

'Missing' banker found in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police on Sunday recovered the banker, who had gone "missing" from the capital's Gulshan on Tuesday, from Chittagong.

Police tracked the phone of Nayeemul Islam Shaikat, 30, a senior officer of a bank branch in Shyamoli, to Kacharipara in Hathazari of Chittagong. He was taken to Dhaka yesterday, Abdur Rashid, officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Industrial Police Station, told The Daily Star.

The police official claimed that Shaikat moonlighted as a loan shark. He said Shaikat borrowed money from people on interest and lent money on higher interest to make profit. He had lent Tk 1.88 crore to some people but could not recover the money, the OC said.

Failing to deal with the mounting pressure from his lenders, he ran away to Chittagong. "Shaikat rented a room in Hathazari area and was staying there," the OC added.

He made a statement before a Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate court yesterday afternoon, said the OC, adding that Shaikat was handed over to his family.

Jamal Uddin, brother-in-law of Shaikat, told The Daily Star that they have heard that Shaikat used to make money transactions for profit.

The family had filed a general diary with the police station on

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visits newly inaugurated Bangabandhu Gallery after the month-long Dhaka International Trade Fair opened in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar yesterday. Story on B1.

PHOTO: PMO

Teachers

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textbooks to over 4.37 crore students from class-I to class-IX amid a festivity. Their classes will begin shortly.

But these non-MPO teachers are on the streets to press home their demand for salary from the government.

Many of them passed Sunday night lying on polythene sheets and newspapers with blankets and shawls under the open sky.

Yesterday, a number of female teachers along with their children joined their colleagues.

"I have brought my son with me as we don't want to return home empty-handed," said one of the female teachers who came from Dinajpur. Her child fell asleep on her shoulder.

Many of them were crying while describing their agonies.

"Teaching the future generation without any salary for years is inhuman. We urged the government to look at us," said Mokheasur Rahman, a teacher from Naogaon.

On Saturday, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid urged the teachers to end their agitation and return home. Rejecting the call, they started their hunger strike next day.

The number of non-MPO education institutions across the country is 5,242, where around 80,000 teachers are working without any pay, some for more than a decade, said the federation leaders.

This is because the schools do not have the ability to pay the teachers, while the government stopped enlisting the institutions for MPO due to "fund crisis".

Under the MPO scheme, the government gives 100 percent basic to the teachers of non-government schools. The teachers also get a lump sum amount as other allowances from the MPO.

As per rules, an education institution first comes under the MPO facilities followed by its teachers getting enlisted in the government payroll.

After a suspension of six years by the then BNP-led alliance government, the Awami League-led government revived the MPO facility in 2010 as per its electoral pledge and enlisted 1,624 private secondary and higher secondary schools and colleges in the MPO scheme.

The rest of the non-MPO teachers have been staging demonstrations for MPO facilities since then.

Currently, more than four lakh teachers and employees of 26,340 secondary schools, colleges, madrasas and technical institutes get the MPO facilities.

Lower courts' freedom undermined by 3 rules

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Court Day today.

Talking to The Daily Star, barrister M Amir-Ul Islam and advocate AF Hasan Ariff said the three rules included recently formulated "Bangladesh Judicial Service (Discipline) Rules 2017".

On December 11 last year, the government issued a gazette notification on the discipline of lower court judges, keeping the president's authority over their conduct.

The president will make necessary decisions in consultation with the Supreme Court, and the law ministry will implement those, a high official of the ministry said interpreting the contents of "Bangladesh Judicial Service (Discipline) Rules 2017".

Yesterday, the six jurists in their statement said, "While we recall the important decision in Masdar Hossain's case, we cannot but express grave concern that the protection extended by that decision to the independence of the judiciary has been undermined by three cardinal Rules as are to be made under Article 115 & 116 [of the constitution] for the subordinate judiciary now framed

under Article 133 under the Executive Chapter, thereby treating the Judges of the subordinate judiciary having been made subordinate to the executive branch.

"It has thus violated the scheme for separation of power further sanctified by the judgment in the Masdar Hossain case.

"Those Rules as are mandated under the constitution now framed in a non-transparent manner and without due deliberations, nor following effective consultations with both Divisions of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh."

