

5 women, including an Indian, held with yaba pills

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Rab arrested five female alleged drug peddlers, including an Indian, with 17,860 yaba tablets in Chattogram city yesterday evening.

The arrestees are Komol Kaur, 28, Rosina Begum, 52, Naima Begum, 28, Shahnaz Begum, 50, and Sumaiya Islam, 21.

Assistant Superintendent of Police Kazi Md Tarek Aziz of Rab-7 said Komol, of India's Uttarakhand, came to visit her aunt Rosina in Chattogram.

Naima is the daughter of Rosina, while Sumaiya is the daughter of Shahnaz.

Acting on a tip-off, Rab arrested them from a microbus in front of Chattogram Government Women's College around 6:30pm and recovered the yaba pills from the vehicle.

During primary interrogation, the arrestees confessed that they brought the pills from Dhaka and were planning to smuggle those to India.

"Komol confessed to us that she had visited Bangladesh on several occasions and smuggled drugs to India during those visits," said the Rab official, adding that the arrestees were members of a yaba smuggling syndicate.

EU calls for Afghanistan ceasefire

AFP, Kabul

European Union officials yesterday called for a ceasefire in Afghanistan, saying the breakdown in talks between the US and the Taliban presented an opportunity to push anew for a truce.

US President Donald Trump last month declared talks with the insurgents "dead", citing a Taliban attack that killed a US soldier.

Negotiations had been in the final stages for a deal that would have seen the US pull troops from Afghanistan after 18 years in return for various Taliban guarantees.

But to the dismay of many Afghans and international observers, the deal included no immediate, comprehensive ceasefire, rather it would supposedly have paved the way for a reduction in violence and later talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government.

Roland Kobia, the EU ambassador to Afghanistan, said the talks' collapse provided a chance to push for a ceasefire which would, in turn, prove a large enough change in Afghanistan for Trump to consider resuming negotiations.

"It's the right moment and the right opportunity to maybe go one step beyond a simple reduction in violence and explore ways in which a ceasefire ... will take place," Kobia told Kabul journalists.

"The idea is really to see how we can move the ceasefire idea forward instead of leaving it for later. ... There is an opportunity here today."

When asked how the EU, which has only a limited footprint in Afghanistan, could leverage a ceasefire, Kobia suggested that the Taliban might return to power in "one form or another" within months so would entertain a truce to help normalise future relations with the European bloc.

"A ceasefire would be a token, a guarantee of goodwill and good preparation for the normalisation of these relationships," Kobia said.

The Taliban, for its part, has steadfastly ruled out an immediate ceasefire but last year downed weapons for a three-day truce.

Afghanistan is currently in an uneasy waiting period following the first round of presidential elections on September 28.

Results were supposed to be released Saturday but have been indefinitely delayed due to "technical issues", the Independent Election Commission said.

Pierre Mayaudon, head of the EU delegation in Afghanistan, said a delay of a few days to finalise results was legitimate to ensure votes were fairly counted.

"But not many more days that again will go into weeks and will possibly raise the perception that something is happening," he told reporters.

Violence in Afghanistan meanwhile continues unabated. On Friday, at least 70 people were killed when a mosque in Nangarhar province was bombed.

Omar Faruk ousted

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Sources present at last night's meeting said Hasina delivered an introductory speech at the closed-door meeting and invited Jubo League leaders to share their opinions about their organisation.

Jubo League Joint Secretary Mohiuddin Ahmed Mohi said that he demanded punishment to those who had tarnished Jubo League's image.

Jubo League leader Amir Hossain Gazi said that many of his fellow leaders were supposed to visit grassroots activists and hold councils, but committees were announced from the centre without their knowledge, the sources added.

Hearing the allegations, the PM asked why she had not been informed about these earlier. "If I knew, I could have taken action. You are saying these after I have started taking action," a Jubo League leader quoted her as saying.

She also said some people were working for the party while others

were busy plundering public money.

UNB reports: Hasina in her speech said, "No mercy will be shown to criminals... Injustice will not be tolerated."

She said the government wanted everyone to lead a prosperous life.

"I think it is necessary to take punitive actions against injustice," the PM said.

Jubo League General Secretary Harun said the organisation's chairman has stopped coming to the party office while the office secretary was on the run.

Presidium member Shaheed Seraiab said different local committees of Jubo League were announced for money.

He mentioned the name of arrested top government listed contractor GK Shamim and said Omar Faruk had given him a Jubo League post.

He said the glorious history of Jubo League should not be tarnished and requested the PM to bring fresh and committed leaders to Jubo League.

JS body blasts

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Another member of the committee, wishing anonymity, said the meeting discussed the recent protest by residents of the capital's Jurain, who brought lemons, a bag of sugar, and a jar of Jurain's murky tap water to the Wasa Bhaban in Karwan Bazar to "treat" the Wasa MD to a glass of sherbet.

Taqsem A Khan's comment in April about Wasa tap water being "100 percent pure", was also criticised by the Jatiya Sangsad committee members, said a member of the House watchdog.

MPs also sought clarification from the Dhaka Wasa MD on recent news published on the irregularities and corruption.

On April 17, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) in a report said that 91 percent Wasa subscribers had to boil the supply water to make it drinkable and, in the process, burned gas worth Tk 332 crore a year.

The TIB findings also show that nearly 45 percent subscribers do not get the desired amount of water, while about 35 percent complain of poor-quality water throughout the

year.

On April 20, the Wasa MD had publicly challenged the report, saying the TIB claims were unfounded.

City dwellers have long complained that the worn-out Wasa supply lines are responsible for rampant water contamination.

With 3.74 lakh connections in its 360sqkm service area in Dhaka city and Narayanganj, Wasa supplies 240 crore litres of water daily. Of this, 22 percent is surface water taken from rivers and treated and the rest is extracted from underground.

The water is brought to homes through a network of 60,000km of supply lines -- 36,000km of which are derelict 150-year-old pipes.

In face of repeated criticism, the DWASA MD assured the parliamentary committee that the problems were being dealt with and there would be safe water for all the city's residents by 2021.

"I am assuring you-- there will be no complaint regarding impure water," he said, according to meeting sources.

The meeting also decided for the parliamentary body to visit the Milk Vita factory in Sirajganj.



Pieces of broken furniture lie scattered on the floor of Sri Sri Gournitai Ashram in Bhola's Bhawalbari after the temple was attacked by religious zealots yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

4 killed, 100 injured

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afternoon soon after the hate conversation was circulated allegedly from the youth's Facebook account to some of his Facebook friends, said locals and police.

Some of them then saved screenshots of the hate conversation and made it viral on the social media platform, stirring up outrage among locals, they said.

Around 8:00pm on Friday, the youth, a student of Bhola Government College, went to Borhanuddin Police Station and filed the GD. Police then took him in custody.

Throughout Saturday, a group of locals under the banner of "Sarbastorer Muslim Tawhidi Janata" staged demonstrations at the upazila headquarters, Kunjerhat and Borhanganj bazar, demanding trial of the youth.

From there, they announced holding a rally at the Eidgah Maidan at 11:00am yesterday and through loudspeakers urged people to join it.

Meanwhile, police and the local administration took initiatives to ease the simmering tension by engaging with religious leaders and local representatives, according to a statement of the police headquarters.

Law enforcers also kept the youth in custody as per demands of local Alems.

Even the representatives of the Alems called off their protest programme upon police's assurance that necessary legal action would be taken, it said.

But a group of people started gathering at the Eidgah Maidan and a "quarter" set up 17 loudspeakers at different points of the Maidan yesterday morning, mentioned police.

The law enforcers, who had been at the spot since morning, requested the Alems there to clear the area, but the religious leaders said there would be no disorder.

The upazila nirbahi officer, the SP and Additional DIG of Barishal Range AKM Ehsanullah went to the spot and gave speeches, assuring locals of taking necessary steps.

Assured, people started leaving the spot, said the statement.

After delivering the speeches, the SP and the additional DIG along with other officials went to a room of a nearby madrasa.

In the meantime, members of a vested quarter entered the Eidgah Maidan and started inciting people. Without any provocation, a group of people then swooped on the officials staying in the room, said police in the statement.

Wielding firearms, members of the group attacked the officials and shot a policeman, leaving him seriously injured. The additional DIG and another police official also got injured, it said.

Under the circumstances, police fired teargas canisters and shotgun shells upon orders from the UNO and the executive magistrate in self-defence and to save public property, mentioned the statement.

"As the situation worsened, police were compelled to open fire upon directives from the magistrate," it said.

Talking to The Daily Star, Additional DIG Ehsanullah said the angry mob broke the door of the room partially, but could not get in.

"We used a mattress as a shield ... Had they managed to enter the room, they would have killed me, the SP and the UNO," he said.

When the officials came under attack, the UNO contacted the deputy commissioner, who permitted police to fire shots to take them to safety, said the additional DIG.

"We had no option but to open fire,"

VESTED QUARTER USED RELIGION

The police HQ said a vested quarter was out to create unrest by using religion.

"The situation is completely under control," it said, calling upon people to maintain communal harmony.

A five-member committee, led by the DIG of Barishal Range, was formed to probe the incident. It was asked to submit its report within seven working days.

EXTORTION MONEY SOUGHT

When the Hindu youth went to Borhanuddin Police Station to file the GD, he got a phone call and the caller asked him to pay extortion money, said police.

The youth conveyed it to the officer-in-charge, who then relayed the message to the Bhola SP.

Police arrested the caller, Sharif, from Patuakhali and another person named Emon from Borhanuddin upazila on Friday night. Both of them were involved in hacking the youth's Facebook account, said police.

In the past, rumours through Facebook posts led to incidents of attacks on minority communities. Such attacks took place in Ramu of Cox's Bazar in 2012, Ataikula in Pabna in 2013, Nasimgar in Brahmanbaria in 2016 and Horkoli Thakurpara in Rangpur in 2017.

Three dozen cases were filed in connection with the incidents, but trial of none of those has been

completed.

DEMO IN CTG

Students of different madrasas, mostly from Darul-Ulum Moinul Islam Madrasa, known as the base of Islamist group Hefazat-e-Islam, vandalised Hathazari Police Station yesterday, protesting the police firing in Bhola.

They also barricaded roads in and around the Hathazari Bus Station area and demonstrated setting fire to tyres.

The madrasa students, mostly followers of Hefazat, started demonstrating near the bus stand around 5:00pm and brought out a procession from there, according to police and locals.

The protesters blocked Hathazari road. At one stage, they started hurling brickbats at police and vandalised Hathazari Police Station.

Unruly Hefazat activists swooped on two journalists of private TV channel DBC news when the two went to the spot to cover the incident. They are reporter Md Shahidul Sumon and cameraperson Md Parvez. Later, police took them to safety.

Talking to this newspaper, Additional SP (North) Moshuiddowla Reza of Chattogram Police said, "Activists of Hefazat-e-Islam and madrasa students brought out a procession. At one point, they vandalised the police station and attacked police when the law enforcers tried to stop them."

"Later they blocked the roads in and around the bus stand area and staged demonstrations ... The situation was later brought under control," he mentioned.

No case was filed and no one was arrested.

Drugs, arms cases filed against Rajib

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prayed for a 20-day remand for Rajib -- 10 days for each case filed.

After the hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Yeasmin Ara placed Rajib on a 14-day remand -- seven days for each case.

Rajib's arrest came eight days after the arrest of Habibur Rahman Mizan, another Dhaka North City Corporation councillor and former general secretary of Mohammadpur thana Awami League, from Moulvibazar's Sreemangal upazila on October 11.

Meanwhile, after the second raid at Rajib's Mohammadpur home and office early yesterday, Rab Executive Magistrate Sarwar Alam sentenced Rajib's accomplice Sadek for ruining evidence such as important documents, and for non-cooperation during the drive.

Rab also recovered a deposit slip of Tk five crore from his office.

The law enforcers alleged that they could not find anything suspicious in Rajib's home as all evidence had been removed after he sensed that a raid would take place.

Hours after his arrest, Rajib lost the

post of joint general secretary in Jubo League's Dhaka north unit for breach of discipline.

A group of locals brought out a rally in Mohammadpur to celebrate the arrest of Rajib. Most of them were harassed by Rajib and his men on different occasions.

They said they could not protest against Rajib out of fear as he was backed by an influential ruling party leader.

A hawker, based in Katarur area, said he had to pay Rajib's men Tk 120 every day. He hopes that extortion in the area will now stop.

Rajib, who allegedly made a huge amount of money illegally since he became the councillor of ward-33, had been underground since October 12, sources said.

Recently, several media outlets have run reports saying he has been involved in various illegal activities.

About six years ago, Rajib used to live in a small room on the ground floor of an apartment building in Mohammadpur. He worked as an assistant to his father, a carpenter, and ran a small tea stall in the area, according to the reports.

His life turned around after he joined the politics of Jubo League, the youth wing of the ruling Awami League. He was elected ward councillor in 2014.

According to media reports, he currently owns a duplex in the same area, several cars and assets worth crores.

The reports also said he had multiple cases filed against him with different police stations.

Since September 18, Rab and police have raided different areas and arrested a number of leaders of the ruling party and its affiliated bodies over the past month.

The list includes expelled Dhaka South Jubo League president Ismail Chowdhury Samrat, his accomplice Arman, expelled organising secretary of Jubo League's Dhaka south unit Khalid Mahmud, Kalabagan Krira Chakra President and ex-Krishak League leader Shafiqul Alam Firoz, Jubo League leader and businessman GK Shamim, Mohammedan's Director-in-Charge Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has recently, on different occasions, said

the anti-graft drive would continue.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday said, "Those involved in tender manipulation, casino business, terrorism and corruption will be brought to book. Those who amassed illegal wealth are also being brought under the ambit of law."

MIZAN SENT TO JAIL

A Dhaka court yesterday rejected a bail petition and sent ward councillor Habibur Rahman Mizan to jail in a money laundering case.

Metropolitan Magistrate Md Tofazzal Hossain passed the order after Criminal Investigation Department Inspector Md Gias Uddin produced Mizan before the court upon expiry of his seven-day remand.

Gias, also the investigation officer of the case, said Mizan gave important information about the money laundering. The information was being verified.

"Mizan needs to be confined to jail until the investigation is complete," the IO added.

Meanwhile, the defence submitted a petition saying his client, Mizan, was implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy to harass him.

Don't try to cash in on Bhola incident

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Hasina said punitive measures must be taken against anyone who wanted to disrespect Prophet Muhammad (SM). "At the same time, if anyone tries to frame another person, measurers will also be taken against them."

The prime minister said the Facebook account of a minority youth was hacked by another youth. The hacker demanded Tk 20,000 over the phone, and threatened that if not, he would write something which will be dangerous for that youth. Getting the phone call, the youth went to the police station to lodge a general diary. Police arrested that youth and later also arrested the person who hacked the account, she said.

"We've communicated with the

Facebook authorities for further information. We'll be able to collect all related information."

Hasina termed the incident "unwanted", which led to the loss of lives.

She also wondered how a Muslim can write derogatory remarks about the Prophet just to put another person in trouble. "Negative propaganda was spread on Facebook. Who're these people, what's their intention?"

Hasina, also chief of the ruling Awami League, said how a Muslim, who has the minimum respect for the Prophet, can write such remarks about him.

The prime minister said the

government is taking the country forward, and it has continued its drive against terrorism, militancy, drugs and corruption. "There will be no mercy for criminals."

Hasina said when the country is developing economically, it is natural that some people will become greedy. "As a result, society is pushed towards destruction. This type of injustice will not be tolerated."

She said the government wants everybody to have a good life through economic emancipation. "But I think it is a must to take punitive action against any sort of injustice."

In this connection, she mentioned that whenever a change happens in society, some people suddenly

become rich while some remain poor. "We're working hard to run the economy in such a way so that the people at grassroots level can get economic benefits and the income disparity doesn't widen."

The prime minister said Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman liberated the country to bring smile to the faces of the general people. "We're running the country keeping that in mind."

Hasina said that taking advantage of a Digital Bangladesh, some bad elements often create problems. "I request everyone not to pay heed to rumours and know the truth, and act accordingly."