

'Drug dealer' killed in 'gunfight'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A suspected drug peddler was killed in a "gunfight" with members of Rapid Action Battalion in Hazaribagh area of the capital early yesterday. The dead -- Nadim Bahadur, 38 -- is a listed drug dealer and accused in nine cases, Rab claimed in a short message circulated to journalists. Sajid Mia, deputy assistant director of Rab-2, told The Daily Star that one of their teams came across two men on a motorbike around 4:00am near Sikder Medical College Hospital in Hazaribagh.

As soon as the Rab team signalled the motorbike to stop, the duo opened fire on them, forcing the law enforcers to retaliate, he claimed. At one point of the "gunfight", Nadim was shot and another unknown person managed to flee. Nadim was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared him dead, the Rab official added.

Rab confirmed the identity of the dead from a national identity card found with him.

The elite force also claimed to have seized a motorcycle and recovered a pistol along with few bullets, 35 bottles of phensidyl, and 180 pieces of yaba.

The body was sent to DMCH morgue for autopsies.

Section-144 imposed in some areas of Tangail town

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

The local administration last night imposed a three-day ban on holding any public gathering in some areas of Tangail town after two Awami League factions called for programmes at the same spot.

Muhammad Shahidullah, additional district magistrate of Tangail, imposed the embargo under section-144 in and around Shaheed Smrity Pouro Udyan, Nirala Intersection, Old Bus Stand areas along with some other important streets in the town.

The temporary embargo was imposed after two groups of the ruling Awami League called for programmes at Shaheed Smrity Pouro Udyan at 3:00pm today, said officials seeking anonymity.

A group led by Amanur Rahman Rana, former AL lawmaker of Tangail-3, called for a programme marking the 16th death anniversary of his elder brother Aminur Rahman Khan Bappy, who was also a leader of the party and killed near his home.

On the same venue at the same time, a rival group under the banner of Nirjatito Awami Paribar, along with local CNG-run auto-rickshaw workers and diesel-run three-wheeler workers, called for a programme demanding justice for freedom fighter Faruk Ahmed, whose body was found near his College Para house in the town on January 18, 2013.

Additional policemen were deployed in the town.

ACC

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Till yesterday, the Commission filed 15 cases, including against Ismail Hossain Chowdhury Samrat, Khaled Mahmud Bhuiyan, and Mohammedan Sporting Club Director In-charge M Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan.

Yesterday, it also filed a case against suspended Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) councillor AKM Mominul Haque Sayeed for amassing Tk 4.47 crore beyond known source of income.

The ACC will step into its 15th anniversary today. Over the years, it has filed around 5,530 cases.

The ACC chairman said that in the last three and half years, at least Tk 15,000 crore was recovered from the banking sector, due to direct or indirect intervention of the Commission.

CASE AGAINST SAYEED
ACC Assistant Director Ataur Rahman Sarkar yesterday filed a case with its integrated district office against suspended councillor of DSCC Ward-9 Sayeed.

According to the case statement, Sayeed had shown moveable properties worth Tk 1.55 crore in his tax return for the fiscal 2018-19.

The commission did not find any specific source of income behind amassing the wealth, it said.

Earlier, the ACC had requested the BFIU to share the details of Sayeed's different bank accounts.

The financial unit informed the ACC that Sayeed had Tk 2.93 crore in different bank accounts, which did not include the moveable property he had declared in his tax returns.

Sayeed, also the joint general secretary of Dhaka South Jubo League and the president of Arambagh Krira Sangha, is now abroad, sources said.

On September 22, Rab busted illegal casinos housed inside Arambagh Sporting Club, Dilkusha Sporting Club, and Mohammedan Sporting Club, all of which were run by Sayeed.



Conservative leader Boris Johnson and Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn shake hands during a televised debate ahead of general election in London, Britain, on Tuesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Top US diplomat implicates Trump

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House visit for President Zelensky," Sondland said.

Far from being a "rogue" operation outside normal US diplomatic channels, Sondland told the hearing top officials in the White House and State Department -- including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo -- were kept constantly informed.

"We followed the president's orders," in working with Giuliani, he testified before the House Intelligence Committee.

'WITCH HUNT MUST END NOW'
Democrats said Sondland's testimony strongly supported allegations of abuse of power that would justify Trump's impeachment.

"Today's testimony is among the most significant evidence to date," said Adam Schiff, the committee chairman leading the inquiry.