The legal experts also said, "The subordinate judiciaries' appointment and transfer have thus been placed under the Executive Branch [Chapter-II - The Prime Minister and Cabinet]. This being done while the seat of chief justice kept vacant creating a void thereby in the republic itself. In the process judiciary has been placed under the authority and control of the Executive Branch taking the country back in 1999 in the pre-Masdar Hossain era."

The statement adds, "We are observing Supreme Court Day on January 2, 2018, in commemoration of the opening of this

Supreme Court by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 18th December 1972.

At this juncture the Supreme Court is without its head [chief justice] and the judicial organ of the republic continue to remain without the chief justice.

"Yet, on this occasion we feel proud of sharing the rich heritage of Bangladesh Supreme Court while protecting and defending fundamental rights of the people. [SC] also rose to the occasions in preserving, protecting and defending the constitution along with integrity, independence and separation of judiciary, with particular mention to some of those judgments among many others (a) holding the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution purporting to fragment the High Court Division having been declared as ultra vires to the unitary character of the republic when the High Court Division was fragmented in Seven Divisional Head Quarters (b) the fifth and seventh amendment cases, declaring Martial Law proclamation ultra vires to the constitution, (c) the decision which saved the Chittagong Port from being leased out for over 100

years to a foreign company, (d) the decision which declared void the voters' list which had contained more than 1,40,00,00 fake voters in 2007 and indeed the recent judgment holding the sixteenth amendment [parliamentary removal of judges of Supreme Court] to be void."

The jurists said those landmark decisions continue to act as the beacon for upholding the supremacy of the constitution for all times to come by defining and identifying basic structure of the constitution which are not amenable to any amendment.

For the first time in history, Bangladesh is celebrating the Supreme Court Day today.

The SC authorities are set to organise a meeting at the Supreme Court Judges' Sports Complex this afternoon to mark the day.

President Abdul Hamid is scheduled to attend the meeting as chief guest, while Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah, who is discharging the duties of the chief justice, and other judges of both the Appellate and the High Court divisions of the SC will attend the occasion.

Glowing with joy

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than 4.37 crore students of class-I to class-IX of different mediums, including madrasa and technical.

"I am very happy to get my set of new textbooks on the very first day at school. The first thing I will do after reaching home is see what's in there [the books]," said Rimon, a class-VI student of Government Laboratory High School and College.

In order to solve the textbook crisis that had persisted for many years, the government in 2009 decided to distribute textbooks to students for free. Since then, it has distributed more than 260.85 crore copies to primary and secondary students.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid inaugurated the festival at Azimpur Government Girls High School in the capital around 9:30am yesterday by releasing balloons along with the officials of his ministry and the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB).

"Bangladesh is the only country in the world that distributes such a huge number of textbooks to students on the very first day of a year," the minister said in his speech after inaugurating

BOOKS FOR DISTRIBUTION THIS YEAR

LEVEL	NUMBER OF BOOKS	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
Primary	10,36,24,405	2,17,21,129
Secondary	18,73,85,921	1,30,35,574
Pre-primary level	68,23,648	34,11,014
Madrasa, vocational, technical (trade)	5,62,98,507	54,79,960

FREE BOOKS DISTRIBUTED SINCE 2010

YEAR	STUDENTS	TEXTBOOKS
2010	2,76,62,529	19,90,96,561
2011	3,22,36,321	23,22,21,234
2012	3,12,13,759	22,10,68,333
2013	3,68,86,172	26,18,09,106
2014	4,33,53,201	31,78,12,966
2015	4,44,52,374	32,63,47,923
2016	4,44,16,728	33,37,62,760
2017	4,26,35,929	36,21,82,245

the festival.

Nahid termed the distribution of

textbooks New Year's gifts to the students.

He mentioned changes to some textbooks and modification of 12 textbooks of class-IX with recommendations from educationists.

Last year, the government faced severe criticism for changes to some textbooks, mainly Bangla and Anandapath of different classes, with eminent personalities saying that the changes were made following demands of a radical Islamist group.

The minister said they have prepared 8,405 Braille books for 963 visually impaired students.

He urged the students to concentrate on their studies to get the best possible education and take the country forward.

Sohrab Hossain, secretary to secondary and higher education division of the ministry, urged the students and parents not to run after leaked question papers.

After the speeches of the minister and other officials, the books were handed over to the students who played the drums and waved placards and balloons. Parents and teachers too joined the ceremony.

The school premises was colourful

with several thousand students of 25 secondary institutions attending the programme wearing red and green caps, holding festoons and balloons in one hand and textbooks in the other.

A cultural programme was also held to mark the occasion.

Meanwhile, Primary and Mass Education Minister Mostafizur Rahman inaugurated the distribution of primary books at Dhaka University Playground.

He termed the book distribution programme one of the biggest achievements of the government.

Ratan Siddique, a member of NCTB (text), told The Daily Star that distributing such a large number of textbooks on time required massive work, which the government has been doing successfully for the last eight years.

It cost Tk 1,050 crore for printing the books, he said, adding that around 400 printers printed the books and more than 98,224 people were involved in the entire process this year.

The process began in March through tenders for printing and distributing the books. The bid winners printed and delivered the books to the schools.

Two 'Neo JMB' men held in Chittagong

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Counter Terrorism Unit of Chittagong Metropolitan Police early today arrested two "Neo JMB" operatives at Madarbari in the port city.

Arrestees Ashfaqur Rahman Russel alias Abu Mahir Al Bangali, 22, and Rakibul Hasan Jony alias Abu Taisir Al Bangali, 19, had been planning to attack establishments of law enforcement agencies, police claimed.

Police recovered 10 grenades, two suicide vests, and a document containing

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Quintuplets

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said, "We were surprised to see the five siblings!"

Somaya Khanom, wife of Goffar Khan, former member of Korpara Union Parishad, gave birth to the five children on July 21 in 2012. The quintuplets are Rubia Khan Hira, Rusra Khan Moni, Ramisa Khan Mukta, Raisa Khan Mala, and Mohir Gafar Manik.

Somaya said, "All five of my children aspire to be police officers. I ask everyone to pray for them."

Goffar Khan said, "We are very happy to be have all our children enrolled in the same class today. I believe they will contribute to the development of our nation in the future."

3 killed

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sharp weapons, forcing them to retaliate that triggered the shootout, the OC claimed.

Injured Yunus was rushed to Chunarughat Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared him dead.

The OC said Yunus had long been involved in yaba trading and was accused in some cases including drugs and robbery.

One of the policemen was also injured during the "gunfight", he added.

In Netrakona, an alleged ringleader of an inter-district robbery gang was killed in a "gunfight" with police in Mohanganj upazila. The deceased was identified as Lutfor Rahman Ripul, 40.

Ansari Jinnat Ali, officer-in-charge of Mohanganj police, said Ripul was accused in 19 cases including murder and robbery filed with different police stations of Netrakona, Sylhet, Sunamganj and Manikganj.

On Sunday, the police arrested Ripul in Chandpur village around 3:00pm, took him to the police station and interrogated him, said the OC.

"When the police along with Ripul were going to that village again to recover firearms, his accomplices opened fire on the law enforcers near Nayapara area on way to Chandpur around 1:00am," said the OC.

In retaliation, the police fired six rounds of bullets, forcing the gang members to retreat. The police found Ripul in a critical state with bullet wounds in his forehead and chest and rushed him to Mohanganj Upazila Health Complex where he succumbed to his injuries.

Three policemen -- a constable and two assistant sub-inspectors -- also sustained injuries during the incident and were given first aid, the OC added.

The police also recovered a country-made shutter gun, three machetes and two rounds of bullets from the area.

In the incident in Feni, another alleged drug peddler Anwar Hossain Raju, 25, was killed in a "gunfight" with the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) near Eidghaj in Dharmapattar village.

Shafayat Jamil Fahim, squadron leader of Rab-7 in Feni camp, claimed they had recovered two foreign pistols, two shutter guns, one local rifle, seven bullets and 656 pieces of yaba tablets from the spot.

Rashed Khan Chowdhury, OC of Feni Sadar police, said the deceased was accused in 10 cases for rape, robbery, arms, drug and smuggling.

