people want to achieve something ill by having the relationship between the government and media deteriorate," the statement says.

Urging Mohsin Ali to learn from history, the journalists said they play their professional role without being influenced by any vested quarter.

They called upon all to create an environment where newsmen can play their due role in upholding democracy and protecting the public interest.

Dhaka Reporters Unity in a statement yesterday said it would boycott the social welfare minister if he did not withdraw his objectionable comments on the journalists.

Journalists of Sylhet too have demanded Mohsin's exclusion from the cabinet and have announced to boycott all programmes attended by the minister.

They made the announcement at a human chain at Sylhet Central Shaheed Minar yesterday.

Meanwhile, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury termed Mohsin Ali's comments unacceptable and sought an explanation from the prime minister.

"If the remarks are true, the minister should not be kept in the cabinet," the former president of the country said in a statement.

At a programme at Sylhet District Council auditorium on Saturday, Syed Mohsin Ali termed journalists as "dirty chaps and of bad character".

At the beginning of his speech, he told the photojournalists to move away from in front of him.

"I have not come to see your faces ... They have not studied journalism to become journalists. Only my daughter has done an MA in journalism. And others have only roamed around their colleges," Mohsin Ali said.

Mohsin Ali said, "My leader Sheikh Hasina called me and said Hasanul Haq Inu is a 14-party leader, and you are Awami League's grassroots leader. You continue to do what you are doing. Let journalists write whatever they want. It does not matter."

At one stage, the MP elected from Moulvibazar said, "Once the independent [broadcast] commission is formed, we will see how far you can go".

After this, the journalists there left the venue in protest and demonstrated in front of the auditorium.

Ten pieces

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house at sector 5 around 9:00am.

About two hours later, Turag police found the other parts in a travel bag on Chandalbhog Bridge, said Ali Mahmud, inspector (investigation) of Turag Police Station.

Police suspect the woman was killed on Saturday night.

Seven killed in Honduras liquor store shooting

AFP, Tegucigalpa

At least seven people were killed late Saturday when a band of gunmen opened fire on a liquor store in the outskirts of the Honduran capital, police told local media.

About ten people arrived at the busy store in the Las Torres neighborhood in a vehicle and two motorcycles, and opened fire with automatic weapons.

According to media reports three people were killed inside the store along with a 14-year-old boy who happened to be walking by. Three of six wounded customers who were rushed to a local hospital also died.

Police at the scene of the crime said they did not have a motive for the crime or an identity for the assailants.

Hope now in local

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"This could be Pinak-6," Hasan told The Daily Star in the evening. They have marked the spot and will resume their search this morning.

"We will send our divers into the river if the condition allows us to do so."

Around 15 people, who work for a mechanical parts shop at Mawa, tied some weight to the middle of a rope and sank it deep into the river to be dragged with the ends of the rope in two boats.

Asked whether they are doing it on their own, Hasan said the shipping minister and upazila chairman of Lauhajang had directed them to carry out the search following a meeting with the locals at Mawa terminal on Friday.

He said they have done this type of work in the past.

Contacted, Osman Gani Talukdar, chairman of Lauhajang upazila, said, "During the meeting, we had announced a prize for detecting the launch."

Meanwhile, after its seven-day search turned futile, the government withdrew all its rescue teams and decided to focus on one spot -- from where the side-scan sonar of Kandari-2 picked up signals from a "metallic object".

The survey vessels of Chittagong Port Authority, Kandari-2 and Jarip-10, will be in action to know whether the object is Pinak-6, said Saiful Hasan Badal, deputy commissioner of Munshiganj, during a press briefing at Padma Bridge Rest House at Mawa.

Rescue ships Rustam and Nirbhik will be on standby for salvage operations, he added.

Talking to The Daily Star, Saiful Hasan said six vessels from the BIWTA, coast guard, the navy and fire service had conducted an intensive search in around 50 square kilometres area, but could not find anything.

"And there is no possibility of getting anything from the 50 square kilometres area. So we have decided to withdraw the agencies after con-

sulting the shipping minister and experts," he said.

