

# Four held in Jatrabari for narco-trade

## Detectives recover 28,000 yaba pills

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch of police arrested four persons from inside a CNG refueling station in the capital's Jatrabari area on Monday evening and recovered 28,000 pieces of yaba pills from them.

The arrestees are Maulana Md Shahidullah, 35, an imam and teacher of Ferry Ghat Jame Mosque of Rangunia, who hails from Teknaf in Cox's Bazar; Swapan Dutta, 32 of Madaripur Sadar; Mahub Sarder, 30, a truck driver from Jessore; and Mahmud Hossain, 30, a truck helper from Teknaf.

On information, a team of DB police conducted the drive in the filling station and arrested Swapan Dutta with 13,000 pieces of Yaba pills, said Mashiur Rahman, deputy commissioner of DB police.

"During interrogation Swapan informed us that one Shahidullah gave him the tablets from inside a small mosque," he told The Daily Star.

"We later arrested Shahidullah from a small mosque next to the filling station and questioned him." Mashiur said that Shahidullah

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A man trying to cross the lane on Mayor Hanif Flyover near Palashi area in the city yesterday. Although flyovers are off-limits to pedestrians, many try to use it to cut their trip time after getting off buses.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

# CHRI concerned over deaths in 'shootouts'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) has condemned the recent deaths of scores of people in so-called shootouts in Bangladesh.

As many as 136 alleged drug dealers have been killed in the ongoing anti-narcotics drive in the last 21 days. Most of them were killed in so-called shootouts involving Rab and police.

The CHRI in a statement yesterday reminded the government and the law enforcers in Bangladesh that they were accountable for the deaths.

Mentioning the condemnation expressed by the National Human Rights Commission and civil society organisations over the issue, the statement said it was of serious concern that the spate of killings, being described by many as extrajudicial, was seen by the government as the needed response in a "war" against drug crime without mention of the accountability for causing death.

Sanjoy Hazarika, CHRI's international director, called upon the government to ensure that each killing was properly investigated in a time-bound manner, and all those responsible for ordering and carrying out the killings were brought to book immediately.

Being tough on crime cannot be a

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# Battered

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Locals allege that hardly any progress has been made on the development work of Port Connecting Road and its adjoining Agrabad Access Road which began in November 20 of last year.

The Agrabad Access Road-- used by commuters from Bepari Para, Choto Pool, Shanti Bagh and Bara Pool areas-- is another example of how bad the situation is.

Commuters taking the road expect a bumpy journey while the condition of the road means that cng-run auto-rickshaws and pulled rickshaws both charge higher fares to traverse the road.

Tripti Barua, a resident of Shantibagh area and a student of Government Commerce College, Chittagong, said she had to endure the uncomfortable journey every day to and from college.

"If a rickshaw or auto-rickshaw driver agrees to use the road, they demand double or triple the fare."

Vehicles also get stuck in the 2.38 kms potholed road. Many vehicles also break down because of them.

However, officials of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) expect the Tk 158.47 crore Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) funded project to be completed by January next year.

Contacted, Lt Col Mohiuddin Ahmed, chief engineer of CCC, said the elevation work of Port Connecting Road would be made which would need more time.

He said the Agrabad Access Road would also be elevated by three feet. "We have already completed work on all the side drains and expect to complete the entire work by January next year," he said.

Regarding the allegation of a slow pace of the work, Mohiuddin said most time was needed to do the basic work.

"We had to carry out eviction to enlarge and build the drains," he said, adding, "Once the preliminary work is done, the rest would be completed rapidly."

During a recent visit, this correspondent found three other thoroughfares-- Muradpur to Oxygen Road, Bahaddarhat to Karnaphuli Shah Amanat Bridge Link Road and Bahaddarhat to Kaptai Rastar Matha of Arakan Road--to be in disrepair.

The tattered stretch of Bahaddarhat to Karnaphuli Shah Amanat Bridge Link Road was due to the ongoing construction of a flyover. Elsewhere, the Muradpur-Oxygen Road and Bahaddarhat to Kaptai Rastar Matha has been in disrepair also for around a year.

