



Garuhara Non-government Primary School at Jatrapur union in Kurigram has been inundated, leading to the suspension of academic activities. *Right*, flood water swamps Gozaria Government Primary School in Shariakandi upazila of Bogra. This is one of the 18 primary schools closed amid flood in the upazila.



PHOTO: STAR

SUJAN'S CUSTODIAL DEATH Judicial probe completed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Investigators yesterday completed a judicial probe into the custodial death of garment-waste trader Mahbubur Rahman Sujan with taking witnesses account of three policemen. Metropolitan Magistrate SM Ashiqur Rahman recorded the statements of Tareq Ahmed, senior assistant commissioner of the detective branch (west) of police, sub-inspector Saiful Islam of Hazaribagh Police Station and constable Anwar Hossain of Mirpur Police Station, said court sources.

With the three, the magistrate has so far taken accounts of 11 persons, said court sources.

The magistrate recorded statements of Sujan's wife Momtaz Sultana Lucy on August 5 and five other family members the next day.

On July 20, a Dhaka court ordered a judicial probe into the Sujan's death after Lucy filed a murder case against 10 people, including

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Education faces wrath of floods

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Buriganga, Shitalakkhya, Turag and Balu -- might rise in next 72 hours due to the rise of the Old Brahmaputra, mentioned Ripon.

Among the southern districts, Madaripur's Shibchar upazila has been hit by onrush of water from the Padma, which is flowing 15cm above the danger level in Shariakandi upazila.

In Bogra, over 17,000 families and 46 educational institutes in three upazilas have been affected in flooding, Md Arifuzzaman, Nazarat Deputy Collector (NDC) of Bogra, told this newspaper.

Though the water level in seven points of the Jamuna has decreased, the river was flowing 61cm above the danger level in Shariakandi upazila.

A total of 19 schools have been closed. Students of 12 more schools are attending classes on embankments under the open sky.

In Kurigram, about two lakh people in chars and low-lying areas of 52 unions remained displaced as flood water has been receding slowly. The Brahmaputra, Dhara, Dudhkumar and Teesta were flowing below their danger levels.

District Primary Education Officer Abdul Kader said 172 primary schools have been closed due to flooding.

"I've asked the school authorities to arrange classes for class-V students on higher lands as the Primary School Certificate exams are not far away," he added.

Though the flood situation improved slightly in Lalmonirhat with Teesta water level decreasing by 10cm yesterday, 47 schools in the district remained closed since August 16, disrupting education of more than 9,000 students, said district education officers.

State Minister for LGRD Mashiur Rahman Ranga visited the flood and erosion affected Kulaghat village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila yesterday, but no relief materials were distributed among the victims.

Six out of seven upazilas of Jamalpur have been hit by the flood. Some 20,000 families in the worst-hit Islampur upazila are suffering from shortage of food, drinking water and medicine. Sixty-six primary schools in the district have been closed for six

days.

A total of 3,500 families of Islampur, Dewanganj and Sharishabari upazilas have been displaced by the deluge. Of them, 2,500 have already received relief materials, said Shafiqur Rahman, district relief and rehabilitation officer (in-charge).

Twenty-four metric tonnes of rice and 5.5 lakh taka have been distributed among the victims.

According to the sources of Agriculture Extension Department, a total of 14,386 hectares of cropland went under water in the district.

Downpours coupled with the onrush of water from hilly areas triggered flash floods in Sunamganj, inundating 70 villages in the district where the Surma was flowing 93 cm above the danger level yesterday afternoon, according to the flood control cell of Water Development Board.

Duarabazaar upazila primary education officer said 15 schools in the upazila suspended their classes.

Our correspondents in Bogra, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Jamalpur and Sunamganj contributed to this report.

147 leaders, activists

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higher court challenging the legality of the indictment order.

Indictment of so many people in a case is very rare in the country's judicial history. Earlier, a total of 847 people, mostly members of the erstwhile Bangladesh Rifles and a few civilians, were indicted in a case for killing 74 people, including 57 army officers, during the February 2009 mutiny by the members of the paramilitary force at its Pilkhana headquarters.

During the hearing yesterday, BNP leader Farroque told the court that police on that day had entered their office and assaulted them without any provocation. The BNP should have sued policemen for carrying out the attack, but rather police have filed cases against party men to divert attention from the fact, regretted Farroque.

Farroque, Rizvi, Aman, Pradhan and 95 others pleaded not guilty and demanded justice after Metropolitan Magistrate Tareq Mainul Islam Bhuiyan read out charges to them.

The charges in the case filed under the speedy trial act were pressed on March 24 against 148 opposition alliance men, but one Omar Faruk was dropped from indictment as he died last year.

