

Missing students under surveillance

Claims home boss

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Students who have gone missing in recent times are now under surveillance of law enforcement agencies, claimed Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday.

The home boss' remarks came at a time when nine youths, including a madrasa student and a government employee, had gone missing in the last couple of weeks.

Their sudden disappearance has caused serious concern to their families, given that the Holey Artisan Bakery attackers and many other militant suspects disappeared in a similar fashion.

Kamal was addressing at an extended meeting of Awami League's Dhaka city (north) in a Gulshan hotel.

"The law enforcement agencies are working to find all militants," he said, adding, "Missing madrasa students are now staying away from their families on their own will."

He hoped that the missing persons would be found soon.

AK's Dhaka city (north) President ALM Rahmatullah presided over the meeting.

Questions

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frustration and dissatisfaction as all their preparation for the first day of the exams went in vain due to the negligence of the authorities concerned.

Suporna Rani, head teacher at Angapara Government Primary School, said she along with representatives from other primary schools reached the Sadar upazila primary education office on Friday morning to collect the math question papers.

After spending the entire day waiting there, Upazila Primary Education Officer Khandokar Shariful Islam told them that the math exam would have to be held later as the question papers were not ready yet, she added.

Contacted, UPEO Khandokar Shariful Islam said he was unable to deliver the math question papers in due time as he was busy at a workshop on Friday and the printers could not finish printing the question papers on time either.

Dilip Kumar Bonik, district primary education officer, said he issued a show cause notice to the UPEO and departmental as well as other administrative steps would be taken against the official concerned if he is found guilty.

The math exam at the Sadar upazila primary schools would be arranged after all other exams are over, he added.

Brutality

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behaviours of her husband Shofiquil Islam. He often didn't come home at night and seldom give her money for familial expenses.

Besides, there was always a demand for dowry from her husband. Whenever Liya protested, she faced torture.

"We brought our daughter (Liya) home on several occasions but Shofiquil's parents took her back through village arbitration by elders," said Liya's mother Halima Begum.

She gave birth to her first baby a year after the marriage. The second son was born on November 30 through a caesarean section at a private clinic in Tangail town.

On the night of December 6, a day after she went home, Shofiquil switched off the light of their room and attacked her all of a sudden with a sharp object.

"I couldn't see what it was in the dark. Hearing my screams, neighbours came to our house and rescued me," Liya said at the hospital.

Her father filed a case with Bhuapur Police Station on Friday against Shofiquil, his father Hamid Miah and mother Rokeya Begum under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, said OC AKM Kawsar Chowdhury.

The accused have been on the run since the incident and police have been conducting drives to arrest them, he added.

Water returns

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In 2013, the NGO Progressive took up the challenge as well. They developed a three-kilometre pipeline that would bring fresh water from a water-fall to a village tank, and on to every village home. It was a project that cost Tk 10 lakh.

"Villagers are really enjoying the benefits of the water supply," says Ghilachari union's chairman Amar Jibon Chakma. "They have no trouble to collect water now. We are all grateful to Progressive for the work they've done."

Progressive's executive director Sucharita Chakma notes the project was possible due to the cooperation of Choichari's villagers and also because of collaboration of NGO FORUM.

"Our project here will end this December," she says. "From then the water supply will be under the supervision of the villagers themselves."

US VOTING 'IRREGULARITIES'

Wisconsin judge rejects bid to stop recount

AGENCIES

A US judge in Wisconsin on Friday rejected a request by President-elect Donald Trump supporters to stop a recount of election votes while the Michigan Supreme Court denied an appeal by Green Party candidate Jill Stein to restart the state's recount.

The results of the Nov 8 election have been challenged in three states by Green Party candidate Jill Stein, who finished fourth in the presidential poll. In Pennsylvania, the third state, a judge said he would rule on Monday on whether to allow a recount to go forward.

Even if the recounts were carried out, they would be extremely unlikely to change the outcome of Trump's win over Democrat Hillary Clinton.

In Wisconsin, the Great America political action committee and Stop Hillary PAC had called on the court to halt the recount, which is more than 88 percent complete, according to the state elections commission. A commission spokesman said in an email

CJ for changes in charter

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control posting, promotion and discipline of lower court judges.