Potholes were frequently seen in Muradpur, Bibirhat, Hamzarbagh and Aturar Depot areas in Muradpur-Oxygen Road.

CCC officials said the repair works in these two roads were delayed as the Chittagong Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (CWASA) had not yet completed their Chittagong Water Supply Improvement and Sanitation project.

Contacted, Sudip Basak, executive engineer of CCC, said CWASA was yet to complete their work but they were supposed to do so in March.

He said repair could not be done while the CWASA project was underway.

"But our work in these [two] roads is almost 80% completed."

CWASA managing director AKM Fazlullah said the construction work in Bahaddarhat to Kaptai Rastar Matha would be completed within 31st May while it would take some more time for the Muradpur-Oxygen Road.

# Budget aims to please all

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Muhith, however, does not like the term "election-time budget".

"It's a useless comment. Before placing the budget, every government remains careful about its electorates. Every budget is placed to make all satisfied," he told reporters on Monday.

To meet the expenditures, he will set an ambitious revenue target without any additional tax measures.

"The good news is there is a limited increase in tax rates. That's the happiest thing for people... that's all," Muhith said.

According to finance ministry officials, there will be no increase in income tax rates so that taxpayers don't feel the pinch in the months before the polls. In fact, some tax rates are likely to be reduced.

In the next fiscal year, the government is likely to set revenue target of Tk 339,200 crore.

Of the amount, the National Board of Revenue will collect Tk 296,201 crore, which is around 32 percent higher than the revised collection target in this fiscal year.

This means around 90 percent of the total revenue will be collected by the NBR. But it's unclear how the ambitious revenue target will be achieved as the NBR's revenue growth rate was 18 percent in the first 10 months of FY 2017-18.

Muhith thinks revenue collection will increase as the process of collecting tax has become easier and the revenue administration is more efficient now. Besides, harassment of taxpayers has been reduced significantly.

In terms of income tax, people don't need to worry as there will be no increase in tax rates, said finance ministry officials.

Corporate tax rates, on the other hand, will be slashed.

The corporate tax rate for banks is likely to be reduced to 37.5 percent from 40 percent.

NBR officials say this will encourage banks to bring down their lending rates, and eventually have a positive impact on private investment.

In case of Value Added Tax (VAT) on goods and services, there will be five slabs, instead of existing nine, but the VAT rates will not be increased, said the officials.

On the expenditure side, a number of projects and programmes will be taken up, eying the national elections. Take social safety net for example.

The government plans to bring more people under the programme in the next budget without raising the allowance per person in most of the schemes.

The number of beneficiaries, who get allowances and food under the programme, will go up by around 10 lakh to 96 lakh in fiscal 2018-19.

In this fiscal year, the government allocated Tk 54,206 crore for the programme, which accounts for 13.54 percent of the total outlay. The amount will cross Tk 65,000 crore in the next budget, said the officials.

At a recent meeting on social safety net, a minister demanded that the number of beneficiaries be increased as the national election is approaching.

Another major focus of the next budget will be on speeding up imple-

A Tk 7,595-crore infrastructure project is also in the pipeline under which 300 lawmakers will get allocations for constructing buildings for 2,000 MPO-listed madrasas in their constituencies. The institutions will be selected by the MPs.

Under another big project, the lawmakers will get allocations of Tk 10,649 crore to construct and extend 10 school buildings in each constituency.

In the upcoming budget, Muhith will give an outline for the universal pension system to be introduced primarily in the private sector.

Under the scheme, private sector employees will make a voluntary contribution to the pension fund. If an employee resigns from an organisation and joins another, his contribution will be transferred.



mentation of nine mega infrastructure projects, including Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, Padma Bridge, Padma Rail Link and Metro Rail.

For the projects, Tk 32,555 crore has been set aside, which is around 19 percent of the development budget.

Besides, some other mega projects such as Dhaka Underground Metro Rail, circular railway and the second Padma Bridge have been included in the Annual Development Programme (ADP).

