

COCAINE PROBE British MP faces suspension

AFP, London

A British MP who headed a parliamentary committee probing drug policies is facing a six-month suspension after a lengthy inquiry into claims he offered to pay for cocaine.

Former Europe minister Keith Vaz, 62, committed a "very serious breach" of code of conduct for MPs, said the House of Commons Standards Committee.

The Sunday Mirror reported in September 2016 that Vaz, posing as an industrial washing machine salesman called Jim, invited two male prostitutes into his flat to engage in paid-for sex and offered to pay for cocaine for another man to use.

Married with two children, Vaz, who was born in Aden to a family from Goa, has been the MP for the central England seat of Leicester East since 1987.

"I found Mr Vaz's account of the events that led to the media reports incredible," said Kathryn Stone, the parliamentary commissioner for standards.



Iraqi students take part in an anti-government demonstration in front of their university in the centre of the southern city of Basra yesterday. Swathes of Iraq have been engulfed by two waves of demonstrations this month over unemployment and corruption that have evolved into demands for regime change. PHOTO: AFP

Three killed

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bodies on the spot and handed them over to police, Mahmudul said, adding that they also recovered two pistols, 12 bullets and some sharp weapons from the spot.

After preparing inquest reports, police sent the bodies to Chattogram Medical College Hospital for autopsies, said Firoj Hossen Molla, officer-in-charge of Sitakunda Model Police Station.

No case was filed yet in this connection, the OC said.

Eight held

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Mollah, 50, were arrested for gang-raping a woman yesterday.

Police said the victim used to live with one of her cousins in a house owned by Azimuddin in Ashulia. Robin is a "friend" of the victim.

On Monday evening, four of Robin's friends Akbar, Shanto, Imran, and Nahid visited Robin. Robin late at night took the victim's cousin for a walk, said Inspector (investigation) Ziaul Haque of Ashulia Police Station.

While they were away, the four friends of Robin broke into the victim's house and gang-raped her while the house owner Azimuddin stood guard outside, he said.

As the girl started screaming, locals went to the house and rescued her, said the officer, adding that the victim filed a case against the six yesterday morning.

In Narayanganj, a court on Monday sent a madrasa teacher to jail for sexually harassing a third-grader.

Officer-in-Charge Aslam Hossain of Fatullah Model Police Station said parents of the victim filed a case against Shahidul Islam, 48, a teacher of a madrasa, alleging that he sexually harassed the girl.

Following the allegation, police arrested the accused on Sunday, said the OC, adding that he was sent to jail the next day.

During primary interrogation, the accused confessed to sexually harassing the girl, the OC added.

In Jashore Sadar upazila, police arrested madrasa teacher Rakib Uddin, 40, on Monday for attempted rape of one of his students.

Police said the accused tried to rape the class-III student inside the madrasa that day.

After the victim shared the incident with her mother, she filed a case with Chandpara Police Station, said Milon Kumar Mandal, in-charge of the station, adding that they arrested Rakib that night.

Meanwhile, in Jashore's Sharsha upazila, a teenage boy was detained for allegedly attempting to rape a two-year-old child.

OC Ataur Rahman of Sharsha Police Station said the victim went to watch television at a neighbour's house on Monday morning.

The boy, finding her alone, tried to rape her. When the child started crying, neighbours rescued her, the OC said.

Police detained the boy at night following a complaint lodged by the victim's father, he added.

In Moulvibazar, a rape victim yesterday wrote to Superintendent of Police Faruk Ahmed alleging that three policemen and two people accused of raping her had been threatening her with dire consequences.

Police said Anis and Shanu allegedly raped the seventh-grader on October 24. Her parents filed a case with Kulaura Police Station that day.

In the complaint, the victim said the accused threatened to set her home on fire if she did not withdraw the case.

Contacted, SP Faruk said he received the complaint and would take necessary action after investigation.

(Our Savar, Narayanganj, Benapole and Moulvibazar correspondents contributed to the report)

UK set for polls to end Brexit chaos

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Speaker, to refresh this parliament and give the people a choice," Johnson said.

The United Kingdom voted 52%-48% in favour of Brexit in a 2016 referendum.

General elections have been held twice in the last four years -- in 2015 and 2017. The next is not scheduled to happen until 2022.

The first Christmas election in Britain since 1923 would be highly unpredictable: Brexit has variously fatigued and enraged swathes of voters while eroding traditional loyalties to the two major parties, Conservative and Labour.

Some politicians fear an election so close to Christmas could irritate voters, while campaigning and getting the vote out could be hampered by cold winter weather and darkness setting in by mid-afternoon.

Ultimately, voters would have a choice between an emboldened Johnson pushing for his Brexit deal or a socialist government under Corbyn renegotiating the deal before a second referendum.

If no party wins conclusively, the Brexit deadlock would continue.

After four years of arguing over Brexit, almost all British politicians now agree an election is needed to break the cycle of inaction that has shocked allies of a country once considered a bastion of stable Western capitalism and democracy.

An election, though, could decide the fate of Brexit as well as the main players - PM Johnson, 55, and his rival Corbyn, 70.

When Johnson's predecessor, Theresa May, bet on an early election in 2017, she lost her slender majority - a failure that ultimately prevented her from ratifying her Brexit deal in parliament and sank her political career.

Johnson's Conservatives are ahead of Labour by an average of about 10 percentage points in polls this month, though pollsters underestimated the support for Brexit in 2016 and admit that the models they use are wilting beside the Brexit furnace.

Both major parties face a fight on at least three fronts: The headline Brexit Party led by Nigel Farage will seek to poach Brexit voters while the Liberal Democrats will seek to win over opponents of Brexit.

"This will probably be the most unpredictable election I have ever known," Anand Menon, director of The UK in a Changing Europe, told Reuters.

"Is it Brexit or is it not? We don't know. Second, the election is as volatile as ever and, thirdly, the potential for tactical voting - and tactical voting to go wrong - is very high given the Leave-Remain split," he said.

Lawmakers on Tuesday approved the timetable for Johnson's "Early Parliamentary General Election Bill"

without a formal vote. Two votes on the bill itself will take place from around 1730 GMT.

Lawmakers could still bring significant amendments to Johnson's bill. Opposition parties are squabbling over which day in early December is best for an election.

Johnson told his cabinet of senior ministers that there was not enough time to change who could vote in the election, ruling out ideas put forward by some opposition parties to lower the voting age and allow EU citizens to vote.

Corbyn said he would support settled EU citizens getting a vote in the election.

Meanwhile, the legislation enacting Johnson's Brexit deal has been put on hold, pending an election, according to Jacob Rees-Mogg, who oversees the government's legislative agenda in the House of Commons.

Behind the bickering, though, Johnson is closer to an election than he has ever been in his tumultuous 3-month premiership.

Among voters, there was some relief that the Brexit debate might be ending soon.

"We've just got to bring this to some sort of resolution," commuter Matt Finch, 36, told Reuters outside London's Charing Cross rail station on Tuesday. "We've had many votes in the last 12 months in parliament and I think a general election might be a way to sort it all out."

The school of inclusion

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Thirty-five children have already gotten admitted to the 50-seat floating school, said Hosneara Hasi, executive director at Jago Nari.

"We will be providing these children with pre-primary education for one year. Once they are eligible, we will then send them to a nearby government primary school so that they can continue their studies," she added.

Under the three-year project -- 'Education for Inclusion of Manta Community (EIMC) -- a floating boat like structure -- 75 feet long and 18 feet wide -- was built at a cost of Tk 20 lakh. The total cost of the project was

Tk 60 lakh, which includes payment of teachers and costs of books, stationery, bags, tiffin boxes, mats and lifejackets, said Fazlul Karim, project coordinator.

The boat includes modern equipment, including computers and televisions, that are run by solar power and an in-house generator. Two teachers have been appointed to run the school from 10:00am to 5:00pm daily, he added.

They have provided tiffin boxes, but the children bring their own snacks to eat, said Nazmunnahar, a teacher at the school.

Md Matul Islam Chowdhury, deputy commissioner (DC) of

Patuakhali, inaugurated the school on October 18 as the chief guest in presence of Dr Md Jahurul Islam, Rangabali upazila chairman, Md Mashfaque Rahman, upazila nirbahi officer, Abu Shamsuddin Ahmed, Rangabali upazila Awami League unit acting president and Md Hanif Mia, local UP chairman.

"We will take an initiative to settle them on land by building an Ashrayan project and bring them under different government social safety programmes, like adult allowances, fisherman allowance, Vulnerable Group Feeding and Vulnerable Group Development," said the DC.

Origin of modern humans traced

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Africa and Namibia.

They then combined the DNA samples with geographic distribution, archaeological and climate change data to come up with a genomic timeline that suggested a sustained lineage of L0 stretching back 200,000 years in the region south of the Zambezi River in Botswana.

Their work created a kind of genetic map tracing L0 lineage to show that prehistoric humans lived in the region for around 70,000 years, before climatic events forced them to begin dispersing throughout the world roughly 130,000 years ago.

"We've known for a long time that modern humans originated in Africa roughly 200,000 years ago," said Vanessa Hayes, from the Garvan Institute of Medical Research and University of Sydney.

"But what we hadn't known until the study was where exactly this homeland was."

The area identified in the study was called Makgadikgadi-Okavango, once home to a massive lake, roughly twice the area of modern-day Lake Victoria.

It is largely desert today.

Around 200,000 years ago, tectonic activity caused the lake to begin to break up, creating a vast wetland that researchers say was home to not only the first anatomically modern humans but also to mega fauna such as giraffes and lions.

But by the time 70,000 years had passed, the first genetic split occurs when a subset of the population migrated north east.

Another 20,000 years on, another group travelled south, according to the genomic map compiled in the study, which appeared in the journal Nature.

"Every time a new migration occurs, that migration event is recorded in our DNA as a time stamp," Hayes told AFP.

"Over time our DNA naturally changes, it's the clock of our history."

According to Axel Timmermann, from the Center for Climate Physics at the Institute of Basic Science in Busan, South Korea, these earliest migrations were driven by a very modern human obsession: climate change.

"Comparing the climatic data with timelines of genetic divergences we found a striking pattern," said Timmermann, a study co-author.

"More rainfall around 130,000 years ago, northeast of the homeland, created a green corridor for migration for the first group."

Although there have been humanoid fossil remains believed to pre-date the 200,000-year benchmark named in the study, the team says their study of L0 data allows us to trace our lineage directly back to the region south of the Zambezi river.

"We're talking about anatomically modern humans, people living

today," said Hayes.

"Everyone walking around today... it does actually come back to L0 being the oldest, and it all comes back to this one (region)."

The team said they wanted to collect more DNA samples to help refine their methods and better reconstruct the history of the first movements of our earliest ancestors.

"It's like looking at a big tree," Hayes said. "European and Asians are just tiny little branches of the tip of the human tree."

Bangladesh

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said the CPJ report.

The list is topped by Somalia for the fifth consecutive year. The country, which is battling al-Shabaab terrorists, has 25 unsolved murders of reporters.

Syria and Iraq were ranked second and third respectively.

Other countries on the list are South Sudan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Brazil, Russia, Nigeria and India and Thailand.

"Rampant impunity sends a message to would-be killers of journalists that they can get away with the crime," said Elana Beiser, CPJ Editorial Director.

"It also sends an intimidating message to journalists and can lead them to censor their own reporting out of concern for their safety, which in turn leaves members of the public in the dark," she said.

Baghdadi given burial

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In the case of bin Laden, his body was transported to the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson. It was washed before being covered in a white sheet, and religious remarks translated into Arabic were read over bin Laden's corpse.

Bin Laden's burial at sea triggered mixed reactions, with a prominent imam saying the United States violated Islamic custom by not burying bin Laden on land, a move seen as a US attempt to prevent his resting place from becoming a shrine for extremist followers.

In the United States, some questioned why the man responsible for the September 11, 2001, attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people was laid to rest with such respect.

Milley did not enter into details about any of Baghdadi's last rites. Milley said that before the disposal of his remains, they had been transported to a secure facility to confirm his identity with forensic DNA testing.

"It's been done and is complete," Milley said.

VIDEO OF KILLING?

Trump said on Monday he may declassify and release part of the video taken on Saturday of the raid.

The video is believed to include aerial footage and possibly footage from cameras mounted on the soldiers who stormed Baghdadi's compound.

"We're thinking about it. We may," Trump told reporters before flying to Chicago. "We may take certain parts of it and release it."

But Milley declined to comment on whether he had video from inside the compound, which he described as a place where Baghdadi had been staying "on a consistent basis."

"I'm not going to classify the video -- what we do have, what we don't have, at this time. I've seen a lot," Milley said.

"And I'll wait until everything is appropriately declassified here in the coming days."

Trump said on Sunday that Baghdadi had died "whimpering and crying" in the raid.

Milley did not confirm that account, saying he presumed it came from Trump's direct conversations with members of the elite unit that conducted the operation. Milley had not yet spoken with them, he said.

He confirmed the US military had taken into its custody two adult male Islamic State suspects but Milley declined to talk about intelligence collected from the site.

Abused abroad

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She eventually fell sick and the employer sent her to the Lebanese recruiting office, which then placed her under another employer.

"I was forced to work in three houses. I hardly had any time to sleep. I became so weak that I had to see a doctor, who advised me to go back home," Shafia, who now lives in the capital's Demra, told The Daily Star over phone.

The employer paid her only six months' salaries -- Tk 60,000 -- though she worked for him over a year. He then left Shafia at the Bangladesh Embassy in Lebanon. She was kept in a safe house for a year before the embassy arranged her return.

After her return in 2017, OKUP helped her lodge a complaint with the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) early last year. After three hearings, a BMET officer settled the complaint by fining the manpower broker, who had sent her to Lebanon, only Tk 20,000.

She said she had demanded compensation worth at least one year's salaries and treatment costs and that the amount offered to her was nothing but a joke.

"My [manpower] broker also shouted at me for making the complaint," she said.

According to the research, only 48 of the 110 returnee female domestic workers surveyed had filed complaints with the BMET. Others did not want to do it fearing either social stigma or threats from the manpower brokers.

The research further said Bangladesh has the Overseas Employment and Migrant Act 2013 for the management of recruitment, and any migrant can file a police case if the person faces fraudulence or abuse. They can also complain to the BMET for arbitration.

As lodging a police report involves lengthy procedures and financial expenditure, arbitration at the BMET is a better option, said Shakirul Islam.

He, however, said the study revealed gross loopholes in this process that fails to protect the abused migrants' rights.

The BMET doesn't have a dedicated office or a code of conduct on how to conduct the arbitration.

"This creates imbalance of power

between the officials, staffers [of recruiting agencies] or brokers involved, and the migrant workers. This leaves the migrants vulnerable to further manipulation and exploitation," said Shakirul.

The Overseas Employment and Migration Management Rules 2017 allows legal representation of the migrants, but they can't arrange it due to financial reasons.

"They [complainants] often face disrespect, misconduct and/or unequal treatment. Some NGOs assist migrants in the arbitration process, but face challenges from groups with vested interests," the study observed.

Shakirul also said the 48 complainants whose cases were settled last year and this year got on average around Tk 10,000 in compensation. Last year, a total of 315 complaints were settled by the BMET after which the victims, on an average, received Tk 9,200.

The importance of the issue is paramount, as thousands of abused female migrants have been returning from the Middle East in recent years.

The complaints included physical, sexual and mental torture. Many were unpaid for months. Some also returned pregnant and faced social stigma.

There are also cases of suicides by female migrants, especially in Saudi Arabia and Lebanon.

"We need to review the act and make it migrant-friendly. Otherwise, the women, abused abroad, face injustice at home again. It's not acceptable," said Shakirul Islam.

He also suggested that the state provides legal assistance to the abused migrants.

Since 1991, a total of 8.75 lakh Bangladeshi women migrated abroad, mostly to the Middle East, for domestic work. There is no data on how many of them returned or who returned after facing abuses.

The Brac Migration Programme says it has recorded the return of at least 1,365 abused female workers in 2018 and some 900 until yesterday this year.

Officials said filing cases against the employers in the destination countries is difficult as the survivors of exploitation need to stay to pursue any case, but they cannot do it.

Four-point

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to remain closed between October 25 and November 5 for ensuring fair examinations.

The minister directed the authorities concerned to remain careful so that rumours over question paper leaks cannot spread on social media.

Examinees would have to enter the exam halls 30 minutes ahead of the tests, she said, adding that details of latecomers would be reported to respective education boards.

All physically challenged students will get 20 minutes extra while visually impaired ones and those with cerebral palsy will be provided

with writers.

Besides, examinees with autism, down syndrome and cerebral palsy will be given 30 minutes extra, and will be allowed to get the help of teachers, parents or designated assistants during the examinations.

No one, including teachers and office staffers, can bring any electronic devices within 200 metres of the examination halls, said the minister, adding that legal actions would be taken against outsiders entering the centres during, before, and after the exams.

At least 26,61,682 students are to sit for this year's JSC and JDC examinations.

They built

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few more days would be needed for its completion.

"We went door-to-door to the villagers to collect materials to build the bridge, and they willingly donated bamboos and funds for this purpose," he said, adding many people came forward to help with the initiative.

Locals said the concrete bridge that was there over the canal had collapsed after the Teesta river flooded in 2015, and the road adjacent to it collapsed in 2017.

Since then, they had been using a longer, alternative route to reach the upazila headquarters.

Gaddimari Union Parishad Chairman Atiar Rahman told The Daily Star that local lawmaker Motahar Hossain assured that a concrete bridge would be built over the canal during this current fiscal year.

"An application for building a concrete bridge has been submitted to the LGED," he said.

Hatibandha Upazila Nirbahi Officer Samiul Amin said, "It is a good sign that the villagers are building the bridge with their own efforts. The administration is willing to help them if they ask for it."