



Long queues of goods-laden trucks near Shimulia ferry terminal in Munshiganj yesterday. Ferries have not been able to use their full capacity for the last one month due to reduced navigability in the Padma. The authorities have begun to remove silt from the river to improve its navigability. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

HOLEY ARTISAN ATTACK

Suspect 'confesses' training militants

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Aslam Hossain Rashed alias Rash, an alleged key "Neo JMB" militant, yesterday confessed to a magistrate that he had coordinated arms training for the Gulshan cafe attackers.

In his confessional statement, Rashed said he collected arms and explosives from another "Neo JMB" leader Shohel Mahfuz who smuggled arms and explosives from India, court sources said.

Metropolitan Magistrate Sadbir Yasir Ashim Chowdhury recorded the statement for over three hours and sent Rashed to jail.

Rashed also said he had received arms for the cafe attack from Sagor and Chhoto Mizan at a Shevrapara den of the militants in the city days before the incident.

Later, the arms were handed over to another planner, Nurul Islam Hafiz, and finally used in the Gulshan attack on July 1 last year that left 20 hostages, mostly foreigners, and two policemen dead.

Earlier in the day yesterday, Humayun Kabir, an inspector of CTCI,

and also the investigation officer of the case, produced Rashed at the chamber of the metropolitan magistrate for recording of the confessional statement.

Rashed, 20, a "close aide" to Tamin Ahmed Chowdhury, the chief coordinator of "Neo JMB" was arrested in Natore on July 28.

The following day he was placed on a six-day remand. Later he was placed on another six-day remand for questioning about the cafe attack.

Another "Neo JMB" leader Shohel Mahfuz on July 23 confessed before a magistrate that he had supplied all the bombs used in the Holey Artisan Bakery attack.

Rashed earlier told interrogators that two of the five cafe attackers - Meer Saameh Mubasher and Rohan Imtiaz - had received training in throwing grenades in the middle of river Buriganga.

Chief of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit Monirul Islam said following the arrests of Rashed and Shohel Mahfuz, the case would be settled.

BNP chiefs eye surgery successful

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleeda Zia has undergone a successful eye surgery at a hospital in London on August 8, her party officials said.

Doctors of Moorfields Eye Hospital conducted a successful surgery for cataract in her right eye, on Tuesday evening at 6:00pm in London time, Syrul Kabir Khan, a staff of the BNP chairperson's media wing, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Khan said Khaleeda's doctor discharged her from the hospital three hours after the surgery.

She is now resting at home under the supervision of Dr Zubaida Rahman, wife of Khaleeda's son Tarique Rahman.

He said the BNP chief sought blessings from the country's people for her early recovery.

Khaleeda travelled to London on July 24 for medical treatment and to spending time with her family members there.

On September 16, 2015, she underwent a surgery for cataract in her left eye, also in London.

The BNP chief is likely to return home after celebrating Eid-ul-Azha with her family members in London.

Landing in jail!

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When they were supposed to be having fancy food at the wedding, they were answering a barrage of questions from the jail staffers.

They had to face interrogations and were released after four hours later, said Senior Jail Superintendent Prasanta Kumar Banik of Kishinpur Central Jail-2.

France said Billal and his family were on the way to Kuddus Nagar of Konabari in Gazipur from Dhaka on the pilot landed on the helicopter for the children of jail staffers.

Shougal Lalit, the school's pilot and also the director of flight operation of Meghna Aviation, wrote to the jail authorities and Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh expressing regret, Monjur Alam, officer (account and customer service) of the company, told The Daily Star.

MoU signed to import rice from Thailand

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other international sources.

Earlier, an Indian delegation also demanded high prices that Bangladesh did not agree as well. But before that, Bangladesh signed a deal with Vietnam for rice import at \$470 per tonne, and nearly one lakh tonnes of Vietnamese rice have already reached Chittagong port.

Qamul told journalists yesterday that though the country attained self-sufficiency in rice production, a loss of the crop in the haor region due to flashfloods necessitated import from different countries.

"We have already imported rice from Vietnam, and hopefully, we will be able

to import the staple from Thailand as per our requirements," said the food minister.

Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed, who was present during the MoU signing, said rice was being imported due to its domestic production shortfall. After to sign the MoU, the government would import Thai rice upon fixing price through negotiations.

Thai Commerce Minister Tantraporn said, "This is a very auspicious moment that we have signed this MoU for the rice trade between Bangladesh and Thailand. This MoU is an intention of Bangladesh to import rice from Thailand, the quantity not exceeding one million metric tonne per

year." Vietnam and Thailand apart, the government in last two months also inked an MoU with Cambodia for importing rice.

Besides, over the past two months, the Directorate General of Food floated seven international tenders, seeking to import an additional 3.5 lakh tonnes of rice.

The moves come long after the crop loss in the March flashflood, which ravaged the backwaters in the country's northeastern region where 90 percent of standing Boro crops, totaling over 10 lakh tonnes, was damaged. Fungal attacks in at least 19 districts also caused crop loss in the last Boro

season.

