



A joint team of coastguard and narcotics department parading two people arrested from a fishing boat near the Chittagong Port yesterday. Around 6.80 lakh yaba tablets were seized from the boat.

PHOTO: STAR

Hasina sees plot against country

UNB, Dhaka

In an apparent reference to the recent murders of two foreigners, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said there was a plot to tarnish the country's image through creating a situation in the country with the killings.

"The situation is under full control of the government," she told newly appointed Dutch Ambassador to Bangladesh Leoni Cuelenaere when she met the premier at her office.

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters after the meeting.

Japanese citizen Kunio Hoshi was shot dead in Rangpur on October 3, five days after Italian national Cesare Tavella was gunned down in the capital's Gulshan by unidentified assailants.

Hasina said after assuming office, the present government took necessary measures to contain insurgencies in the country.

She mentioned about the burning of innocent people to death by "BNP-Jamaat men" in the name of a movement.

She recalled the horrible incidents during the 2001-2006 tenure of the then BNP-Jamaat alliance government when she came under a grenade attack

and the serial bomb blasts on a single day across the country.

Turning to Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100, the PM expressed satisfaction over the progress of the ongoing activities under the plan, including river dredging.

Recalling her meeting with Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte on the sidelines of the 70th UNGA in New York, the PM said she was waiting to meet the Dutch Queen in the first week of next month during her visit to the Netherlands.

She welcomed the proposed visit of the Dutch Queen to Bangladesh next month in her capacity of the UN secretary general's special advocate for inclusive finance for development.

The premier greeted the Dutch envoy on her new assignment to Bangladesh and assured her of all-out cooperation during her tenure.

The Netherlands envoy congratulated Hasina for receiving the world's highest environmental accolade, The Champions of the Earth Award, and The ICT Sustainable Development Award of the International Telecommunication Union.

Leoni Cuelenaere also lauded the PM's pragmatic leadership in achieving the Millennium Development Goals

Now govt to hire teachers

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said at a press conference.

"We have finalised almost everything and won't take much time. We hope to complete it in a month," he said.

The press conference was organised to brief reporters on the amendment of the Non-Government Teachers Examination, Registration and Certification Rules, 2006.

The formation of a separate recruitment commission for non-government educational institutions was mentioned in the National Education Policy, 2010.

There are around 30,000 such institutions in the country.

According to the new amendments, teachers will be appointed to institutions in their own upazilas.

However, the ministry is yet to make it clear who will be at the helm of the NTSC.

Although educationists have hailed the decision, they have stressed that the commission must be able to work effectively and independently.

CORRUPTION AND NEPOTISM

The existing teacher recruitment system in the non-government educational institutions is mired in widespread allegations of corruption and nepotism.

To become a teacher, as per the existing system, aspirant teachers sit for a pre-qualifying examination under the Non-government Teachers' Registration and Certification Authority (NTRCA).

Since the absolute authority over the selection process lies with the managing committees and governing bodies, there is huge room for corruption and nepotism, said officials of the education ministry.

Each lawmaker is the chief of four such committees in his constituency while the people nominated by him head the other committees.

"So bribery and political consideration get priority in appointments," said a top official of the ministry, wishing not to be named.

He also said although the government bears the whole salary expenses for the teachers in these institutions, it has apparently no say in their appointments.

Briefing the reporters, the minister too said appointment of teachers lacks transparency. Nepotism takes place when the right people do not get appointed.

"We need quality teachers, which is

the main challenge," Nahid said.

Explaining the loopholes in the current system, the minister said NTRCA conducts the pre-qualifying test without having a fixed number of vacant posts. Therefore, a huge number of candidates pass the test.

The candidates then resort to illegal means to get appointed since there is no provision for selection based on a merit list and since the number of successful candidates is huge, he said.

Besides, he said the NTRCA's test does not have any viva voce, so many candidates with faulty ways of expression are getting appointed.

"Overall, it hampers appointment of qualified teachers," Nahid said.

He said once the commission is formed, the NTRCA would be dissolved.

The minister informed that 12 pre-qualifying tests were held so far with more than 5.40 lakh candidates coming out successful.

Of the successful candidates, only 63,042 were recruited while the rest of 4.77 lakh are waiting for appointments. At present, there are around 40,000 vacant posts, he said.

He said the candidates who are yet to be recruited will be in the merit list of the NTSC.

HOW THE COMMISSION WILL FUNCTION

According to the new amendments, district education officers will collect the number of vacant posts in these institutions before the end of every year.

On the basis of that demand, the NTSC will conduct the qualifying test to be held in three phases -- preliminary, written and viva voce.