The next budget may bring smiles to several thousand teachers of private secondary educational institutions working without any pay, as the government is likely to allocate Tk 500 crore to bring around 1,000 institutions under the Monthly Pay Order (MPO) scheme.

In December last year and January this year, teachers and employees of non-government educational institutions took to the streets, demanding resumption of the MPO scheme that remains suspended for seven years.

To materialise the idea, several subsidiary institutions will be established. Those include pension enrolment office, pension trust, central record-keeping agency, trustee bank, pension fund managers and annuity service providers.

In the next fiscal year, the government will also provide housing loans to around 14 lakh government employees at low interest rates.

Loans between Tk 75 lakh and Tk 20 lakh will be disbursed in three categories depending on location of the property.

The interest rate will be 10 percent, of which 5 percent must be paid by the loan applicants and the rest will come from government subsidy. The tenure for repaying the loans will be 20 years.

The government will also implement a Tk 60-crore special project to publicise its development work through screening of films, rallies and various programmes across the country.

# Call for justice

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per the probe report, Bahadur said.

The Jubo League leaders also requested the minister to take action against those who published false and fabricated news against Akram portraying him as a drug dealer and an owner of vast properties.

A news report mentioned that Akramul had a number of cars and houses, Bahadur said. "But we met Akramul's family members and we did not find anything like that."

The two leaders also sought assistance from the state for the family of Akramul.

On Thursday, Akramul's wife Ayesha Begum alleged during a press conference at Cox's Bazar Press Club that her husband was murdered in cold blood. She gave journalists four audio clips in support of her claim.

Rab, however, claimed he was killed in "gunfight" between the force and drug traders on May 27.

Amid huge outcry on social media over Akramul's death, the government decided to investigate the incident. The home minister on Monday talked to Ayesha but it could not be confirmed what he said to her.

Officials from the Prime Ministers' Office also communicated with the family, sources in the family said.

Meanwhile, Teknaf Awami League leaders said an emergency meeting of its executive committee will be held today to discuss the killing of Akram and decide the unit's next course of action over the matter.

The AL unit will also urge the prime minister and the home boss to launch an investigation to find out whether local MP Abdur Rahman Bodi played any role in the killing, they added.

## MORE 'SHOOTOUTS'

Four more people were killed in three districts yesterday as the nationwide anti-narcotics drive continues.

Two alleged drug traders were killed in a "gunfight" between drug traders and police in Rangpur and Bogra while two bodies with deep injury marks were recovered from the Brahmaputra River in Mymensingh, police claimed.

The Daily Star could not verify the claims.

With the four, at least 136 alleged drug traders have been killed in the drive in the last 21 days. Most of them died in so-called shootouts involving Rab and police.

There was no incident of death in "shootout" on Monday.

In Rangpur, Shahjahan Hossain alias Dabirul, 50, was killed in a "gunfight" with police in Kaunia upazila around 3:30am, our Dinajpur correspondent reported quoting Saiful Islam, additional superintendent of Rangpur police (Circle A).

Shahjahan, son of Sohrab Hossain of the upazila, was accused in 10 cases, police said. The law enforcers claimed to have recovered 126 yaba pills, 173 Phensedyl bottles, a pistol and a bullet from the spot.

In Bogra, Liton alias Riten, 32, was killed in a "gunfight" with detectives in the town's Matidali area.

Police claimed they recovered 200 yaba tablets and two machetes from the scene, our Bogra correspondent reported quoting Officer-In-Charge of Detective Branch (DB) in the district Nure-Alam Siddiquee.

Police claimed Liton was accused in five drug cases.

Liton's wife Rasheda Khatun, however, said her husband was a



Members of Bangladesh Wildlife Service Foundation release a slow loris, locally known as Lojjaboti Banor, at Lawachhara National Park in Moulvibazar's Kamalganj upazila yesterday marking the World Environment Day. The organisation released some animals in the forest after rescuing them from different areas of the country.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA