

Doctor jailed

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 seeking acquittal, said his lawyer, Mahmud Bhuiyan Manna.

The ex-acting civil surgeon was sent to jail by a mobile court over a scuffle with Sheikh Murshidul Islam, additional deputy commissioner of Laxmipur, on Monday. The scuffle between the two happened at the entrance of Shishu Angan, a primary school near the deputy commissioner's residence.

The mobile court was conducted by Executive Magistrate Nuruzzaman. On Tuesday, Sharif was granted bail by a Laxmipur court following media reports and widespread criticism from different quarters.

On the same day, the High Court ordered ADC Murshidul and Executive Magistrate Nuruzzaman to appear before it on December 13 over the sentencing of Sharif.

BCL men

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 11:30am, they alleged.

The principal said resident students were asked to leave their dorms by 3:00pm.

"We wanted to avoid further violence," he told The Daily Star, refusing to comment any further.

The assault followed incidents over the last three days, where BCL men threatened the women in broad daylight with gang rape on the campus.

Students said BCL men had started intimidating women in the dormitory after they opposed BCL's proposal to form a human chain on the campus on Sunday. The women wanted to hold the programme in the city's Zero Point area.

The BCL men held the programme on the campus locking the women's dorm from outside.

In the afternoon, the BCL leaders went inside the women's dorm and threatened the resident students with gang rape. The threats of attack and rape were repeated on multiple occasions on Monday and Tuesday.

Many of the intimidated women stayed inside the dorm for two days after the incident.

Demanding security on the campus, about 100 women staged a sit-in yesterday morning.

They also submitted a complaint to the principal against several BCL leaders.

The women were attacked when they were returning to their dorm.

Sirajul said they would file a case in connection with the incident if the women agreed.

Asked, BCL President Jahidul Islam, said, "We did not attack or threaten anyone. The allegations against some of us are false."

He added that there was a brawl over the women's denial to take part in the human chain.

Meanwhile, Rajshahi city BCL in a meeting at the AL office last night decided to request the central committee leaders to expel Jahidul and three other leaders of the institute from the student body.

The rest of the leaders to be expelled are BCL General Secretary in the institute Anwar Hossain, and Vice Presidents Faisal Ahmed and Mizanur Rahman.

The women's complaint to the principal mentioned the names of the four leaders to be expelled from the organisation.

They also decided to abolish the BCL unit in the Institute of Health Technology, Fazle Rabbi, office secretary of Rajshahi city BCL, told reporters in an email.

Amir Jafar, a deputy commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police, who visited the scene, said they would investigate the allegation that women were attacked in front of police.

Earlier this year, the institute remained shut for over a month after a brawl between rivaling groups of BCL men, teachers said.

That incident on December 28 last year took place over establishing supremacy on the campus.

The institute, closed that day, reopened on February 4 with additional police deployment, the teachers added.

Cashing on the silence of the authorities, Chhatra League men have unleashed a reign of terror on the campuses of public educational institutions in Rajshahi over the last several years.

On December 23 last year, BCL and AL men stopped recruitment exams for government jobs at Rajshahi University and forced job seekers out of the campus.

A senior AL leader, wishing anonymity, said BCL men controlled all the student dormitories and often engaged in violent clashes on campuses of public educational institutions in Rajshahi.

NRBC Bank MD

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 have faced action for irregularities and loan mismanagement.

On November 27, Farmers Bank Chairman Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir and the bank's audit committee chair Mahabubul Haque Chisty resigned after the BB asked them to step down over their alleged involvement in financial scams.

Contacted, economists and experts welcomed the BB's latest action, but said it was not enough to restore corporate governance in the bank. They also said the BB should have acted sooner to bring back depositors' confidence in the NRBC Commercial bank.

In November last year, the central bank found that Mujibur was involved in disbursing loans worth over Tk 700 crore violating credit norms.

According to its findings, former Mercantile Bank chairman Shahidul Ahsan had drawn benefits from nearly Tk 44-crore shares held by two sponsor directors in the bank, breaching the Banking Company Law.

"Shahidul Ahsan is the actual beneficiary of the shares held by two NRBC Bank directors -- Kamrun Nahar Sakhi and ABM Abdul Mannan -- and those shares are forfeitable," said the BB report.

