

JS whip, son draw

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secretary of Chattogram city AL, said there was no room for gambling or running casinos at sporting clubs.

In a joint statement on Wednesday, city AL President Mahtab Uddin Chowdhury and Nasir said those rejecting the government's ongoing drives against casinos would be considered as "enemy of the people".

Vice President of the city AL Khorshed Alam Sujon said gambling at the Abahani club was an open secret.

He also termed the JS whip an AL infiltrator and said he was a Jatiya Party-blessed ward commissioner in the 1980s.

Contacted yesterday, Shamsul said he welcomed the drives against "casinos" and the media published "only parts of his remark".

He claimed that no gambling took place at the Abahani club.

About some AL leaders calling him an infiltrator, he said he was nominated for the MP post of Chattogram-12 three times in the past. "Some people are just jealous of me. That's why there are making such comments."

The Abahani club was opened in 1981 with the name Abahani Krira Chakra, Chattogram. It was renamed Chattogram Abahani Limited in 2001.

'KARIM THREATENS DIDARUL'

Recently, a clip of a telephone conversation in which Karim is heard threatening Didarul Alam Chowdhury, youth and sports affairs secretary of Chattogram city AL and also the founding general secretary of the Abahani club, has been doing the rounds on social media.

At one stage of the conversation,

Karim, a member of an AL sub-committee on financial affairs, is heard telling Didarul that he would slap and beat him up in public.

Didarul said Karim became furious after the youth affairs secretary earlier this month applied to a private bank in Chattogram for closing a bank account belonging to Chattogram Abahani Limited.

The account was opened in 2007 with signatures of three -- Didarul, JS whip Shamsul and SM Saifuddin, team manager of the Abahani Football Committee.

Didarul took the step alleging Shamsul made illegal transaction through the account, several AL leaders alleged.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Didarul termed Shamsul an infiltrator in AL and alleged he made money from gambling at the club.

Didarul alleged that more than Tk 6 lakh was spent in gambling every night at the club.

He said he currently does not hold any post at the club and that he went for closing the account as it might land him in trouble.

Asked about threatening Didarul, Karim, also a director of Chattogram Chamber of Commerce and Industry, told The Daily Star the audio clip that went viral was edited and it had only parts of the full conversation.

He, however, admitted that he got angry at one point after Didarul allegedly used abusive words against his father.

Several AL leaders in Chattogram criticised Karim for his behaviour with Didarul.

Rumours run rife over Samrat

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Jubo League sources said Samrat, reportedly holed up in his Kakrail office, was desperately trying to leave the country to avoid arrest and get away from the government's wrath on illegal gambling.

At the beginning, several hundred Jubo League men and supports of Samrat surrounded his office building but since Monday, about the time rumours started spreading that he was detained, their numbers dwindled.

According to Jubo League insiders, Samrat left his office Sunday night and has been traceless since. They said he was available on his phone until Sunday afternoon.

Amid speculations over his possible arrest, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said, "You will see... very soon."

"Many things are being said about him [Samrat]; Samrat or whoever, if he has committed any crime, [he] will be brought to justice," Kamal told reporters after attending a programme at a Dhaka hotel yesterday.

Meanwhile, Border Guard Bangladesh yesterday issued its highest alert for its personnel and immigration police in Benapole Land Port so that people with links to illegal gambling could not leave the country, said 49 BGB Commanding Officer Lt Col Salim Reja.

Benapole Immigration Police said they received another directive from the Special Branch (SB) of Police to stop Samrat and nine Nepali citizens from leaving the country.

The government on September 24 imposed a travel ban on Samrat and Bangladesh Bank sought details of his accounts with banks.

Following Khaled's arrest, law enforcement agencies detained a number of leaders of Jubo League, Krishak League, and the Awami League in the capital in connection with running illegal casinos.

A list prepared by the crime division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police shows that six illegal casinos were run and controlled by some top leaders of the ruling Awami League's youth front Jubo League and other associate bodies in "Motijheel Club Para area".

According to the list, Swetchhasebak League President

Molla Md Abu Kausar runs an illegal casino at the Dhaka Wanderers Club, while Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Councillor AKM Mominul Haque Sayeed ran casinos in Arambagh Sporting Club, Dilkusha Sporting Club, and Mohammedan Sporting Club.

Samrat runs an illegal casino in Victoria Club while Jubo League Dhaka South Organising Secretary Khaled Mahmud Bhuiyan ran a casino in Fakirerpool Young Men's Club, which was raided first on September 18.