"It goes right to the heart of the issue of bribery as well as other potential high crimes or misdemeanors," he said.

Tweeting as he headed to Texas on board Air Force One, Trump asserted on the contrary that Sondland had

exonerated him, and demanded an immediate end to the impeachment probe.

"Impeachment Witch Hunt is now OVER!" Trump wrote. "This Witch Hunt must end NOW. So bad for our Country!"

Addressing reporters earlier at the White House, Trump reenacted segments of the day's testimony to hammer home his point.

"What do you want from Ukraine?" the president quoted Sondland as asking him, reading from large-print notes.

"Here is my answer: 'I want nothing. I want nothing. I want no quid pro quo. Tell Zelensky to do the right thing,'" added the president.

"I would say that means it's all over."

Trump also sought to distance himself from Sondland -- whose testimony was closely watched as a political appointee -- saying he did "not know him very well."

TOP OFFICIALS KNEW OF POLICY
A hotel developer named ambassador after donating \$1 million to Trump's

inauguration, Sondland was at the center of efforts to convince Zelensky to do the US bidding on the investigations in order to obtain a meeting with Trump, and also to unlock \$391 million on aid put on hold in July.

Sondland told lawmakers a White House summit was explicitly tied to the investigations, meant to target Burisma, an Ukrainian energy company on which former vice president Biden's son Hunter had held a paid board position.

But he said he figured out himself that the unexplained, White House-ordered hold on security aid was also tied to the investigations -- although he never discussed the issue with Trump.

"In the absence of any credible explanation for the suspension of aid, I later came to believe that the resumption of security aid would not occur until there was a public statement from Ukraine committing to the investigations of the 2016 election and Burisma, as Mr Giuliani had demanded," he said.

Sir Fazle Abed

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Netherlands embassy were at the event, said a Brac statement.

Sir Fazle Abed expressed his delight, saying, "Being named an Officer in the Order of Orange-Nassau is an immense honour.

"The Netherlands has been a great friend and supporter of Brac over the decades and our connection with the country has deepened since establishing the base of our international operations there 10 years ago. This recognition is a testament to that friendship. As Brac expands globally, we look forward to working together to advance the causes of the people living in situations of poverty and deprivation."

The ambassador, in his speech, said, "Sir Fazle has always strived to uphold human dignity, resilience, integrity and inclusion. These values have been at the heart of the successful development of Brac.

"The fact that, for Brac, the empowerment of women is not a secondary aim but a guiding principle of all of its programmes and enterprises, is greatly appreciated. Brac's anti-poverty work is recognised across the world, including in the Netherlands."

The Order of Orange-Nassau is awarded for longstanding meritorious service to society, the State or the Royal House of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Designer baby could be two years

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analysis by Kevin Smith, a bioethicist at Abertay University in Scotland, published last week in the journal Bioethics.

Advocates like Smith want to change the genetic makeup of embryos to prevent the transmission of gene-related diseases.

However, the practice is hugely

controversial due to fears that it could be used to create "designer babies" whose genes have been edited for non-therapeutic purposes.

In November 2018, Chinese scientist He Jiankui sparked outrage after announcing he had created the first genetically-modified babies in the world from embryos altered to make them resistant to HIV.

But Smith says their creation is ethically justifiable and would offer hope to parents at risk of transmitting serious genetic disease to their offspring, according to a statement.

From a "utilitarian standpoint" genetic modification is the "only conceivable way" to deal with multiple disease-associated genes in an embryo, according to Smith.

Palestinians condemn US policy shift

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in the occupied West Bank "inconsistent" with international law.

"The State of Palestine condemns the strongest terms the US administration's lawless position on Israel's illegal settlements in occupied territory of the State of Palestine, as announced by the Secretary of State Mike Pompeo," Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad Malki said in a statement on Tuesday.

Pompeo on Monday said that

after legal consultation Washington had concluded the establishment of settlements was "not, per se, inconsistent with international law", saying he trusted the Israeli courts to decide.

Aside from Palestinians, the US announcement, the latest in a series of moves by the Trump administration favouring Israel, drew immediate criticism from rights groups, Arab world, some US allies and politicians worldwide.

The UN and EU made clear that they continue to view Israeli settlement in the occupied Palestinian territories as illegal. The Arab League called the US move an "extremely adverse development."