Tomorrow, a seven-member probe committee, formed by the shipping ministry, will hear testimonies of survivors and witnesses at the rest house.

But a four-member committee of the shipping department was dissolved allegedly under pressure from the ministry.

A highly placed source said every time a launch or boat accident takes place, the shipping department forms a probe committee as per the inland shipping ordinance.

"But this time, the ministry's probe committee did not want this body to work. They put pressure on the director general of shipping department through higher officials to get the committee dissolved."

However, the government's handling of the post-accident situations roused resentments among the victims' families.

"I don't understand what the government had been doing in the last seven days with all this modern equipment. Did it really make any effort to find out the launch?" said Akram, a survivor who lost his parents and sister.

As no dead body was recovered yesterday, the confirmed death toll stands at 46. After identification, 28 bodies were handed over to family members. Two bodies were buried yesterday at Shibchar Municipal graveyard in Madaripur.

The double-decker vessel, which was on its way to Mawa from Kaorakandi, was carrying more than 200 passengers against a capacity of 85. It sank in the face of strong waves and high winds in the mighty river near Lauhajang around 11:00am on Monday.

So far 62 people remain missing, officials say.

[Farhana Mirza from Munshiganj and Nityananda Halder from Madaripur also contributed to this report]

Following the report, Justice SK Sinha went to the Public Safety Disturbance Crime Prevention Tribunal on August 7 and confiscated the files of the related cases.

An SC source said Justice Sinha, the senior most judge of the Appellate Division, found some of the allegations to be true.

The Daily Star could not contact Faruk for his comment.

But when Jugantor contacted him on August 6, the day before it published the report, he said he could not comment without going through the records.

The Jugantor report also cited a High Court rule that said lower court judges will not, in the last three months before their retirement, deliver verdicts in such cases that may spark controversy.

They are Chairman of First Labour Court of Chittagong and former District and Sessions Judge of Dhaka AKM Ishtiaque Hossain, Additional District Judge of Jessore Mizanur Rahman, and Joint District Judge of Lalmonirhat Salauddin Mohammad Akram.

Following an investigation overseen by Justice Sinha, the SC registrar's office yesterday sent a letter to the law secretary, asking him to take appropriate action against Faruk Ahmed.

Asked, SC Registrar AKM Shamsul Islam said he was not aware of Justice Sinha's findings.

Last month, the chief justice decided to send three lower court judges into forced retirement for misconduct and corruption while discharging duties.

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"Samples of paracetamol syrups were collected from Shishu Hospital

following a verbal order by the then director general of Directorate [General] of Drug Administration. Currently, there is no record in the department on the samples collected," the DGDA had officially told The Daily Star.

The Daily Star in March 2011 had requested the DGDA through an application for access to the documents under the Right to Information Act.

The request had been made after the newspaper retrieved documents from individuals about the drug tests, which were accurate beyond suspicion since tests done by the government and the individuals matched.

The government test was also overseen by a representative from WHO.

The adulteration of paracetamol syrup allegedly continued between 1982 and 1992 and killed an estimated 2,700 children. But this heinous crime remained beyond prosecution despite proof being there.

An investigation by The Daily Star in 2009 found deliberate destruction of evidence, manipulation of legal system and corruption by the DGDA, preventing justice from being delivered.

The probe subsequently led to the resumption of the prosecution process, with owners of one company, Adflame Ltd, being convicted in July this year.

The drug court yesterday fixed August 18 for Khair to produce documents required for prosecuting the six accused in both the cases against BCL Bangladesh.

He says sorry

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sorry through a media statement," said sources close to the minister last night.

Meanwhile, many leaders of the ruling Awami League have expressed disgust over Mohsin's comments.

They said the comments have embarrassed the government as well as the party. However, they declined to make any formal statement in this regard.

Addressing a discussion at Sylhet Zilla Parishad Auditorium on Saturday, Mohsin had said that journalists are "dirty chaps and of bad character" and that they always misinterpret things and do not know how to deal with people.

Retracting his statement through a handout yesterday, the minister said, "I did not make the comments about all journalists. I believe that journalism is a noble job. People involved in the profession are honest and live a life that knows no fear. A number of renowned journalists are my friends."