A recent US Department of Agriculture projection, however, put the figure at 15 lakh tonnes in the current fiscal.

The food ministry's move also comes at a time when end-season rice stock in public granaries dropped to a six-year low and market price of coarse rice shot up to as high as Tk 48 a kg in June-July. This is a 47 percent rise from the price during the same period last year.

Despite the government's move and increased buying by the private sector, a Trading Corporation of Bangladesh's market monitoring report shows that the price of coarse rice has remained static at Tk 45 a kg for over two weeks.

Don't file cases without nod from centre

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The plaintiff accused them Gazeta Sadar upazila nirbahi officer Barka Tariq Salman of distorting a portrait of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The incident led to the arrest of the then UNO.

Facing a barrage of criticism, the AL suspended Sazul for showing "over enthusiasm" in filing the case.

Earlier on August 2, the Police Headquarters issued an instruction to all the police stations across the country, asking them to consult its legal wing before recording any case under section 57.

The AL general secretary earlier said use of section 57 for trifling matters

should be stopped; otherwise, it would be suicidal.

About the party's latest directive, AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hani said the decision was taken to stop misuse of section 57.

Right activists and journalists have been demanding repeal of section 57 for its "widespread misuse to muzzle freedom of speech and the press." They say the section has sowed wounding, allowing it to be used for silencing journalists and social media users.

Under the ICT Act, police upon investigation of crimes submit either a charge sheet or a final report to the Cyber Tribunal in Dhaka, the lone tribunal to deal with such cases.

According to a tribunal source, the

court till July 30 received 763 final reports from police since the law was amended in 2013 with provisions for harsher punishments.

Ninety percent of the cases were filed under section 57 and a large number of those were filed by ruling party men, the source added.

The actual number of cases is much higher as police file final reports with the court only after completing investigations into the cases.

Of the 763 cases, 205 have so far been disposed of - 84 after trial and the rest either after getting final reports or after being withdrawn by plaintiffs.

This year, the tribunal has processed 342 reports in as many cases till July 30. Of them, 300 were filed under

section 57.

NARAI/JCD LEADER HELD

Police have arrested a Chhatra Dal leader in Narail in a case filed under the ICT Act for allegedly posting and sharing distorted photos of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and ex-home minister Sahara Khatun on Facebook, reports INSUR.

Sub-Inspector Saiful Islam of Lohagara Police Station said they arrested Lefin Khan, 22, vice-president of JCD Lohagara municipality unit, from Narail's Hatirbag area on Wednesday night, hours after he posted and shared the photographs.

Sagor Udadin Sohet, vice-president of Narai Chhatra League, filed the case with the police station.

At least 56 dead in Yemen sea

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sponsored said. The majority of the migrants appeared to be teenagers and young adults.

On Wednesday, traffickers also found more than 120 Somali and Ethiopian migrants into the rough seas off Yemen, to avoid arrest by local authorities, leaving at least 50 dead and 22 missing, UN reported.

UN teams, working with the International Committee of the Red Cross, found the bodies of 29 migrants in shallow graves along the coast of Shabwa, currently under the control of Yemeni troops backed by the United States.

"The smugglers deliberately pushed the migrants into the waters since they feared

that they would be arrested by the authorities once they reach the shore", an IOM emergency officer in Aden, where the Yemen government is based, told AFP.

Laurent de Boeck, IOM's Yemen mission head, said the boat's crew immediately returned to Somalia on Wednesday to pick up more migrants headed to Yemen on the same route.

He described the forced drownings as "shocking and inhuman."

"The suffering of migrants on this migration route is enormous. Too many young people pay smugglers with the false hope of a better future," he said.

Long the Arab world's most impoverished country, Yemen has all but collapsed

in what the United Nations has called the "largest humanitarian crisis in the world."

Years of fighting between the Saudi-backed government and Shiite Houthi rebels allied with Iran have been compounded by a cholera outbreak that has killed almost 2,000 people and the looming threat of famine.

The IOM estimates some 55,000 migrants have however left the Horn of Africa for Yemen since the start of 2017, more than half of them under the age of 18.

The journey is particularly dangerous at this time of year due to high winds in the Indian Ocean.

Despite the war, smugglers - who are highly active in the Red Sea and the Gulf of

Aden - have continued to force their way through Yemen, which shares a land border with Saudi Arabia.

In March, a helicopter opened fire on the vessel carrying 156 140 Somali passengers in the Red Sea and the attacking 34 civilians and wounding another 31.

The government was represented by AFP in June, said the attack constituted a violation of international humanitarian law and was most likely carried out by a Saudi-led military coalition backing Yemen's UN-recognised government.

The coalition has denied that its forces were operating in the area when the vessel carrying Somali refugees came under attack.

Woman tortured by husband, in-laws in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Police yesterday arrested the husband and two in-laws of a woman for torturing and leaving her critically injured at Kashiipur village of the district.

The arrestees Sirajul Islam, 42, his sister Lily Begum, 34, and her husband Abu Bakkar Siddique, 41, had allegedly dabbled in the victim's private parts with red chili powder. They were sent to jail by a court.