Accusing the current US Administration of legitimising the Israeli colonial settler agenda, Malki said the announcement "risks the demise of the international order and threatens to plunge the world into chaos and violence."

Law preventing noble act

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These patients spend between Tk 30 lakh and Tk 40 lakh each, he said.

Around 100 to 200 patients, mostly from well-off families, undergo treatment in Singapore and the US, and they spend between Tk one crore and Tk three crore each, he added.

Some people are also treated in Thailand, he said in reply to a query.

Under the existing facilities, as many as 250 kidney transplants take place each year in Bangladesh, said Zafrullah.

As it is required to prove relationship with patients to become donors under the present law, many people try to establish false relationship, he said.

Patients and their families bring individuals, impersonating siblings or wives or mothers, he added.

Deceased people's kidneys can be transplanted, but the result is not the same as a living person's kidney, he said.

Zafrullah said if the government

declares reward of Tk 5 lakh for each kidney donor and recognises them with certificates to give priority in healthcare service, then it will encourage many people to donate kidneys.

It will also help curb illegal transaction of money over getting kidneys, he added.

In a written handout, the Gonoshasthaya Kendra recommended making three types of organ donations eligible under the law.

These are: related living donor, which can be eligible for close relatives, unrelated living donor, which can be eligible for non-relatives, and swap or paired donation, which can be eligible for friends and in case of "emotional attachment".

Zafrullah said an "authorisation board" could be formed in every district with a retired justice or a doctor or a senior journalist as its chairman to stop transaction of money over kidney donation.

About 45,000 new patients are

being diagnosed with renal failure each year in the country, he said, referring to Bangladesh Kidney Foundation's data.

People of low-income group are more prone to renal failure due to lack of treatment facilities, he added.

Its best treatment is kidney transplant, but a patient can also get similar remedy with dialysis regularly, he said.

Dialysis is expensive and it requires Tk 30,000 to Tk 40,000 a month for a patient, he further said.

Gonoshasthaya Dialysis Centre provides around 260 patients with dialysis service daily, he said, urging the government to give the patients incentives.

It will start kidney transplantation next year. A team of surgeons from the UK will help this centre's surgeons initially, he said.

For each kidney transplant, low-income people have to spend Tk 1.5 lakh and solvent people Tk 2.5 lakh, he added.

Enemy conspiracy defeated in Iran

Claims Khamenei; Amnesty says more than 100 killed over fuel price hike protest

AFP, Tehran

Iran's Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the enemy had been "repelled" in the country where dozens are thought to have died in violent protests sparked by a petrol price hike.

Demonstrations broke out in the sanctions-hit Islamic republic on Friday after it was announced the price of petrol would be raised by as much as 200 percent.

"We have pushed back the enemy in the military arena. We have pushed back the enemy in the political war," Khamenei said in a speech aired on state television late Tuesday.

"We have repelled the enemy in the arena of security warfare... in recent days," he said, adding that the unrest had not been the result of a popular movement.

"The recent actions were security

issues, not from the people," he said. "We have repelled the enemy."

State television, which rarely shows any signs of dissent in Iran, has aired footage of masked young men appearing to clash with security forces.

The United Nations called for restraint on Tuesday and voiced alarm at reports dozens may have been killed in the violence.

Amnesty International said more than 100 demonstrators were believed to have been killed across Iran since security forces were ordered to "crush" the protests.

"At least 106 protesters in 21 cities have been killed, according to credible reports," the London-based rights group said, adding that "the real death toll may be much higher, with some reports suggesting as many as 200 have been killed".

Negligence

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The Dhaka-bound Turna Nishita rammmed Chattogram-bound Udayan Express at Mandobagh Railway Station in Kasba early November 12. The railway authorities estimated the loss from the accident to be Tk 30 lakh.

The minister said they earlier announced that 16 people were killed in the accident, but the correct figure would be 15 as the name of a victim was mentioned twice.

Two more victims died of their injuries at different hospitals on Saturday and Sunday.

Sujan yesterday said 25 injured were still undergoing treatment at hospitals.

The minister said he received reports from three out of five probe committees and their findings were almost similar.

Asked whether fog or construction materials for a second line caused the accident, the minister said the investigation committees did not find any evidence to support such assertions.

"There is no evidence in the reports that he [driver] dozed off. The speed of the train [Turna Nishita] was 70km per hour [before it reached near the station], but when it hit the other train, it was running at a speed of around 25km per hour, meaning the driver applied the brakes," he said.