In 2017, at least 162 people were killed in "crossfire", "shootout", and "gunfight" with the law-enforcement agencies or while they were in their custody, according to an annual report of rights body Ain o Salish Kendra.

Return of diphtheria rings alarm

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vaccine. Symptoms include a thick covering in the back of the throat. It can lead to difficulty in breathing, heart failure, paralysis and even death.

Contacted, Mahmudur Rahman, former director at the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control & Research (IEDCR), said the immediate vaccination programme was the appropriate response to combat the disease.

"According to published data, in Bangladesh the last case of diphtheria in throat was detected in 1976 and on skin in 1983," he told this paper.

THE OUTBREAK

The first suspected case, in a woman aged about 30, was reported on November 10 at an MSF clinic in a Rohingya camp in Ukhia. It was confirmed through a lab test on December 4.

"I was very surprised when I got that first call from the doctor at the clinic telling me that he had a suspected case of

diphtheria," said Crystal VanLeeuwen, MSF's emergency medical coordinator for Bangladesh.

"Diphtheria?" I asked, 'Are you sure?' When working in a refugee setting you always have your eyes open for infectious, vaccine-preventable diseases such as tetanus, measles and polio, but diphtheria was not something that was on my radar," VanLeeuwen said in a statement on December 24.

VACCINATION
On December 12, the government with support from international partners launched a vaccination programme among the Rohingya children to contain the spread of the disease.

Most of the 2,700 who contracted the disease are children aged 5 to 14 and they face high risk of death, officials said.

"We have vaccinated around 1.2 lakh Rohingya children aged below seven and around 1 lakh children aged

between 7 and 15," said Salam, the Cox's Bazar civil surgeon.

Officials expect the vaccination programme will be completed by tomorrow.

Meanwhile, the government yesterday began vaccinating Bangladeshi children living in Ukhia and Teknaf.

Nearly 1 million Rohingya refugees, including more than 6,55,000 who fled Myanmar since August 25 -- live in overcrowded camps spreading over these two upazilas.

Under the programme, 1.5 lakh Bangladeshi children aged between 7 and 15 will be vaccinated in the next two weeks.

CHALLENGES AND WORRY
In the December 24 statement, the MSF said the emergence and the spread of diphtheria show how vulnerable the Rohingya refugees are.

"The majority of them are not vaccinated against any diseases, as they had

very limited access to routine healthcare, including vaccinations, back in Myanmar. Diphtheria is transmitted by droplets and spreads easily in the refugee settlements where people live in overcrowded conditions, with shelters squeezed up against each other and sometimes families with up to 10 people living in one very small space."

Separately, the International Organisation for Migration said key challenges associated with the response to the diphtheria outbreak included low vaccination coverage among the Rohingya population, limited treatment capacity, insufficient global supply of diphtheria anti-toxins (DAT), and necessary isolation, infection prevention and control procedures requiring additional resources.

According to the MSE, there are only less than 5,000 vials of DAT globally. "There is not enough of the medication to treat all of the people in front of you

who need it and we are forced to make extremely difficult decisions," said VanLeeuwen. "It becomes an ethical and equity question."

Nevertheless, the IOM said it was scaling up its response to the outbreak in a number of fields including risk communication, contact tracing, case management, vaccination, coordination and health system support.

Bangladesh earlier implemented mass vaccination programmes for cholera, polio and measles in Rohingya camps and among the local communities in the area.

COORDINATED HEALTH PACKAGES

The health ministry is also considering providing basic healthcare services to the Rohingya people in a more coordinated and systematic way.

The ministry has already taken up a programme -- Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals Health

Intervention Strengthening -- in this regard to protect the refugee population from any disease and thereby safeguard the local population against any outbreak.

Nineteen local and international organisations and development partners will jointly implement the programme, starting this month.

Under this initiative, primary healthcare centres will be set up across the camps -- one for every 20,000 people, said Abul Kalam Azad, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services.

There will be a field hospital for every 2 lakh people where patients will receive indoor treatment except for surgeries, he told The Daily Star.

"Our target is to provide 80 percent medical treatment in the camp area. The rest 20 percent will be given in the upazila health complex and in hospitals in Cox's Bazar and Chittagong," he said.