Quoting family members, police

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CASE AGAINST UNO SC asks law ministry to transfer Barisal judge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court has asked the Law Ministry to transfer Chief Metropolitan Magistrate of Barisal Ali Hossain, who had dealt with the defamation case against former Barisal UNO Gazi Tariq Salman, to Narayanganj as an additional district and sessions judge.

The SC's general administration committee led by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha took the decision at a meeting on Wednesday, a SC source said, adding that Ali Hossain was transferred as he had served as a CMM for two and eight months.

On July 25, the law ministry sent a proposal to the SC for transferring Ali Hossain to Jamalpur as an additional district and sessions judge as there were complaints about his role in the Barisal incident, Law Minister Anisur Huz had said.

Barisal City AL leader Obaidullah Saqu filed a case against Tariqul Haq allegedly distorting a portrait of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The incident led to the arrest of the then Upazila Nirbahi Officer.

The arrest created an outcry leading the AL to suspend Saqu from the post.

Govt finds reasons unacceptable

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against the "objectionable and irrelevant comments" in the judgment, according to meetings sources.

At the meeting, it was decided that the law minister would file a formal reaction to the verdict that restored the Supreme Judicial Council for removing SC judges on grounds of gross misconduct or incapacity.

In September 2014, the SC said the provision of SIC has been reinstated following the cancellation of the amendment that empowered parliament to remove SC judges.

The minister further said it was their belief that independence and job security of SC judges were protected through the change in the SCJ system.

"The government led by Bangabandhu's daughter Sheikh Hasina, and parliament never had any intention to limit or curb independence of the judiciary by any amendment," he said.

He also pointed out that parliament didn't get into any "power contest" with the judiciary through the 16th amendment, rather it made efforts to strengthen independence of the judiciary.

ANISUR ON CJA'S OBSERVATIONS

The law minister claimed that Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha made many comments in the judgment, which were irrelevant to the "fact in issue" of the case.

"He made derogatory remarks on the Jatya Sangsad and undermined this institution.

"I think those political questions cannot come into consideration of the court," said the minister.

Ansul said.

"The CJ's observation is not based on logic, rather it is driven by emotion and grudge, he added.

"We thank the four judges who disagreed with his [CJ] observations," he noted.

The minister said, "We all should remember that the office of the chief justice is a constitutional institution... So it is our responsibility to protect the dignity of the institution."

"I want to say that an institution is bigger than a person and the country is bigger than any institution."

The law minister said he respects the SC verdict though they disagree with it.

He mentioned that the SC upheld the High Court verdict that had wrapped the 16th amendment on three grounds.

One of the grounds is that the 16th amendment is against the basic structure of the constitution, as it will hamper independence of the judiciary. The judges cannot work independently if parliament members are given the responsibility of removing judges. The judges will be in fear of getting removed if their judgments go against lawmakers.

Another ground is that the 16th amendment is against the doctrine of separation of powers. The judges will be in fear of getting removed if their judgments go against lawmakers.

The third ground is that the 16th amendment is against the doctrine of rule of law. The judges will be in fear of getting removed if their judgments go against lawmakers.

The law minister said, "In our consideration, the 16th amendment to the constitution was made to strengthen independence of the judiciary and make it more transparent. We passed the bill on the 16th amendment to institutionalise checks and balances - the fundamental policy of democracy."

He further said they were saddened by the CJ's remark that "no nation, no country is made of or by one person."

"I am hurt by this statement," he said. History says a sovereign Bangladesh was achieved as a result of movements that took place from 1948 to 1971 under the leadership and ideology of Bangabandhu, and that the CJ's comments in this regard were unacceptable to them.

KM Sobhan - bypassing the Supreme Judicial Council.

He also mentioned that a sitting judge allegedly distributed leaflets of Hefajat-e-Islam among colleagues of the SC. The SC sat to discuss the issue. But the judge got acquitted though there was a lot of information about it.

Ansul said it was very sad that a meeting of the SC was called hurriedly after the final judgment was released on August 1.

Asked whether it was obligatory to abide by the segments in the observations on Article 116, which have been termed "irrelevant," the law minister said, "It is an observation of the highest court of the country. If there is any irrelevant issue in it, we have to see it and take steps against it or in favour of it."

He said the government would deal with the verdict through legal means, he added.

The law minister said the cabinet in April last year approved a draft law to determine a system for carrying out enquiry and removal of judges, and the process is similar to that of the SC.

The draft law proposed giving judges

the responsibility of probing any misconduct against their colleagues. They would then send the probe report to the Speaker, who would place it before the JS only if it is found satisfactory.

"In our perspective, it is a very transparent system.

"Deliberations by 100, 200 and 300 lawmakers are much more scrutinised than that of one or two members. That's why we brought the 16th amendment [to the constitution]."

The law minister further said the SC in its verdict made mention of 39 conduct probes against its judges. But there had been no such code of conduct for SC judges in the past.

Asked about bringing further amendment to the constitution, he said if people give them mandate or show their interest in favour of it, they would definitely do so.