He said articles 116 and 116 (A) of the constitution, which deal with promotion, posting and discipline of lower court judges, contradict the basic principles of the constitution.

The chief justice made the observation while he was speaking as the chief guest at a programme at the Supreme Court Bar Association yesterday to celebrate veteran Supreme Court lawyer Abdul Baset Majumder's 50th anniversary in law profession.

Article 116 of the constitution states, "The control (including the power of posting, promotion and grant of leave) and discipline of persons employed in the judicial service and magistrates exercising judicial functions shall vest in the President and shall be exercised by him in consultation with the Supreme Court."

The succeeding article, 116 (A), states, "Subject to provisions of the constitution, all persons employed in the judicial service and all magistrates shall be independent in the exercise of their judicial functions."

The chief justice said the SC could not take steps about the lower court judges due to articles 116 and 116 (A).

Overseas touts

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As a result, the total migration cost of the jobseekers is now between Tk 5 lakh and 6 lakh, the agent said.

The recruitment agent said they have to "buy" every single Saudi work visa for about Tk 3 lakh.

The agent said brokers in Saudi Arabia send addresses of people in Bangladesh who are relatives of migrant workers or business people in Saudi Arabia. The agents pay the relatives here in Bangladesh and the illegal brokers collect the money from the migrant workers or businessmen in Saudi Arabia and bribe the employers for work visas.

The Bangladeshi migrant workers or the businessmen would have otherwise sent the money home as remittance.

A study by Malaysian NGO Tenaganita in 2007 found migration cost for a Bangladeshi in Malaysia was Tk 1.6 lakh to Tk 2.2 lakh. Less than half the amount stays in Bangladesh as fees and profit for the recruitment agents and the rest is used in Malaysia to pay bribes.

"This amount, if not paid as kick-backs to the employers, their personnel or labour supply agents in the labour-hiring countries, would surely have been remitted to Bangladesh," said another recruiting agent.

Bangladeshi migrant workers pay the highest recruitment costs in the world, said a World Bank report released in early 2015.

Citing a recent survey by the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development, the WB said worker-paid recruitment cost on average is \$1,955 in Kuwait with the Bangladeshis paying the highest, between \$1,675 and \$5,154.

The average cost of migration for male Bangladeshis, between 2014 and 2015, was Tk 3.8 lakh and for females Tk 1 lakh, according to a 2015 study by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

These findings are in sharp contrast to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) convention which says that migrant workers should not be paying recruitment fees or costs anywhere.

RMMRU Executive Director Professor CR Abrar said a migrant worker is not supposed to spend more than Tk 40,000 for passport, medical test, government and recruiting agent fees in Bangladesh.

"Ideally, all other costs, including

that the recount was expected to be completed on Monday.

Also on Friday, the Michigan Supreme Court, in a 3-2 ruling, denied Stein's request to restart a recount, affirming a lower court ruling that she did not have grounds to mount the challenge.

Although Clinton won the national popular vote, by 2.6 million according to the latest count, she lost to Trump in the Electoral College, the 538-person body chosen state-by-state that actually selects the president.

Trump, who won a projected 306 electoral votes to Clinton's 232, takes office on Jan 20. Neither Stein nor Libertarian Party candidate Gary Johnson won any Electoral College votes.

The three "Rust Belt" states narrowly supported Trump. The New York businessman and former reality TV star who has never previously held public office won by more than 68,000 votes in Pennsylvania and about 11,600 votes in Michigan, according to state figures.

The Supreme Court, following separate writ petitions, has already scrapped a number of amendments that were against the main pillars of the constitution. A few such scrapped amendments include the 5th, the 7th, the 8th and the 13th.

"The executive and the legislative branches of the state had derailed over the last 45 years of the independence of the country, but the judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court, did not do so," he observed.

Justice Sinha also urged young lawyers to concentrate on developing their professional qualities, rather than putting too much emphasis on making money.