A merit list will be prepared at upazila, district and national levels with an additional number of successful candidates.

The education minister said the successful candidates will be appointed to their own upazilas. If any upazila does not find any candidate for a particular subject, then someone from a nearby upazila will be recruited.

If the candidate is not found in the nearby upazila, someone will be appointed from the district level, he said, adding that if the teacher is not found at the district level, then someone will be recruited from the divisional level.

"We will take opinion from all. We welcome good suggestions," he said.

Education Secretary Nazrul Islam Khan said the validity of the certificate given by the NTSC to the candidates will be for three years. "After that, the candidates will have to sit for the test again," he said.

DECISION HAILED

Welcoming the government decision, Rasheda K Choudhury, a former adviser to a caretaker government, said an independent commission is essential for appointing skilled and competent teachers.

"We've long been demanding for such a commission. We want an effective commission which could work without any fear or favour," said Rasheda, also the executive director of Campaign for Popular Education.

Shahjahan Alam Shaju, general secretary of Shwadhinata Shikkhak Parishad, said, "Recruitment through a separate commission will not only end unbridled control of the managing committees but also will bring an end to corrupt practices."

"We want real meritorious students to get the jobs," he said.

He, however, said they do not want to see any bureaucrat like deputy commissioners or upazila nirbahi officers pulling the strings.

Big hike likely

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Apart from their salaries, the high-ups of the country enjoy other benefits as well.

On September 7, the cabinet approved a proposal for hiking the pay of around 14 lakh government employees. The raise ranged from 95 to 101 percent.

The highest post holders in the civil administration are the cabinet secretary and the principal secretary to the PM.

The fixed salary for the two posts is Tk 86,000, up from Tk 45,000. The remunerations for the senior secretaries have become Tk 82,000 from Tk 42,000.

The new pay scale came into effect in July. The government employees will be able to draw the hiked salaries after the finance division issues a circular in this regard.

The finance ministry official said the circular may come by the first week of the next month.

If that happens, the government staff would be able to draw the hiked salary -- for the month of November -- in December, he said.

The public servants will also receive four months' arrear with the November salary, he added.

6.80 lakh yaba pills seized

2 arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A joint team of coastguard and the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) yesterday recovered 6.80 lakh yaba tablets from a fishing boat near Chittagong port and arrested two persons in this connection.

The two are Faridul Alam, 40, and Abul Kalam, 35, of Gohira in the district's Anwara upazila.

The team recovered 68 packets, each of which contained 10,000 yaba pills, from the boat.

The value of the tablets was estimated at about Tk 20.50 crore.

The tablets were being smuggled in from Myanmar through Teknaf.

VAT on tuition fees stays

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paralysing the capital for three days. The government then came up with a "clarification" that VAT would be collected from the universities, not from the students, but the protest did not let up.

Amid such a situation, the government exempted private university students from VAT on September 14.

Three days later, around 300 parents, students and teachers of English medium schools formed a human chain on footpaths of Sat Masjid Road in Dhanmondi to press home their demand that VAT on English medium school fees be withdrawn too.

They termed it "dual policy" that the government lifted only the VAT on private universities.

The same day, guardians of two English medium students filed a writ

petition challenging VAT on school fees, in response to which the HC stayed the VAT collection for six months. The court also issued a rule asking the government to explain why the imposition of VAT should not be declared illegal.

Petitioners' lawyer Shahdeen Malik yesterday told The Daily Star he had expected that the government would not appeal to the SC against the HC order and would not victimise schoolchildren.

"If the government feels that VAT from school students would be its source of income then be it. Let the government reap money from the students."

He would take steps after consulting his clients about the hearing on the rule issued by the HC, Shahdeen Malik added.



Engineers' Institution Bangladesh organises a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday, demanding immediate arrest of the people who murdered former PDB chairman Khijir Khan at his Madhya Badda home on October 5.

MP Liton detained

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The OC added that once the lawmaker was brought to them, they would show him arrested in both the cases and produce him before a Gaibandha court.

Asked if they would seek remand for the MP, he said, "We are yet to take a decision in this regard."

Earlier in the day, Chamber Judge of the Appellate Division Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain stayed a High Court order that had asked the lawmaker to surrender before a lower court in Gaibandha by October 18, clearing the way for his arrest.

The chamber judge came up with the order after hearing two separate petitions moved by Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, seeking a stay on the HC order.

There is no legal bar for law enforcers to arrest Liton in the cases following the SC order, Mahbubey Alam told reporters.

He said the HC on October 12 rejected the two anticipatory bail peti-

tions of Liton, but ordered him to surrender to the trial court. The HC cannot pass such an order on an accused after rejecting his bail petition, he added.