Shahidul was present in an annual general meeting of the NRBC Bank as proxy for Kamrun Nahar Sakhi, who lives in Canada. He also attended several meetings of the bank's board and the executive committee, violating rules.

Mujibur is responsible for all of these because, as the MD, he did not take any effective step to stop Shahidul from participating in the board meeting.

As allegations of irregularities at the bank began to surface in 2015, AKM Shafiqul Islam and Syed Golam Farouque -- both directors of Ahsan Group owned by Shahidul -- were appointed alternative directors for Sakhi and Mannan.

But Farouque had attended four meetings of the bank board even before his appointment, the BB found.

In one instance, the bank board approved a Tk 140-crore loan for AG Agro, a concern of Ahsan Group, on May 8, 2013, four days after Shahidul submitted an application for the loan.

Since the collateral against the loan was only Tk 3.91 crore, the BB advised the bank to bring down the loan amount. But the board not only ignored the advice, but also raised the loan amount to TK 183 crore in May last year, putting the bank at risk, the BB report stated.

Besides, the bank's head office approved loans worth Tk 19 crore against Begumganj Feed Mills, an asso-

ciate company of Ahsan Group, without any loan application from the client and proposal from the branch concerned. Later, the client submitted a backdated application to the bank.

At a meeting on May 11 last year, the bank board raised the loan amount to Tk 118 crore without verifying the company's capacity to pay back.

NRBC Bank's default loans stood at Tk 194 crore at the end of the third quarter of this year, up from Tk 128 crore a year earlier, due to massive irregularities in loan disbursement.

Finding such gross irregularities in the bank established in 2013, the BB issued separate letters to the bank's Chairman Farasath Ali and Mujibur on March 20, asking them to explain why they would not face action for their wrongdoings and their failure to protect depositors' interest.

Later, a BB standing committee started interrogating Mujibur in a personal hearing at the BB headquarters on October 16.

As he failed to satisfy the BB officials, the central bank at last removed him from the post as per article 46 of the Banking Company Act, concluding the process yesterday.

However, the BB has yet to take any action against its chairman.

'TOO LATE, NOT ENOUGH'

Contacted, former BB governor Salehuddin Ahmed said the central bank should take punitive action also against the board members as they too were involved in the malpractice.

Exemplary punishment against the board and the management will help prevent such scams in future, he added.

The BB waits too long to take action. This is unhelpful, as the scamsters get more time to perpetrate more corruption, he noted.

"Mujibur has been removed almost one and a half months after arranging the hearing by the central bank. The BB will have to take such action promptly and timely," he said.

AB Mirza Azizul Islam, former adviser to a caretaker government, said the BB should consider taking legal action against the scamsters.

The BB should send its reports to the Anti-Corruption Commission for actions against those involved in the loan scandal.

Also, the board members who were part of the scam should be removed, he added.

Govt to buy

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 Bangladesh is still battling to increase its reserve, with rice import set to hit its highest level in a decade.

The import of rice at both government and private levels has been stepped up lately. From July 1 to November 21, 18.18 lakh tonnes of rice was imported. Of the quantity, 4.12 lakh tonnes was brought in by the government.

Last fiscal year, the government did not have to import any rice, but 13.32 lakh tonnes of the staple came through the private sector.

The government has also decided to import 20 lakh tonnes of food grains -- 15 lakh tonnes of rice and 5 lakh tonnes of wheat -- this fiscal year. This is 11 lakh tonnes more than the government's earlier projected food import target.

Through the imports, the government's food reserve, which had fallen below 3 lakh tonnes, has started to gradually increase.

The food reserve on November 21 was 6.15 lakh tonnes, of which rice was 3.97 lakh tonnes. On the same day last year the reserve was 7.94 lakh tonnes with the quantity of rice 5.04 lakh tonnes.

The cabinet committee on purchase yesterday also approved a proposal to import 50,000 tonnes of wheat at \$245.35 per tonne to be supplied by Korea-based M/s Singsong Food Corporation.

Police sue 122

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 them to jail and set December 10 for hearing on the remand petition.

DC Maruf said, "We are now trying to identify the other suspects based on the statements of the eyewitnesses and Footage of CCTV [installed in the area]."

Police charged the accused with vandalism, arson, attack on cops and obstructing them from performing their duty.