"It is not possible for the chief justice or the judges alone to establish rule of law, unless the lawyers make their due contributions to this effect," the CJsaid.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, Supreme Court Bar Association President Yusuf Hossain Humayun and advocate Abdul Baset Majumder, also vice-president of Bangladesh Bar Council, also spoke.

Judges of the Appellate Division and the High Court Division of the SC, lawyers from across the country and law officers of the SC were also present

airfare, have to be taken care of by the employers," he said.

Labour migration researcher in Qatar Ray Jureidini in an ILO report said migrants have to take loans at high interest rates (30 to 60 percent), sell family assets and use their savings to finance the migration.

For Qatar, the government fixed migration cost at Tk 84,000 only. But Masud Mia spent Tk 6.5 lakh to go to Qatar two years ago, borrowing most of the money at 30 percent interest.

"I am yet to repay the loan," said Masud, who works as a welder in Doha and gets around Tk 30,000 a month even though he was promised Tk 50,000 a month.

"I get frustrated when I think about how I would repay the loans and save some," the 28-year old told this correspondent from Qatar where he works 11 hours a day.

It is not only the workers who are hurting. Bangladesh is also being deprived of a huge amount of foreign exchange due to these illegal brokers, corrupt employers abroad, and the illegal money transactions through hundi.

However, the practice of illegal money transactions is widespread in almost all the countries recruiting workers from Bangladesh and other Asian labour-sending countries, said Ray Jureidini in the ILO report.

As a result, a large number of low-skilled workers in the Arab countries face forced labour and debt bondage, he added.

Britain committed to Gulf security: Johnson

AFP, Dubai

Britain "is back" in the Gulf region and stepping up its security commitment, Foreign Minister Boris Johnson told regional policymakers on Friday.

"Britain is back East of Suez," he told the annual Manama Dialogue security forum, as his country prepares to leave the European Union after a shock referendum vote in June to quit the bloc.

"This is about building on and intensifying old friendships," Johnson said.

"Britain has been part of your story for the last 200 years, and we will be with you for the centuries to come."

Russia helped

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and 'Make America Great Again.'"

The Washington Post report comes after President Barack Obama ordered a review of all cyberattacks that took place during the 2016 election cycle, amid growing calls from Congress for more information on the extent of Russian interference in the campaign.

The newspaper cited officials briefed on the matter as saying that individuals with connections to Moscow provided anti-secrecy website WikiLeaks with emails hacked from the Democratic National Committee, Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton's campaign chief and others.

Those emails were steadily leaked out via WikiLeaks in the months before the election, damaging Clinton's White House run.

The Russians' aim was to help Donald Trump win and not just undermine the US electoral process, the paper reported.

"It is the assessment of the intelligence community that Russia's goal here was to favor one candidate over the other, to help Trump get elected," the newspaper quoted a senior US official briefed on an intelligence presentation last week to key senators as saying. "That's the consensus view."

CIA agents told the lawmakers it was "quite clear" that electing Trump was Russia's goal, according to officials who spoke to the Post, citing growing evidence from multiple sources.

Russian hackers did not limit their hits to the Democrats, according to The New York Times.

"We now have high confidence that they hacked the DNC and the RNC, and conspicuously released no documents" from the Republican organization, the Times cited one senior administration official as saying, referring to the Russians.

The Times also questioned when Russia started supporting Trump.

"It isfar from clear that Russia's original intent was to support Mr Trump, and many intelligence officials - and former officials in Mrs Clinton's campaign - believe that the primary motive of the Russians was to simply disrupt the campaign and undercut confidence in the integrity of the vote," the Times report added.

However, some questions remain unanswered and the CIA's assessment fell short of a formal US assessment produced by all 17 intelligence agencies, the newspaper said.

For example, intelligence agents don't have proof that Russian officials directed the identified individuals to supply WikiLeaks with the hacked Democratic emails.

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has denied links with Russia's government.

Those individuals were "one step" removed from the Russian government, which is consistent with past practices by Moscow to use "middle-men" in sensitive intelligence operations to preserve plausible deniability, the report said.

"I'll be the first one to come out and point at Russia if there's clear evidence, but there is no clear evidence - even now," said California Republican congressman Devin Nunes, the chair of the House Intelligence Committee and a member of the Trump transition team.