A top official of Victoria Sporting Club, wishing not to be named, earlier told this newspaper that Samrat was the one who had proposed renting out space to the "casino".

Since September 18, the law enforcers have been conducting drives against illegal casinos, bars, and spa and have arrested some top leaders of the ruling Awami League's youth front Jubo League and other associate bodies.

Meanwhile, the home minister said Rab was given the job of conducting anti-casino operations.

Asked why the police were taken off the charge, the home minister said, "I want to make it clear... Since the casino crackdown was initiated by Rab, the elite force will be in charge of the investigations."

6 die drinking toxic

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police station, said all eleven victims bought spirit from Zayed's Rafiq Homeo Hall at Bashurhat area on Friday.

Family members buried three of the dead before police came to know about it, he said.

Later, police recovered the bodies of Nur Nabi and Rabi Lal from their houses and sent those to Noakhali General Hospital for autopsy.

Police are waiting for autopsy reports to confirm the cause of their deaths, the OC said.

Meanwhile, the five people who fell ill are being treated at different hospitals.

Locals said a section of homeopathic doctors in Companiganj and nearby areas had been selling spirit for long.

92 taken last year: report

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"Enforced disappearances and 'crossfires' continue to take place," he told The Daily Star, adding that the lack of accountability was particularly concerning.

Of the 92 victims of enforced disappearances mentioned in the report, 14 were found dead, 17 returned home, and 38 produced before courts after they went missing.

Bullet-riddled bodies of several political activists were found at different places after they disappeared, it says.

In most cases of "crossfires" or "gunfights", people were killed during law enforcers' operations or raids.

Of the victims, 251 were killed in encounters with police, 132 with Rab, 44 with DB, and two others with Border Guard Bangladesh, it adds.

"The government description of these incidents follows roughly the same pattern," it says.

Last year, at least 83 people were killed in political violence.

In violence centring the election, at least 50 people were killed while 44 died in mob beatings.

Two journalists were killed, 136 injured, 27 threatened, nine arrested, and 22 assaulted in 113 incidents last year.

Fifty-five people were arrested under the Digital Security Act-2018 while 15 Bangladeshis were killed by Indian Border Security Force.

The HRSS found that 693 were raped, including 279 women and 414 children aged below 16; 235 women were killed due to family feuds and 44 over dowry.

A total of 291 people, including 34 women and 69 children were abducted. Of them, 144 were killed.

About 95 incidents of violence were committed against children; 43 of them were killed and 76 critically injured.

In different places, 988 bodies were recovered. Among them, 617 were male, 326 female and 45 remained unidentified.

At least 228 civilians were victims of violent attacks. Of them, 124 were killed, 88 seriously injured and 16 shot.

An estimated 38 attacks on minority communities took place last year, it says.



The Bangladesh Awami League decorates the roundabout on the eastern end of Manik Mia Avenue with photos of the party president and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday, marking her 73rd birth anniversary. Hasina is now in New York to attend the 74th session of the UN General Assembly. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

It's becoming a regional threat

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Myanmar and its own people, the Rohingyas. They themselves have to resolve it."

The premier said voluntary return of the Rohingyas to their homes in Rakhine in safety, security and dignity is the only solution to the crisis. She added that Bangladesh would continue its engagement with Myanmar to make the repatriation happen.

The four proposals placed by Hasina are: Myanmar must manifest clear political will supported by concrete actions for sustainable return and reintegration of Rohingyas to Myanmar; Myanmar must build trust among Rohingyas by discarding discriminatory laws and practices and allowing "go-and-see" visit to Northern Rakhine by Rohingya representatives; Myanmar must guarantee security and safety of the Rohingyas by deploying civilian monitors from international community in the Rakhine state; and the international community must ensure that the root causes of the Rohingya problem are addressed and the violation of human rights and atrocities committed against the Rohingyas are accounted for.

At the 72nd UNGA in 2017, Hasina had put forward a five-point proposal to resolve the crisis. The proposals included full implementation of recommendations of the Kofi Annan Commission, and establishment of a civilian monitored safe zone in Rakhine.

SUPPORT FOR PALESTINIANS

The PM said the value of UN's role in maintaining international peace and security is enormous. "We stand firm in our support for our Palestinian brothers and sisters till their just and rightful struggle comes to fruition."

Noting that three million innocent people were killed and 200,000 women violated during Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971, she said, "Our painful experiences have emboldened us to continue to speak for the oppressed people."

About the country's development, the premier said Bangladesh has often been cited as a "development miracle".

Despite turbulence in the rule-based international order, and apprehensions of gradual economic slowdown, Bangladesh continued to prosper over the last 10 years, she added.

According to the Spectator Index 2019, Bangladesh recorded the highest economic growth in the last 10 years among 26 countries listed, with 188 percent expansion of gross domestic product (GDP) at the current prices.

"Our GDP has grown from \$102 billion in 2009 to \$302 billion this year. We continue to embark on a pragmatic programme for the rapid economic and social development," the PM said.

She mentioned that the exports of Bangladesh grew three times from 2005-06 to reach \$37 billion in 2017-18, while the per capita income grew 3.5 times and foreign exchange reserve grew nine times to \$33 billion. The GDP growth has now reached 8.13 percent.

Describing poverty and inequality as two major obstacles to development, Hasina said Bangladesh has achieved one of the fastest poverty reduction rates in the world with poverty rate dropping from 41.5 percent in 2006 to 21.4 percent in 2018, extreme poverty rate from 24 percent to 11.3 percent.

A key development strategy in Bangladesh has been addressing inequality through social security, decent work and financial inclusion, she said, adding that the social safety net programmes are expanding, now covering nearly a quarter of the population and accounting for 2.58 percent of the country's GDP.

The PM also highlighted the development and activities in the country's different sectors, including education, health, electricity, IT, telecommunication and blue economy.

Talking about climate change, Hasina said the global disposition for climate action generated by the just concluded Climate Action Summit would translate into real impetus for implementation of Paris Agreement in the broader context of 2030 Agenda.

Bangladesh's long-term plan for adaptation and resilience is anchored

in our Delta Plan 2100, she said, adding that the plan focuses on food security, water safety, climate change, environment sustainability, disaster management and sustained economic growth.

"Following the recent Dhaka Meeting of the Global Commission on Adaptation, we're working on setting up a Global Centre for Adaptation in Dhaka," she said.

About migration, Hasina said Bangladesh promotes safe, orderly, and regular migration. Irregular migration and human trafficking are global menaces rooted in complex nets of syndicates and criminal networks.

"To prevent and suppress human trafficking nationally and also to foster international cooperation in tackling human trafficking, we have recently acceded to the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons," she said.

Describing multilateralism as the strongest panacea for resolving the global problems and create global goods, Hasina said the UN is the symbol of hope for peace, stability and prosperity.

"Bangladesh will continue to support the United Nations as a strong multilateral body, which would be fully equipped to deal with the tasks and responsibilities assigned to it under the Charter."

With the 75th anniversary of the UN coming up next year, the PM call for collective actions to build a stronger UN for the civilisation to deal with emerging challenges of the next century.

She said Bangladesh appreciates the reform initiatives of the UN secretary-general, particularly the UN Development System.

At the outset of her speech, Hasina recalled the architect of Bangladesh, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

She said Bangladesh is now preparing to celebrate the birth centenary of this great leader from March next year. "Reflecting on his vision and aspirations, we wish to bring this celebration to the United Nations next year," the PM said.

NUCLEAR PROHIBITION TREATY

Dhaka submits instrument of ratification to UN

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh has submitted the instrument of ratification on prohibition of nuclear weapons to the treaty section of the United Nations.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen handed over the instrument to UN officials in New York on Friday on the sidelines of the 74th UN General Assembly.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons-2017 was adopted in July 2017 and was opened for signature in September.

Bangladesh had signed the treaty on the first day of the opening and now it has been duly ratified by 32 countries.

The treaty will come into force upon submission of 50th ratification.

Bangladesh believes in complete and general disarmament and it has already become member of other global nuclear instruments.

Malaysia PM says can't provoke Beijing on South China Sea, Uighur issue

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia does not want to take a confrontational stance towards China over the disputed South China Sea and Beijing's alleged mistreatment of its minority Uighur Muslims, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said in an interview published on Saturday.

Malaysia is too small to face up to the Asian powerhouse, even though Chinese ships surveying its waters for oil and gas in South China Sea do so without permission, he told an online news service during a visit to New York this week.

"We watch what they are doing, we report what they are doing, but we do not chase them away or try to be aggressive," Mahathir told BenarNews.

"The Malay states have existed near China for the past 2,000 years. We have survived because we know how to conduct ourselves. We don't go around trying to be aggressive when we don't have the capacity, so we use other means."

He said that in the past Malaysia used to send to China "gold and silver flowers every year as a symbol of our being practically, well, subservient to them".

This month, China and Malaysia agreed to set up a joint dialogue mechanism for the South China Sea, as ties between the countries improve. China is Malaysia's biggest trading partner.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has been overseeing a sweeping plan to refurbish its army as the country ramps up its presence in the South China Sea and around self-ruled Taiwan, rattling nerves around the region and in Washington.

Mahathir also said China's might was the reason Muslim-majority Malaysia did not speak out much against Beijing's alleged repression of Uighur Muslims.

DU freshman

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up, two witnesses said.

Rabbi also threatened to evict him from the dormitory if he continued to skip BCL programmes.

Contacted, Rabbi said he only talked to Rana and there was no incident. Rana declined to comment.

BCL acting president Al Nahean said, "We are looking into the matter. We will take action against the BCL activist if the incident is found to be true."

REB, forest dept at loggerheads

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The cases were filed three years ago on the allegations of encroaching upon forestland, razing trees and harming the forest. The forest officials argued that REB could have sought the forest department clearance, which was made mandatory by a government gazette.

Also in that meeting, the REB wanted back the goods seized by the forest officials during a move to install the power lines.

'THINGS UPSIDE DOWN'

If the lines go through the forests, it will have a devastating impact on the ecosystem as well as wildlife, said Prof Kamal Hossen of Institute of Forest and Environmental Science, Chattogram University.

Existing laws, gazette, forest policy and commitment to global forums by the government are in favour of forests but in practice things are upside down, he added.

"Now every developed country assesses the service value reaped from forest. The service of the ecosystem is far bigger than the benefit we will get from electricity. If we take into consideration the soil and water a forest holds back, the resources, biodiversity and the extent of carbon it absorbs, the monetary value will go far beyond the value of electricity."

To achieve the goal of 100 percent electrification, he said, the government can opt for an alternative way by allowing REB to install solar panel.

Prof M Shamsul Alam, energy adviser of Consumer Association of Bangladesh, told The Daily Star that there are many ways to bypass the

ecologically sensitive areas such as reserve forests.

"The REB's that they need to trespass on reserve forests for 100 percent electrification is quite unacceptable. Alternatives like captive generator, off-grid electrification or solar power could easily be chosen instead of grid line," he said.

Forest and environment should not be preyed upon when there are alternatives, he added.

ILLEGAL OCCUPANCY

Top forest department officials, preferring anonymity, said they fear that illegal occupants in the reserve forests would be encouraged to stay there if they get power lines and the forest woodlands be exposed to more encroachment.

Of the six reserve forests that are in the REB plan, four are in Chattogram and one each in Gazipur and Moulvibazar.

According to documents obtained by The Daily Star, at least 15,000 encroachers live inside the four forests in Chattogram -- Chunoti, Ramgor-Sitakunda, Fasikhali and Jilonja.

The exact figures in other districts could not be known but sources say around two lakh people might be living illegally inside the reserve and protected forests in the eight districts.

In the face of the forest department's reservation, the inter-ministry meeting decided to verify the national identity cards to provide connection to those who are living within the periphery of forest areas.

addresses. So, they won't be allowed to have power connection," read the meeting minutes.

'MINIMUM DAMAGE'

Contacted, Md Billal Hossain, additional secretary of the forest, environment and climate change ministry, said they received a letter from the REB in April about the installation of power lines in woodlands.

The ministry then wrote to the forest department to assess how much damage the lines might inflict on the forests.

"We will of course suggest REB find some alternative ways as we made commitments to various international forums to maintain and expand forestland," he said.

"If we finally have to issue clearance, we will give it on condition that the damage is kept at minimum level. Otherwise, they will have to go for alternative ways."

On the other hand, REB Chairman Maj Gen (ret'd) Moïn Uddin said 341 upazilas have been brought under "100 percent electrification", and the prime minister inaugurated connections in 211 upazilas so far.

"In some areas, we are facing reservations from the forest department. We are considering their concerns too. We held meetings thrice with the forest department," he told The Daily Star recently.

"If we install the lines through forests, we will try to keep the damage at minimum level. If necessary, we will go for an expensive model like insulated cables to minimise the threats to forest."