The accused include BNP Joint Secretary and Dhaka City South President Habib-un-Nabi Khan Sohel, Jubo Dal President Saiful Islam Nirob and Secretary Sultan Salahuddin Tuku, Central Chhatra Dal Vice President Jakir Hossain Mintu and BNP central leader Nabiullah Nabi.

On Tuesday, over 100 BNP men vandalised the vehicles and torched the motorbike after police foiled their bid to bring out a procession. The opposition activists had gathered in that area to go to a special court at Bakshibazar that granted bail to party Chairperson Khaleda Zia in Zia Orphanage and Zia Charitable Trust graft cases.

The BNP men also clashed with law enforcers for around half an hour, leaving at least 25 people, including three cops, injured, said witnesses and police.

UN officials

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 Spokesperson.

Earlier on Tuesday in Geneva, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein warned against premature repatriation of any refugees in absence of sustained human rights monitoring on the ground and without first addressing the root causes of the crisis.

He cited a similar situation in the 1990s when refugees who fled Rakhine started to return but were again forced to take flight.

Bangladesh and Myanmar have signed an agreement on November 23 to begin in two months repatriation of hundreds of thousands of forcibly displaced Rohingyas who fled Myanmar and took shelter in Bangladesh in the face of horrendous atrocities.

Earlier, the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, has reported that at present, conditions in Myanmar's Rakhine state are not in place for safe and sustainable returns.

An estimated 626,000 refugees -- or more than half the estimated number of Rohingyas living in Rakhine -- have fled to Bangladesh since October 2016, and particularly since August 2017.

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) sent three teams to Bangladesh this year to monitor the situation and interview the refugees.

The witnesses reported acts of appalling barbarity including deliberately burning people to death inside their homes; murders of children and adults; indiscriminate shooting of fleeing civilians; widespread rape of women and girls; and the burning and destruction of houses, schools, markets and mosques.

Bacteria found

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 with the possibility of colonization of other planets and moons," the authors write in the abstract of their paper, published in the journal Peerf.

It will be critical to understand how bacteria lives and thrives in space as humans build ships that will carry astronauts off deep into the solar system. It will be particularly important to try and avoid the spread of those bacteria onto other planets -- a process called panspermia that could end with the planets coming to host alien life that was carried there from our own planet.

The research comes days after a Russian cosmonaut revealed that bacteria had been found on the outside of the space station. That was still being explored to find out exactly where it had come from, he said.

Previous research has even found bacteria that grows better in space than it does on the Earth.

Jonathan Eisen, who is a professor of medical microbiology and immunology and of ecology and evolution at UC Davis and author on the study, said that projects like the one that carried out the new research could be critical in the future -- both on and off the Earth.

"Studying the microbial diversity on the ISS is not only of relevance to space exploration but also serves as an important comparison to buildings on Earth because the ISS has many novel features such as limited influx of microbes," he said.

India

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 an important step forward, China observed.

"What was now important was to create favourable conditions and a favourable atmosphere in order to implement the agreement," reads the Chinese observation.

It said the resolution could complicate the implementation of the repatriation agreement. "Based on that position, China called for a vote on the draft resolution and it would vote against it."

China said the root causes of the conflict, poverty in Rakhine, should be addressed. It condemned the violent attacks in Myanmar and supported the country in upholding peace and security.

The Asian giant said it believed in dialogue and consultation as the only way out and it had proposed a three-phase solution to the crisis, according to the UNHRC document obtained by UNB.

After the adoption of the resolution, Bangladesh spoke on behalf of the Core Group of sponsors. The USA, Egypt and Indonesia took the floor in an explanation of the vote.

Bangladesh bore the burden of nearly one million Myanmar nationals, out of which 626,000 entered the country in the past three and a half months.

Meanwhile, Russia shared concern about the crisis in Rakhine.

It welcomed the recent stabilisation of the situation in Rakhine, and called on all sides to refrain from actions that would further destabilise it.

"That was the only way to find a solution for the Muslim minority in the country and to respond to the massive displacement of the population to neighbouring Bangladesh," said the representative of the Russian Federation during the general debate on the draft resolution.

Russia called on the Myanmar government to establish conditions for the peaceful coexistence of all communities.

Expat ex-JCD

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 on November 14 and shot its owner Siddik and injured three employees, the CITC chief said.

Helal was also a Chhatra Dal leader. He and one of his accomplices coordinated the killing mission from outside, he added.

All the six killers carried firearms on that day and police claimed to have recovered five of those from Helal.

Police said five of the killers handed over the arms to Helal before going into hiding.

Law enforcers could not arrest any of the four killers seen in the footage, in which it was found that two of the killers were entering the office wearing masks and another was wearing a cap.

Police, however, claimed to have identified four of the five other killers as Al Amin alias Pichchi Al Amin, Saddam, Nuri and Sharifuddin.

There had been no rivalry between Helal and victim Siddik, Monirul said, quoting Helal.

The police official said Helal and his accomplices killed Siddik as they were hired to do so. They were also told that they would get a huge amount of money in Siddik's office.

The Chhatra Dal leader living in Sweden was also involved in a shooting incident in Badda on August 13 in 2015 that left four people dead, the police officer claimed.

Trump move stuns world

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 step expected to take years and one that his predecessors avoided so as not to inflame tensions, reports Reuters.

The status of Jerusalem -- home to sites holy to the Muslim, Jewish and Christian religions -- is one of the thorniest obstacles to reaching a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians.

The international community does not recognise Israeli sovereignty over the entire city, believing its status should be resolved in negotiations.

"I have determined that it is time to officially recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel," Trump said. "While previous presidents have made this a major campaign promise, they failed to deliver. Today, I am delivering."

Trump's decision jeopardises the United States' historical role as a mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and frays relations with Arab allies that Washington relies on to help it oppose Iran and fight Sunni Islamist militants.

Israel considers the city its eternal and indivisible capital and wants all embassies based there. Palestinians want the capital of an independent Palestinian state to be in the city's eastern sector, which Israel captured in a 1967 war and annexed in a move never recognised internationally.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hailed Trump's announcement as a "historic landmark" and urged other countries also to move their embassies in Israel to Jerusalem.

Netanyahu said any peace deal with Palestinians must include Jerusalem as Israel's capital. This would be a non-starter for Palestinians if it means the entire city would be under Israeli control.

Sophia charms

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 the PM and Bangladesh.

"I know you are the daughter of the great leader, Father of The Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. You are also known as the Mother of Humanity in the world and you are implementing the Digital Bangladesh," Sophia said.

The robot also said it knew it very well that the name of the PM's granddaughter was also Sophia.

"Yes, the name of Joy's [prime minister's son and the ICT adviser] daughter is Sophia," a smiling Hasina informed the audience.

The premier then asked the robot what she knew about her vision and Digital Bangladesh.

Sophia flawlessly communicated information to the PM about her vision and Digital Bangladesh.

Saudi citizen Sophia came to Dhaka on Tuesday from Hong Kong to attend the mega ICT event. She interacted with visitors at the expo from 2:30pm to 4:30pm.

She answered questions from visitors at the Hall of Fame of the BICC at a session titled "Techtalk with Sophia".

Sophia is a robot with its body shape built to resemble the human body.

Hong Kong-based Hanson Robotics Ltd made Sophia. The company says its humanlike robots have remarkable expressiveness, liveliness, and interactivity.

World Reaction

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said Trump's decision was tantamount to the United States abdicating its peace mediator role.

"These deplorable and unacceptable measures deliberately undermine all peace efforts," Abbas said in a speech after Trump's announcement.

He said Trump's move amounted to "an announcement of US withdrawal from playing the role it has been playing in the past decade in sponsoring the peace process."

Hamas said Trump's decision would "open the gates of hell" on US interests in the region.

"This decision will open the gates of hell on US interests in the region," Ismail Radwan, an official with the Palestinian Islamist movement that runs the Gaza Strip, told journalists after Trump's announcement.

He called on Arab and Islamic states to "cut off economic and political ties with the US embassy and expel American ambassadors to cripple" this decision.

Palestinians say Trump's move will mean the "kiss of death" to the two-state solution, which envisions a Palestinian state in territory - the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem - that Israel took in 1967.

No other country has its embassy in Jerusalem. Two small Latin American states, El Salvador and Costa Rica, previously had embassies in Jerusalem before shifting them to Tel Aviv in 2006, saying they wanted to abide with international norms.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres implicitly criticised Trump's decision, warning that the city's status must be resolved through direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

"From day one as secretary-general of the United-Nations, I have consistently spoken out against any unilateral measures that would jeopardise the prospect of peace for Israelis and Palestinians," Guterres said, immediately after the US leader's announcement.

"Jerusalem is a final status issue that must be resolved through direct negotiations between the two parties on the basis of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, taking into account the legitimate concerns of both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides," Guterres said.

The European Union's chief diplomat voiced "serious concern" at Trump's decision.

"The aspirations of both parties must be fulfilled and a way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of both states," said Federica Mogherini, referring to Israelis and Palestinians.

She added that the EU's concern was based on Trump's announcement "and the repercussions this may have on the prospect of peace".

British Prime Minister Theresa May said her government disagreed with Trump's decision, saying it was "unhelpful" for peace efforts.

"We disagree with the US decision to move its embassy to Jerusalem and recognise Jerusalem as the Israeli capital," she said in a statement. "We believe it is unhelpful in terms of prospects for peace in the region".

French President Emmanuel Macron branded the move as "regrettable", calling for efforts to "avoid violence at all costs".

Addressing a press conference during a state visit to Algeria, Macron

affirmed "the attachment of France and Europe to the two-state solution, Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security within internationally recognised borders, with Jerusalem as the capital of the two states."

Iran strongly condemned Trump's decision, saying it threatened a "new intifada", or uprising.

"The provocative and unwise decision by the US... will provoke Muslims and inflame a new intifada and an escalation of radical, angry and violent behaviour," said the Iranian foreign ministry in a statement on its website.

Jordan and Turkey also slammed Trump for his decision.

"We condemn the irresponsible statement of the US administration... the decision is against international law and relevant UN resolutions," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu wrote on Twitter.

Pope Francis called for Jerusalem's status quo to be respected, saying new tension would further inflame world conflicts. China and Russia expressed concern the plans could aggravate Middle East hostilities.

Several hundred protesters gathered outside the US consulate in Istanbul over Trump's decision.

But US lawmakers across the political spectrum reacted positively to the announcement, although some warned the move would enflame tensions and stall peace efforts.

Several Democrats and Trump's Republicans hailed the move as long overdue.

"Jerusalem has been, and always will be, the eternal, undivided capital of the State of Israel," House Speaker Paul Ryan said in a statement.

"Today's announcement is a recognition of reality that in no way inhibits efforts to reach a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians."

The State Department will immediately act on Trump's order to prepare to relocate the American embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said.

Trump decision has sparked warnings that it could unleash more violence in the Middle East and Tillerson said his department had taken measures to protect American nationals in the region.

"The safety of Americans is the State Department's highest priority, and in concert with other federal agencies, we've implemented robust security plans to protect the safety of Americans in affected regions," said Tillerson, who is on a visit to Germany.

Trump acted under a 1995 law that requires the United States to move its embassy to Jerusalem. His predecessors, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama, had consistently put off that decision to avoid inflaming tensions in the Middle East.

Trump ordered a delay to any embassy move from Tel Aviv since the United States does not have an embassy in Jerusalem to move into. A senior administration official said it could take three to four years to build one.

British PM voices confidence on Brexit deal

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Theresa May yesterday voiced confidence in striking a deal that would allow Britain to open negotiations on post-Brexit trade ties with the EU despite this week's setback.

"We are at the point of progressing to the next stage," May told parliament, after Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) blocked a proposed agreement on the Irish border being discussed in Brussels on Monday.

"We will ensure that there is no hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland."

"We will do that while we respect the constitutional integrity of the United Kingdom and we will be able to do that while we respect the internal market of the United Kingdom," she said.

The DUP, which has been propping up May's government ever since a general election in June in which she lost her parliamentary majority, has said it only saw a draft copy of the proposed deal on Monday.

The party opposed the agreement because it said it wanted no "regulatory divergence" between Northern Ireland and the rest of Britain.

"Now we need to look at the text, make it clear what we cannot agree with and try to work through all of that," DUP leader Arlene Foster said on Tuesday.

The EU has said Britain must make "sufficient progress" in negotiations on the Irish border, the future status of expatriate citizens and a financial agreement to unlock negotiations on post-Brexit trade arrangements.