"There's a lot of innuendo, lots of circumstantial evidence, that's it."

At the White House, Deputy Press Secretary Eric Schultz said Obama called for the cyberattacks review earlier this week to ensure "the integrity of our elections."

"This report will dig into this pattern of malicious cyberactivity timed to our elections, take stock of our defensive capabilities and capture lessons learned to make sure that we brief members of Congress and stakeholders as appropriate," Schultz said.

Obama wants the report completed before his term ends on January 20.

"We are going to make public as much as we can," the spokesman added. "This is a major priority for the president."

The move comes after Democrats in Congress pressed the White House to reveal details, to Congress or to the public, of Russian hacking and disinformation in the election.

On October 7, one month before the election, the Department of Homeland Security and the Director of National Intelligence announced that "the Russian Government directed the recent compromises of emails from US persons and institutions, including from US political organizations."

"These thefts and disclosures are intended to interfere with the US election process," they said.

Trump dismissed those findings in an interview published Wednesday by Time magazine for its "Person of the Year" award. Asked if the intelligence was politicized, Trump answered: "I think so."

"I don't believe they interfered," he said. "It could be Russia. And it could be China. And it could be some guy in his home in New Jersey."

War history e-archived

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and maintains historical documents of Bangladesh's Liberation War. It is run on non-commercial and voluntary basis.

"It's a very rich site for the researchers and explorers who want to work on the Liberation War, as it has a huge collection of books, photographs and documentaries on the war," said Sajjadur recently.

The archive started its journey in 2007 with the name, "Bangladesh Liberation War Library and Research Centre", by collecting some books. At the initial stage, the organisers never dreamt of turning it into an online library. Simply a library was in their plan.

"But I was not satisfied with the output of the books collected as those could serve a limited number of people. Then I decided to turn it into a digital archive so people can get information on the Liberation War easily," Sabbir Hossain, director of the Liberation War e-Archive Trust, told The Daily Star recently.

The archive has eight categories of collection such as books, newspapers of different countries, audio clips, photographs, documentaries, video footage, said Sabbir, adding that the Library of Congress of US had inspired him much to take the initiative.

Between May 2014 and mid-November this year, some one million viewers logged in to the site. Now its daily viewership is 2,500.

It stores more than 4,000 books, 1,000 documentaries and video clips, 1 terabyte of newspaper clippings and war documents and the government list of freedom fighters.

The officials of the site thank many of its contributors who took the trouble of collecting the items from different places such as the British Library.

"A UK citizen of Bangladesh origin collected PDF [portable document format] of the 'Genocide in Bangladesh' by Kalyan Chaudhuri from the British Library, spending his own money, and sent it to us. There are several examples of such contributions that enriched the site," Shanta Anower, chairman of the trust, told this correspondent.

Stern action

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The minister made the comment when he was asked about repeated allegations of extrajudicial killings.

The government is committed to establishing the rule of law, Anisul said while addressing as the chief guest at the seminar arranged by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

This year's slogan is "Stand up for Someone's Rights Today".

The minister's comments came after Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) recently revealed that at least one person was killed on each day of November in so-called shootouts. The rights body had said 184 people were killed in "shoot-outs" in the last 11 months.

Emerging from the seminar, Anisul told journalists that the government was investigating the alleged incidents of people going missing and enforced disappearance.

"Whenever law enforcers receive information regarding such incidents, they will look into the matter," he added.

Replying to a query, he said the special provision in the proposed Child Marriage Restraint Act-2016 will not create any obstacle to achieving the aim of eliminating the menace from the society.

The provision has been included,

Mount pressure

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Bangladesh's border to address the problem.

They also criticised the United Nations and Western countries for their "weak role" to solve the crisis.

The Centre for Governance Studies organised the seminar titled "Human Rights Offenders in Asia: Role of the United Nations" at Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies.

Addressing the seminar, Tareque Shamsur Rahman, former member of University Grant Commission, said opening the border cannot be a solution.

He stressed the need for taking the Rohingya issue to international platforms and putting pressure on the Myanmar government to stop oppression of Rohingyas.

