



Members of Socheton Nagorik Committee of Modhupur in Tangail and Youth Engagement and Support and Yes Friends Group, two associate organisations of Transparency International Bangladesh, take part in a cycle rally in front of Modhupur Degree College yesterday. The theme of the rally was "Corruption is against the spirit of Ekushey, we are united against corruption".

PHOTO: STAR

Lax verification

FROM PAGE 16

At least two dared militants -- Sarwar Jahan and Redwanul Azad Rana -- had collected MRPs on fake information, raising concern among the law enforcement agencies.

Top "Neo JMB" leader Sarwar Jahan whom the Rapid Action Battalion claimed to be "Neo JMB" chief Abu Ibrahim al Hanif, managed to get a passport using a fake name, Abdur Rahman, and address.

Sarwar allegedly jumped to his death from a building in Ashulia on the outskirts of the capital during a raid by the Rab on October 8 last year.

The Rab recovered a fake passport and a driving licence from his flat. His passport was issued on September 10, 2014, which contained his name as Abdur Rahman, father's name as Abdullah and permanent address as Kushkhali of Sathkira Sadar upazila.

However, the address was later found to be false. His parents Abdul Mannan and Saleha Khatun of Thumribhuj village in Chapainawabganj's Bholahat upazila later identified their son from a picture.

He also used a fake name in the driving licence.

Preferring anonymity, a Rab official yesterday told The Daily Star that the police official who verified the information Abdur Rahman used in his passport application recommended the DIP not to issue any passport to him as the information was found to be false.

"But a passport was issued to him mysteriously. We believe an official of the passport department might have helped him getting the passport. We are investigating the matter," he said.

ATM Abu Asad, director of the DIP, said they were yet to receive any complaint about issuance of a fake passport to Sarwar Jahan.

"If we receive any complaint, we'll investigate the matter and take punitive actions against any officials for any wrongdoing," he told this newspaper.

Redwanul Azad Rana, a key organiser of the banned militant outfit Ansarullah Bangla Team, was sentenced to death for planning and killing blogger Ahmed Rajib Haider. He obtained a passport with fake present and permanent addresses, police said.

He fled to Malaysia soon after killing Rajib on February 15, 2013 using the fake passport. The law enforcers did not know his identity until then.

CTTC chief Monirul said although Rana is from Feni, he mentioned Gazipur as his permanent addresses

and Dhaka as the present address in his passport.

As the CTTC supplied information and picture of Rana to Malaysian detectives in 2014 and asked them to arrest him, they recently arrested and deported the suspect to Bangladesh, Monirul added.

A CTTC team arrested him along with of his associates named Ashraf from the capital's Uttara area on Monday.

"Now we are verifying how he had collected the passport on fake information," Monirul said, adding that those who helped him getting a fake passport would be identified and brought to justice.

As per rules, a passport office issues a passport only after getting a police verification report that the information provided by the applicant is genuine.

However, there are allegations that police, in many cases, take bribes from applicants and submit the report without verifying the information properly.

Besides, there are complaints that applicants bribe passport department officials to obtain a passport with fake information.

DIP Director Asad said cops are supposed to file the police verification report to his office within 15 days under the urgent service category. If police fail to come up with the report within the stipulated time, the DIP issues the passport.

He said if police share its criminal database with the DPI, it would be able to check any passport applicant's criminal records beforehand.

"If anyone has any criminal record or is accused in any case of militant activity, we would not issue a passport to him," Asad said.

Police should continue updating its criminal database and update the passport office so that it can cancel any passport if the owner committed any grievous offence, he told The Daily Star.

TWO REMANDED

A Dhaka court yesterday granted five-day remand each for Rana and Ashraf in a case filed under the Anti-terrorism Act after police produced them before it, seeking 10-day remand each, said court sources.

Police filed the case with Uttara West Police Station accusing the two of planning subversive activities.

The remand prayer mentioned that the accused met in front of the Baitul Noor mosque in Uttara to plan subversive activities. About 4-5 other participants of the "secret meeting" fled the scene.

'Abducted' pro-AL man

FROM PAGE 1

Talking to The Daily Star last night Saleha said she submitted all relevant documents of the vehicle to Kapasia police and investigation officer of the CID.