Bangladesh Railway Director General Md Shamsuzzaman said the driver, his assistant and the guard were negligent in their duties.

At one stage, they understood that they had crossed both the outer and home signals, but they didn't apply the "emergency brakes" that could have stopped the train within a few seconds, he told journalists.

Asked whether only administrative actions were enough for causing such an accident and whether the three could be brought to book under the penal code for "criminal negligence",

the railways minister said laws for road and rail accidents were different.

Sujan, also a senior Supreme Court lawyer, said the three were held responsible as they were negligent in discharging their professional duties.

The minister said had they caused the accident deliberately, they could have been tried under the penal code. "But I don't think it [penal code] would be applicable to what has happened here."

Railways Secretary Mofazzel Hossain said nobody expects an accident, but it can happen even after taking necessary precautionary measures.

"We will take action against those who have shown negligence in performing their duties," he said at the press briefing.

The DG said although the railway was facing shortage of train drivers and driver's assistants, the driver of Turna Nishita had necessary training and experience to operate the train. Besides, he had necessary rest before starting the trip.

He said they have 1,134 train drivers and driver's assistants against the posts of 1,742.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Sujan said the probe committees made several recommendations, including installing a CCTV camera inside the cabin of the train driver to closely monitor the activities of the driver and his assistant.

They also recommended providing regular training to the staffers involved in operating trains and filling the vacant posts.

The committees suggested using more modern devices to maintain communications between railway stations and trains and introducing an "Automatic Train Stop" system to avoid a head-on collision between two trains.

The minister said such accidents can be avoided if these recommendations are implemented.

Jacking up rice prices

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Moreover, the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection has already been asked to take necessary actions if any irregularities come to its notice, he added.

If required, the minister said, the food ministry would operate mobile courts to this end.

The country produces nearly 3.44 crore tonnes of rice annually against the demand of almost 2.16 crore tonnes, he said.

At present, the country's food crops stock is about 14,52,707 tonnes at different warehouses of the government. Of the stock, 11,13,303 tonnes are rice.

Acting food secretary Omar Faruque, Director General of the Department of Food Nazmanara Khanum, Bangladesh Auto Major and Husking Mills Owners Association President Abdur Rashid, Bangladesh Auto Rice Mill Association President Khorsheed Alam and representatives from the home, commerce and agriculture ministries, among others, attended the meeting.

AMAN PROCUREMENT
Mosammam Nazmanara Khanum, director general of the Directorate General of Food said, "We have asked all our field offices to begin Aman procurement in areas where the harvest has started. The procurement will start all over the country in phases."

She said her office had already got the list of growers provided by the Department of Agricultural Extension and the procurement officially started in a couple of areas.

The government is buying the paddy so that the farmers get fair prices for their produce and recoup losses incurred in recent seasons.

This year, the volume of paddy purchase, including that of Boro, would be the second highest during the period, according to data from the food ministry.

The ministry bought the highest quantity of paddy -- 6.70 lakh tonnes

-- in the Boro season in 2017.

It had earlier announced that it would start buying Aman paddy at Tk 26 each kg from marginal and small farmers on November 20. The procurement would continue till February 28.

The food ministry estimated the production cost of each kg at Tk 21.55, down from Tk 25.30 the previous year.

After a meeting of the Food Planning and Monitoring Committee, the ministry had said the list of growers would be scrutinised by the upazila procurement committees.

In case the number of farmers exceeds the procurement target, the growers would be chosen through lotteries, the food minister said at a briefing following the meeting on October 31.

The government has also decided to buy 3.5 lakh tonnes of parboiled rice, which would be procured at Tk 36 each kilogram.

The purchase quantity was the same last year.

Besides, 50,000 tonnes of un-boiled rice would be bought at Tk 35 a kg, according to a ministry statement.

Rice purchase from millers would begin on December 1 and continue till February 28, said the statement.

PROCUREMENT IN DINAJPUR

Mahmudul Alam, deputy commissioner of Dinajpur, said the government bought 1,000kgs of Aman paddy from two farmers from the district's Biral and Nawabganj upazilas.

Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman, district food controller, said the district food office would buy 28,700 tonnes of Aman paddy from 13 upazilas of Dinajpur.

A farmer can sell maximum 500kgs of Aman paddy, he said, reports our Dinajpur correspondent.

The number of farmers in the district is around 4.50 lakh.