The court also cancelled bails of 48 others and issued arrest warrants for them for failing to appear before it.

The magistrate fixed September 25 for starting trial of the case.

Law enforcers on March 11 last year detained 157 leaders and activists of the BNP-led alliance during a raid on the BNP headquarters after cocktails went off at a rally in front of the office.

Paltan police on the same day filed two cases against 154 of the detainees.

Of the detainees, BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, Vice-chairman Altaf Hossain Chowdhury and then Dhaka city unit convener Sadeque Hossain Khoka were freed the next day.

On March 20, all the 154 alliance men except for then opposition chief whip Farroque, Aman and Rizvi were placed on a three-day remand in the case.

Such a large number of people had never been remanded before at a time in the country's history. Previously, the highest number of accused remanded in any case was 60, according to court records.

Investigation was underway in the other case filed under the penal code against the same accused.

Black money flying abroad

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Canada and the UAE, just to name a few -- where huge sums were laundered.

To settle in Malaysia under its My Second Home (MM2H) programme, for instance, one needs to show liquid assets worth at least RM 500,000 (about Tk 1.22 crore) and offshore income of RM 10,000 (about Tk 2.45 lakh) per month.

Between 2002, when the programme was launched, and April this year, some 25,500 people from across the world migrated to the country. Of them, 2,874 (11 percent) are Bangladeshis, according to the Malaysian government website.

This means, these Bangladeshis laundered about Tk 3,500 crore at least to settle under the MM2H programme, and none was required to take approval from the competent authority in Bangladesh, as Malaysia does not inquire about the source of the money.

The Malaysian government website also shows the number of Bangladeshis settling in the country rises when election comes around. As many as 852 Bangladeshis settled there in 2005, ahead of the 2007 ninth parliament polls. The number was 388 in 2012, just before the 10th national election.

Similarly, a Bangladeshi can get residence permit in the US or Canada by showing liquid assets worth \$500,000 (about Tk 3.87 crore). Statistics are hard to come by, but reportedly hundreds of

affluent Bangladeshis have made these two countries their second home. Again, the US and Canada will not inquire where the money has come from, experts say.

Zahid Hussain, lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office, told The Daily Star that black money holders preferred to siphon off money instead of whitening it.

According to him, political unrest centring on the January 5 election prompted many to launder their undisclosed money to other countries.

"Since it was an election year, the risk of getting caught was high if the money earned through corruption was kept in the country. So they are at ease by depositing the sums in safe havens," said the WB economist.

In the last fiscal year, 2,573 people legalised their black money by investing in the real estate business, 210 people by paying normal tax plus penalty and one person by purchasing treasury bills.

But there is no figure as to how many people siphoned off how much money. However, analysts say the difference between the formal and informal market rates of US dollar in the second half of 2013 shows the amount was not negligible.

The difference stood at Tk 4, whereas normally it stays below Tk 1, meaning a huge amount might have been laundered in the lead up to the

January 5 election, according to experts who blame the complex legal structure, bureaucratic red tape and culture of vengeful politics for this.

Take, for instance, a Bangladeshi businessman whom we cannot name for safety reasons. For years, he tried to obtain permission to invest abroad in vain. He finally settled in Canada last year.

According to him, the central bank is partially responsible for a large amount of money going out of the country.

"The Bangladesh Bank doesn't permit us to invest abroad. But how much money you want to launder -- Tk 100 crore, Tk 200 crore or Tk 500 crore? It doesn't matter, you can launder it anytime to any country," he told The Daily Star.

In Bangladesh, money laundering is popularly known as Hundi or Hawala transactions. Hundi is an alternative or parallel remittance system active all over the world. Hawala is an Arabic word for transferring money or information between two people using a third person.

But businesses, especially exporters, do this in a "smarter" way.

Some exporters of readymade garments have set up a complex web of intermediaries with the sole purpose of siphoning off revenue to offshore zones and Western banks. An RMG maker, for instance, exports products first to its offshore affiliate or a buying house at a low price. Then it sells the items to Western

consumers at a higher price. The extra sum, earned through such under invoicing, is then deposited in foreign banks.

Insiders say it is very easy and safe.

As for the complex legal structure, an NBR official said many people do not whiten their undisclosed money for fear of arrest under other laws.

When a black money holder whitens his money, he gets amnesty under the tax law only, the official said, adding, "But he can still face cases under other laws, including the Anti-Corruption Act."

Also, there is the fear of political vengeance. If someone affiliated with the Awami League politics, for example, legalises his undisclosed money today, he may face harassment and even cases with the change of the government.

All these discourage people from legalising their undisclosed money, despite repeated offers of amnesty by the government, analysts say.

Over the past 43 years since independence, Tk 13,753 crore of black money was disclosed -- 70 percent of the amount during the 2007-08 caretaker government tenure alone.

The WB economist spoke against extending the amnesty every year. According to him, for the amnesty provision to be effective, it has to be given for a definite period and tagged with a warning. "Plus, it is very discouraging for the honest taxpayers."

Govt to export 50,000 MT rice

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until June 2015 in order to ensure good supply and control price hikes in the local market.

Notifying the cabinet about this year's rice production, Food Minister Qamrul Islam said the Sri Lankan government had sought one lakh tonnes of rice from Bangladesh.

In response, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina who chaired the meeting suggested that he should better export 50,000 tonnes now considering the flood situation, cabinet sources said.

"We will begin the procedure required to export rice shortly," the food minister told the correspondent by phone.

If there is a good Aman harvest, another 50,000 tonnes of rice will be exported under a government to government arrangement, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

Bangladesh has so far exported only aromatic rice in small quantities. In the last two fiscal years, export of aromatic rice amounted to Tk 77 crore, according to government statistics.

On the other hand, the government imported 3,000 tonnes of non-fragrant rice in the last fiscal year. This year the rice production has been satisfactory fulfilling the demand of the local market. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) projected a slight increase in the rice production this year.

SPEEDY POWER AND ENERGY ACT The cabinet yesterday also approved a proposal to extend the Speedy Supply of Power and Energy (Special Provision) (Amendment) Act-2014 for another four years till October 11, 2018.

The law aims at "quick disposal" of contracts in the power and energy sectors to meet the demand for power and energy in short time.

Amidst criticism, the government enacted the Speedy Supply of Power and Energy (Special Provision) Act in October 2010 for two years. In September 2012, the government extended the timeframe for two years, which will expire on October 11.

Briefing reporters after the meeting,

Cabinet Secretary M Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan said the law had been fruitful. It would not have been possible for the government to meet the growing demand for power and energy had it followed the traditional procurement laws and rules, he added.

Speaking about the power generation in the country, Hasina told the cabinet that her government wanted to set up a second nuclear power plant in the southern part to meet the growing needs of power.

PM ORDERS TO SAVE DHAKA

The prime minister directed the water resources ministry to take immediate steps to free the Balu river from land grabbers and connect it with Hatir Jheel lake so that flood water can be drained to prevent water-logging in the capital, sources in the cabinet said.

She also asked the authorities concerned to construct and repair roads in Dhaka city immediately to ease traffic jam. She advised the Ministry of Housing and Public Works to build a planned city in Purbanchal with modern facilities and broadened roads.

Bagerhat trio to face 8 charges

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will consider only the major offences committed during the Liberation War. "If we get evidence of a single offence, we will bring the offender under trial," he added.

The senior investigators said they will send three teams to different parts of the country next month to scrutinise over 584 cases and allegations in which around 3,230 are made accused of crimes against humanity committed in 1971.

The tribunal is currently leading investigations of 14 cases on crimes against humanity against 16 persons.

PROBE FINDINGS

Among the eight charges, four have been brought against Sirajul alone for the killing of 666 people, two against all of them for the killing of 47 people and two against Khan Akram and Abdul Latif for converting 200 Hindus and killing a person.

According to the probe report,

Sirajul on May 13, 1971 was involved in the killing of 40 to 50 people of Hindu Community at Ranjitpur in the district. Their houses were also plundered.

On May 21, 1971, an armed group killed around 600 to 700 Hindus when several thousand Hindu men gathered at Kalimandir in Dakra of Rampal of the district in order to go to refugee camps in India. Sirajul was involved in that killings, said Sanaul.

19 civilians of Besorgati and Kandapara under Bagerhat Sadar Police Station were detained, tortured and killed on June 18, 1971. Sirajul is found to have been involved in the killings, the probe report reads.

The senior investigator said Sirajul took part in looting 50 houses of Chulkathi village and killing seven persons.

The trio attacked civilians at Shakharikathi Haat under Kochua Police Station and killed 42 per-

sons on November 5, 1971, he said.

During the last week of July 1971, Khan Akram and Abdul Latif forced 200 Hindus of Shakharikathi village to convert into Muslim. "They were forced to eat beef," said Sanaul.

The three war crimes suspects killed five persons of different villages of Kachua Police Station on November 22, 1971.

Khan Akram and Abdul Latif detained freedom fighter Fazlur Rahman of Teligati village and killed him on December 13, 1971. Sixty-eight persons are made witnesses of the case.

The trio were the supporters and activists of Muslim League, a political party that opposed the birth of Bangladesh.

Abdul Latif and Khan Akram were arrested on June 10 and June 20 respectively, while Sirajul, who went into hiding after the issuance of arrest warrant by the tribunal, was arrested on July 21.