She said the original number plate of the SUV was Dhaka Metro Gha-11-5756 but when the vehicle was recovered it had Dhaka Metro Gha-11-2029.

Quoting eyewitness Mobarok, a neighbour of Hefzur, Saleha yesterday said seven to eight people armed with shotguns "abducted" her husband, his two bodyguards and his driver from Tejgaon Gulshan Link Road around 7:00pm on September 7, 2015, when he was going to Gulshan.

"They dragged my husband out of his car and forced him into another car and left the scene," Saleha said.

The bodyguards and the driver were kept inside the Land Cruiser. They were blindfolded and driven around in Dhaka for three hours before they were left near the Sangsad Bhaban area, she said.

On information of her husband's abduction, Saleha first rushed to Badda Police Station but later went to Gulshan Police Station.

"Police didn't even agree to record a case let alone offer their assistance in finding my husband. I waited at the police station that night only to be refused by police to record the case," said an emotional Saleha.

"Instead of taking the case, then officer-in-charge of Gulshan Police Station advised me to go to the prime minister and seek her help," Saleha said.

She said Gulshan police eventually recorded the case following directives of the chief metropolitan magistrate's court.

Saleha could not reach the two bodyguards after the incident and driver Shah Alam refused to say anything about it out of fear that his family could be hurt.

In June 9, 2016, police detained driver Shah Alam and freed him after taking his statement about the incident. At that time, Shah Alam told Saleha that he would rather die than say anything about the abduction.

Saleha also filed a writ petition with the High Court later on.

Responding to the HC's queries, chiefs of Rapid Action Battalion and Police and Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner said they were investigating the matter.

"I also got responses from the chiefs

of police in 64 districts in which they said my husband was not in their hands," said the mother of two.

"I met the home minister and Rab chief several times. None could tell me the whereabouts of my husband," she said, adding, "Since filing of the case, police kept telling me that they were investigating. But I didn't get any other information."

Inspector Quayum of the CID, the investigation officer of the case, was not available for comments.

Abu Bakar Siddique, OC of Kapasia Police Station, said they were assisting the CID with the case. A general diary was filed with Kapasia Police Station after police recovered the SUV.

Police first failed to identify the owner of the car as the number plate was fake. They later traced its owner with the engine and chassis number.

Talking to The Daily Star, Jatiya Party Office Secretary Salauddin Ahmed yesterday said Hefzur was actually not a JP leader as he does not hold any posts in central or local bodies of the party.

"He just got the party nomination before the January 5 national elections to contest from Brahmanbaria-4 constituency," Salauddin said.

The returning officer cancelled his nomination and Hefzur had filed a case against the decision.

Law Minister Anisul Huq won uncontested from the constituency.

Hefzur's wife said he is actually an Awami League man. He had made an attempt to contest the polls with JP ticket as he did not get nomination from the AL.

He does not hold any posts in the AL either, Saleha said.

Ekushey

FROM PAGE 2

"I've come here to respond to the call of our mother tongue," he said.

Shadhin Bangla Betar Kendra singer Rothindranath Roy and Khurshid Alam rendered songs at the function while the guests also took part in a blood donation event.

Among others, West Bengal Information and Technology Minister Bratto Basu, Awami League Presidium Member Pijus Kanti Bhattacharya, poet Asad Choudhury and noted Indian writer Sheersendu Mukhopadhyay were present at the event.

[Our Dinajpur and Benapole correspondents contributed to this report]

Armed guards at Kim morgue

Malaysia says body still not claimed

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Armed men stood guard yesterday at the morgue holding the body of the assassinated half-brother of North Korea's leader Kim Jong-Un, with officials denying reports the dead man's son had arrived to claim the remains.

The corpse of Kim Jong-Nam -- who was killed last Monday at Kuala Lumpur airport -- has been at the centre of a diplomatic row between Pyongyang and Malaysia, after the North insisted it be returned and objected to an autopsy being performed.

But Malaysia rejected the request, saying the remains must stay in the morgue until a family member identified them with a DNA sample.

Jong-Nam's son Kim Han-Sol had been due to arrive in Kuala Lumpur from Macau on Monday night, local media and intelligence sources said, but AFP was not able to confirm his presence in the city.

In the early hours of yesterday a convoy of four unmarked vehicles was seen entering the hospital compound where they dropped off dozens of Malaysian special forces.

They were later replaced by private security officers.

A white police van was seen leaving the complex at 4:00 am (2000 GMT Monday), an AFP journalist said.

No family member had yet come forward to claim the body, said Noor Hisham Abdullah, director general of health, at a press conference which otherwise offered few details about Malaysia's investigation.

"We're still waiting for next of kin to come to us," he said, adding that an autopsy report was still pending more than a week after the murder.

Pyongyang's envoy to Kuala Lumpur on Monday dismissed Malaysia's request for a DNA sample as "preposterous" and said the embassy had the right to reclaim the body of a diplomatic passport holder.

Ambassador Kang Chol also savaged the police investigation into the killing, saying it was politically motivated and that Malaysia had conspired with South Korea from the beginning to frame the North.

Special

FROM PAGE 16

A special website has been set up at www.WA50.nl for those hoping to win an invitation, and the lucky 150 guests will be chosen in a lottery on March 3.

The draw is open only to those who share the king's birthday, live in The Netherlands, are over 20 and who are celebrating a "jubilee year" -- a birthday which is divisible by five, the palace said in a statement.

In a specially filmed message, the king, seated at a beautifully laid table laden with cut-glass and vases brimming with tulips, says "one of these 150 seats could be for you. My wife and I are looking forward to it."

The regal dinner will be held on April 28 -- so you can still celebrate your special day with family and friends.

After the dinner, the palace on Dam Square, Amsterdam, will be open to the public for free for 50 hours.

April 27 is an official holiday in The Netherlands to mark the king's birthday, and hundreds of thousands of Dutch don orange clothes and turn out for street festivities.

The first King's Day was held in April 2014, after Willem-Alexander ascended to the throne when queen Beatrix abdicated in favour of her son. He became the first Dutch king in more than 120 years.

Civilians in the crossfire of Boko Haram, military

AFP, Monguno

The four women lay dazed on the beds of the clinic. The face of one of them was burnt. Another broke her leg during the Nigerian army offensive against Boko Haram Islamists in their village.

Civilians have often been collateral damage in the conflict that has raged in remote northeast Nigeria for nearly eight years, leaving at least 20,000 dead and more than 2.6 million homeless.

The women wait for their wounds to heal in the suffocating heat.

"Boko Haram fighters would come to their village to steal food and hide," a nurse explained. "The army went there and put the women in a truck to evacuate them."

"The military set the village on fire, so the insurgents couldn't hide anymore. But the fire 'jumped' in the truck."

The women, with their heads covered and gold nose rings in the tradition of the ethnic Kanuri group, still look terrified.

They stare at the walls and ignore visitors, afraid that questions will focus too much on the circumstances of the "liberation" of their village.

The nurse says there are no more men left. They were either killed in the fighting, drafted into the civilian militia or forced to join the ranks of Boko Haram.

Some may even be at so-called "screening" centres, where soldiers pass judgement on whether local men have been involved in the insurgency.

Such checks, free from any oversight, can take weeks or months, especially if the men are Kanuri like the majority of Boko Haram.

James Adewunmi Falode, a security analyst at the University of Lagos who tracks the conflict, said Boko Haram's resemblance to "ordinary citizens" was

making the fight against them harder.

"They are not a military adversary that can be easily identified and destroyed on the battlefield. These people can easily blend into the general population when the situation demands," he said.

Even women and children, who have been repeatedly used by the group as human bombs, are a potential threat, explaining the tensions between the military and the public.

Around Dikwa and a dozen or so other secured major towns, villages have been emptied to prevent them being used by the jihadists as hideouts or resupply points.

The military also wants to stop the mass kidnapping of their inhabitants.

"Before, they (Boko Haram) would read the Koran and try to change us," said Bulama Goni, a former village chief with a white beard in long, flowing robes.

"Now, they are just criminals, asking for money, looking rough and disgusting."

UN alarmed by upsurge in Syria fighting

AFP, United Nations

The United Nations on Monday expressed alarm over escalating fighting in the Damascus area as the world body prepared to launch a new round of peace talks.

UN officials have received reports of civilian deaths and injuries from shelling in Qabun, Barzeh, Tishreen and western Harasta districts of the city, said UN spokesman Farhan Haq.

"The UN is alarmed by the intensification of fighting in the Damascus area in recent days," said Haq.

Over 100,000 civilians in need live in those neighborhoods which have seen an upsurge in fighting since Saturday, he added.

statement. INCREASED AUTOMATIC EXPULSION

The new rules make it easier for ICE and CBP officials to automatically expel undocumented immigrants. Kelly said the mass detentions of the past, requiring judicial review, have overburdened the government.

"The surge of illegal immigration at the southern border has overwhelmed federal agencies and resources and has created a significant national security vulnerability to the United States," he said in one of the memos.

"Thousands of aliens apprehended at the border, placed in removal proceedings, and released from custody have absconded and failed to appear at their removal hearings. Immigration courts are experiencing a historic backlog of removal cases."

Pro-immigrant groups condemned the memos and threatened legal challenges.

"These memos confirm that the Trump administration is willing to trample on due process, human decency, the well-being of our communities, and even protections for vulnerable children, in pursuit of a hyper-aggressive mass deportation policy," said Omar Jadwat, director of the Immigrants' Rights Project at the American Civil Liberties Union.

"However, President Trump does not have the last word here -- the courts and the public will not allow this un-American dream to become reality," he said.

Accolade

FROM PAGE 1

Indonesia, Grace Ofori-Sarpong of the University of Mines and Technology in Ghana, and Rania Mokhtar of the Sudan University of Science and Technology.

The winners, selected by a panel of eminent scientists, were honoured for their research in engineering, innovation and technology. They received \$5,000 and all-expenses paid trip to the AAAS Annual Meeting.

"The determination, commitment and enthusiasm of these five women are an inspiration to us all, and especially to other women undertaking scientific research in developing countries. This award celebrates their excellent science and demonstrates that their hard work has had an impact both regionally and internationally, despite the difficult local conditions," said Jennifer Thomson, president of the Organisation for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD).

The Elsevier Foundation hands out grants to knowledge centred institutions around the world, with a sustainability focus on innovations in health information, research in developing countries and technology for development.

The OWSD provides research training, career development and networking opportunities for women scientists throughout the developing world.

"We are celebrating the exceptional achievements of five truly outstanding women scientists," said the World Academy of Science Executive Director Mohamed HASSAN, also a special adviser to OWSD.

"Their work will be widely recognised and appreciated for the benefits it can bring to developing countries and the entire world. Just as important, they will serve as inspiring role models to future generations of women science leaders," he added.

12-yr-old boy

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Police rescued him, took his statement and handed him over to his father Hafizur Rahman, Puthia Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) (investigation) Rakibul Hasan told The Daily Star.

Although police could proactively bring the torturers to justice, the OC said they would "look into the matter" only after the victim's family files a complaint.

Hafizur, a landless farmer, is unwilling to file a case fearing associated expenses and reprisals from the staff.

He said Nazmul was told to stay overnight inside the bus of Sabbir Paribahan parked at Khan Filling Station. The staff started beating him at 3:00am and kept him tied to the truck till 7:00am, when the degrading treatment followed, he said.

"My son is still crying and claiming his innocence," said Hafizur last evening.

74 bodies

FROM PAGE 2

As of Sunday, 10,120 had arrived compared with 6,589 between January 1 and February 18 last year.

People smugglers have taken advantage of the chaos gripping Libya since the 2011 revolution to greatly boost their lucrative trade.

Most departures take place from the west of Libya, usually heading for Italy 300 kilometres (190 miles) away across the Mediterranean.

Europeans are considering measures aimed at blocking the arrival of thousands of migrants, alarming NGOs which fear that those stranded in Libya may suffer mistreatment.

In the absence of an army or a regular police force in Libya, several militias act as coastguards but are often accused themselves of complicity or even involvement in the people-smuggling business.