He suggested the Bangladesh government raise the issue in the UN Security Council.

Former ambassador Mohsin Ali Khan said the Rohingya crisis can only be solved through dialogues.

He said opening the border to Rohingyas would create environmental, food and lodging problems. It would also cause an increase in number of crimes as unregistered Rohingyas might get involved in criminal activities.

Referring to opening of European borders to refugees, Mohsin said Europe has resources with more than one country giving shelter to refugees. But Bangladesh doesn't have adequate resources to support Rohingya refugees.

Rights activist Sara Hossain said, "A man migrates to another country for political reasons or securing a job and it's not a humanitarian attitude when

Sabbir said they remain conscious about the copyright issues and go by the laws and readers/viewers cannot download certain books or documents but still can read/see those.

Initially, two friends were with him when he started collecting books, but he was alone when he began to develop the archive.

Sabbir said five of them are now involved in this initiative.

"At the initial stage, I used to make PDF files of the books through my personal scanner. I uploaded those in Scribd," he added.

Scribd is a digital documents library that allows users to publish, discover and discuss original writings and documents in various languages.

"Janatar Adalote Jamaat-e-Islami was the first book he uploaded in Scribd. It was in 2007.

"Within five months, I found 600 viewers had read the book. Back then there were a limited number of internet users in the country. The number vigorously inspired me to open my own website."

He said they tried to collect all kinds of books, documents, videos, and documentaries on the Liberation War. But their prime intention is to get the "first-hand documents" from the victims or persons concerned.

It started archiving photography in 2008 through collecting images from Magnum Photos, an international photographic cooperative owned by its photographer-members.

After the Shahbagh protest in 2013, Sabbir bought the domain <http://www.liberationwarbangladesh.org> that anyone can easily explore without paying money.

"The site came online on May 4, 2014 with 40 books and got the registration in March this year," he said, adding that they inaugurated it officially on November 14.

Trust Chairman Shanta said they have bought a server, which is now under construction and will be inaugurated officially on the Victory Day December 16.

considering the "reality in our rural society", he added.

The special provision allows marriage of girls under 18 years under "special circumstances".

Presenting the keynote paper, noted jurist M Amir-Ul Islam said the constitution mentions ensuring human rights through the enforcement of law but the tendency to break the law is evident everywhere.

"We need to come out of this," he said, adding that rights bodies should address the issue.

He also stressed the need for making people more aware of their rights stated in the constitution.

NHRC Chairman Kazi Reazul Hoque said although the government took initiatives to ensure human rights, but challenges remain as people were being subjected to serious rights violation in the forms of extrajudicial killings and custodial torture.

Nick Beresford, deputy country director of UNDP in Bangladesh, said it was needed to educate children about human rights at schools and make them aware of their rights at an early age.

Nazrul Islam, full-time member of the NHRC, among others, spoke at the seminar.

we fail to ensure his security."

'THEY KILLED SEVEN OF MY CHILDREN'

The Guardian yesterday ran a story on a Rohingya woman, Noor Ayesha.

She is among three women who were interviewed by the British newspaper in Cox's Bazar. They had recently fled Kyet Yoe Pyin and recounted the human rights abuses they say were perpetrated there and in surrounding villages in the days after October 9.

"Noor Ayesha held her last surviving daughter tight as their boat crossed into Bangladeshi waters. She left behind a firebombed home, a dead husband, seven slain children and the soldiers who raped her," wrote the British newspaper.

"A group of about 20 of them appeared in front of my house," the 40-year-old Rohingya woman recalled of the morning in mid-October when her village was invaded by hundreds of Burmese government troops.

"They ordered all of us to come out in the courtyard. They separated five of our children and forced them into one of our rooms and put on the latch from outside. Then they fired a 'gun-bomb' on that room and set it on fire.

"Five of my children were burnt to death by the soldiers. They killed my two daughters after raping them. They also killed my husband and raped me."

She said just one child survived the frenzy: five-year-old Dilnawaz Begum, who hid in a neighbour's house when the soldiers arrived in the village of Kyet Yoe Pyin, in the Maungdaw township of Rakhine State.