He claimed that when he was going to the stage that day, some journalists on the front row made sarcastic remarks about the prime minister and the finance minister. It made him lose his cool and he talked angrily to some journalists.

He also said he made the comments towards a few local journalists who had been dishing out distorted version of his statements for the last few days.

"But I am profoundly shocked to see that my words deeply hurt the whole journalist community. I deeply regret my remarks and hope this statement will bring an end to all misunderstandings ... I had been, I am and I will be respectful to the profession," he added.

Earlier on January 28, Mohsin had apologised for smoking on the dais at a children's function in Sylhet city and promised not to repeat such actions.

On July 22, he came down heavily on journalists, and said a law would be formulated to make sure the electronic media had no freedom.

On August 4, the cabinet approved the National Broadcast Policy-2014, which drew criticism from different section of people.

Ebola alert at airports

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countries and killed at least 961 people, according to World Health Organization (WHO).

As part of precautions, medical teams would monitor the international airports in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet and also the seaport in Chittagong during the 90-day period, said a health ministry statement yesterday.

The decisions on the matter were taken in a ministry meeting chaired by Health Minister Mohammad Nasim yesterday.

The meeting also formed a committee headed by Health Secretary MM Neazuddin to oversee the surveillance activities, according to the statement.

A 20-bed medical ward would be set up at Kurmitola General Hospital in the capital to treat anyone affected by the deadly virus, said Prof Mahmudur Rahman, director of Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research, also a member of the committee.

"The medical teams will advise the people coming from the West African countries to contact the hospital, if necessary," he told The Daily Star.

Prof Mahmudur Rahman said the countries where the virus has spread

are already screening the people going to other countries as per the WHO guidelines, but Bangladesh government took the steps as additional cautionary measures.

He said Bangladesh is a low-risk country for Ebola, as there is no direct air links between Bangladesh and the countries affected by the virus.

Meanwhile, the health minister has also urged people not to panic, but to stay cautious.

WHO recently declared the spread of Ebola virus as an international health emergency in the West African countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Nigeria.

There have been 1,779 cases of Ebola among which 961 deaths have been caused.

Ebola kills up to 90% of those infected. It spreads by contact with infected blood, bodily fluids, organs or contaminated environments.

Initial flu-like symptoms can lead to external haemorrhaging from areas like eyes and gums, and internal bleeding which can lead to organ failure.

Meanwhile, Inter Service Public Relations (ISPR) said, in a statement, all UN peacekeepers including Bangladeshis staying in the West African countries were out of Ebola infection.

Drug official gets bail

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would follow the court's decisions.

In an application produced by the Public Prosecutor Shaheen Ahmed Khan, Jahangir Hossain Mollik, director general of the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA), pledged to help make his subordinate obey court orders.

On August 6, the court had sent DGDA assistant director Khair to jail for defying 18 of its consecutive orders passed since March 2012, asking him to testify in two cases Khair filed in 1992 against BCI Bangladesh Ltd for producing toxic paracetamol syrup that allegedly killed 76 children.

Proceedings of the cases had been stayed for 19 years due to a High Court order that came in 1994.

However, lawyers yesterday considered the application not sound, as the DG only pledged to ensure Khair's being produced before the court. It did not clarify as to whether the documents supporting his testimony would also be brought in.

The public prosecutor, on Thursday, had specifically pointed out before the court that Khair had not brought with him documents to support his testimony.

This ambiguity gives rise to concerns about the cases' fate as the DGDA, in October 2011, had officially informed The Daily Star of losing all documents related to the cases. By documents, it meant results of the tests detecting the presence of the toxic element.

"Samples of paracetamol syrups were collected from Shishu Hospital

on August 6, 2011, and sent to the

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for testing.

After the test results were issued,

the DGDA issued a press release

saying that the results were inconclusive.

Khair was then summoned to appear

before the court on August 6, 2012.

Khair failed to appear and was

sentenced to 10 days in jail.

Khair appealed to the High Court

and the court issued a stay order.

Khair was then summoned