On the morning of October 2, the lawmaker shot Sourav Mia in both legs when the boy was taking a morning walk with his uncle at Gopalcharan village in Gaibandha, said Sourav's family members.

The MP was then returning to his home in Bamandanga from Sundarganj and stopped his car at Brac Intersection.

Liton gestured for Shahjahan to come near him. Scared, Shahjahan started running away.

At this, the MP flew into a rage and fired at Sourav's uncle from his personal gun. Two bullets tore through Sourav's right leg and one through the left.

Sourav's father Saju Mia alleged that Liton also tried to prevent them from taking his critically wounded son to Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

The following day, the victim's father filed a case with Sundarganj Police Station, accusing Liton of attempted murder.

The other case was filed on October 6 against Liton and nine of "his men" on charges of vandalising a house and looting furniture and corrugated iron sheets from its roof in a Gaibandha village soon after the shooting.

Sourav is now receiving treatment at Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

Abdullah-all-Mamun, mayor of Sundarganj municipality, said he heard that people in different unions distributed sweets on hearing the news of Liton's detention.

"He has committed crimes... He has tarnished the image of the party and that of his locality," Mamun said, adding, "The rule of law has been established through his arrest. Now we want to see him punished."

The prime minister and the home minister had kept their words, the local AL leader said.

No stranger to controversy

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he was already infamous for various misdeeds, including insulting teachers, firing blank shots at will, going about the area in a drunken stupor, and taking bribes from poor people promising them jobs at government schools.

Allegedly, the lawmaker was drunk when he shot Shahadat Hossain Sourav, a class-four student, who is now under treatment at Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

'OUT OF HIS MIND' Zahir Uddin is not the only teacher to have been insulted by Liton, 47, though.

Shafiqul Islam is the headmaster of the primary school next to Rambhadra Government High School. He had the misfortune to meet Liton once in 2014.

At their first meeting, Liton told Shafiqul: "You look more like a thief than a teacher."

The teacher was shocked but then thought, "He [the MP] must be out of his mind. No man in his senses can behave with a teacher this way."

So, it came as no surprise to locals when authorities of three colleges in the constituency removed Liton from their managing committees following the shooting.

Abdulla All Mamun, mayor of Sundarganj municipality under Gaibandha-1 constituency, brought some more serious allegations against Liton.

He alleged the lawmaker made huge money by misappropriating funds allo-

cated for educational institutions and also through taking bribes.

"He [Liton] took Tk 2,00,000 to 4,00,000 from each of the 64 peons hired in as many government schools in his area," he alleged.

The Daily Star could not verify his claim.

According to Mamun, also president of ward-9 AL there, Liton often fired blank shots from his gun since becoming an MP in 2014.

The lawmaker surrendered his licenced shotgun and pistol to police following the shooting of the boy.

'DIDN'T SHOOT THE KID' Locals also allege the MP has created a group of henchmen who make his presence felt throughout the constituency.

Interestingly, he has appointed his wife Syeda Khurshid Jahan his assistant personal secretary.

Ahead of the 10th parliamentary election, they both filed nomination papers. Syeda later pulled out of the race and her husband got the ticket.

According to their nomination papers, Liton stopped studying after his SSC while his wife has a master's degree.

The lawmaker could not be reached for comment, but his wife binned all the allegations, including that of corruption, against Liton.

"My husband is innocent. He did not shoot the kid," said Syeda, also joint convener of the district's Mahila League, the women wing of the ruling party.

According to locals, the lawmaker goes out every night and roams around the area. He also visits the upazila health complex during the night "to see if everything is alright".

Sundarganj Muktiyoddha Sangsad Commander Emdadul Haque Bablu said the lawmaker makes these visits after his "drinking hours".

He claimed Liton entered local politics in 1996, thanks to his power of money and muscle.

'PROPERTY, FAMILY' Sixth among seven siblings, Liton is the director of Ananda Group of Industries and owns a house in the capital's Dhanmondi, according to information submitted to the Election Commission.

His Gaibandha home stands on 12-Bigha land. Near Bamandanga Bazar in Sundarganj, he has a six-story cold storage named Ashraf Cold Storage.

His mother Altafun Nesa was a family planning worker. She joined Liton's father, Ashraf Ali, to become a Muslim League activist in the 1950s, local sources said.

Of his siblings, one sister is a joint secretary and another owns a firm, Ananda Builders. One sister is married to a prominent AL leader and yet another to a marine engineer.

One of his brothers teaches at a university in Canada and the other one is a marine engineer.

"But he [Liton] is a black sheep of the family," said Zahir, the headmaster.