

Top EC officials

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11 people, including nine EC staffers, have been arrested.

In the confessional statement, Najim mentioned that he joined Panchliash election office in February 2, 2015, when Latif was the election officer there.

Data-entry operator Mostafa Faruq and office assistants Joynal Abedin and Hossain Patwary were also posted at the office then, he said.

Mostafa and Joynal are now behind bars.

He told the court that Mostafa's and Joynal's desks were next to his. Mostafa, Joynal, and Patwary used to reduce the age of voters in the NID database for money with the help of Latif.

They also used to enter dodgy data into the NID server in exchange for money.

Najim said he was transferred to another office a few months later for protesting the irregularities but he was posted back to the office after a while, court sources said quoting Najim's statement.

He told the magistrate that Latif used to get the money through his office assistant Patwary. Patwary usually deposited the money in Latif's bank account. Najim confessed that he too got involved in the forgery after a while.

Najim said Latif himself used to deposit money to the bank account of a high official of the NID wing in Dhaka.

Inspector Rajesh Barua, also the investigation officer of the case, refused to make any comment in this regard.

Deputy Commissioner of CMP CT unit Mohammed Shahidullah told The Daily Star, "We have learnt several names in the confessional statements and we are verifying the information..."

Wishing to remain unnamed, a deputy assistant director of the Anti-Corruption Commission told The

Daily Star, "During investigation, we found that deceased Rohingya robber Nur Mohammed got Bangladeshi NID smart card from the Panchlaish office."

"Latif was the Panchlaish thana election officer then."

On September 15, the ACC found that using official devices and laptops, several syndicates provided Rohingyas with Bangladeshi NID cards for money. It said several EC laptops that could connect directly to the NID server were stolen but the EC was not made aware of the matter.

Police and passport officials said some Rohingya refugees, with the help of brokers and locals, were making Bangladeshi passports using forged NID cards.

The Rohingyas were using fake names and addresses while seeking the identification document.

EC officials still cannot say exactly how many Rohingyas got the cards.

After the incidents came to the fore, Double Mooring Thana election officer Pallabi Chakma filed a case accusing five and several unknown people.

The Daily Star could not get in touch with Latif and Patwary for comments.

900 including

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details of the people who have surrendered.

"We are evaluating them one by one. More details will emerge once this process is finished," said an official in Kabul who declined to be identified.

The people said several Indian-origin IS fighters are believed to be active in Nangarhar though a few have died in air strikes and operations by Afghan special forces.

Since 2016, about a dozen men from Kerala travelled to Afghanistan to join IS. Some of them had converted to Islam and several were accompanied by their families.

Pompeii's grand baths

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But excavators also found a victim of the disaster, the skeleton of a child who had sought shelter there in vain.

The architects "were inspired by Emperor Nero's thermal baths in Rome. The rooms here were to be bigger and lighter, with marble pools," the archaeological site's director Massimo Osanna told AFP.

The Central Baths lie in an area restored under the Great Pompeii Project, launched in 2012 to save the historical site after the collapse of the 2000-year-old "House of the Gladiators", which sparked outrage worldwide.

"It was an emotionally charged dig," said Alberta Martellone, 43, the archaeologist who led a team of an anthropologist, geologist and vulcanologist in studying the skeleton of the child, who died aged between eight and 10.

"He or she was looking for shelter, and found death instead," she said.

The excavation "was also moving from an architectural point of view, because it is unusual to find a building so large, with such ample rooms, in this densely built up city.

It transmits a sense of grandiosity," she said.

The construction site with its small skeleton "is a sign of life interrupted, on more than one level," she said.

The city's original public bathhouses were smaller, darker and often overcrowded; the new complex would have provided a more luxurious setting for all those who could afford it -- most citizens, but not slaves.

Recent digs at Pompeii have offered up several impressive finds, including an inscription uncovered last year that proves the city near Naples was destroyed after October 17, 79 AD, and not on August 24 as thought.

Archeologists in October discovered a vivid fresco depicting an armour-clad gladiator standing victorious as his wounded opponent gushing blood, painted in a tavern believed to have housed the fighters as well as prostitutes.

Along with the baths, visitors could from Monday visit a small domus sporting a racy fresco depicting the Roman god Jupiter, disguised as a swan, impregnating the Greek mythological figure of Queen Leda.

Myanmar may have chem arms

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of State, told the OPCW in The Hague.

Washington had information that Myanmar "had a chemical weapons programme in the 1980s that included a sulphur mustard development programme and chemical weapons production facility", he added.

"Based on available information, the United States certifies that Myanmar is in non-compliance with the CWC, due to its failure to declare its past chemical weapons programme and to destroy its chemical weapons facility."

Myanmar has previously faced accusations of storing and using such weapons.

In 2013, a parliamentary report said police had used phosphorus the previous year against protesters at a copper mine in the north of the country, causing severe burns.

In July 2014, five journalists from Myanmar were sentenced to 10 years in prison with hard labour over an article accusing the military of producing chemical arms.

The previous year, Myanmar's then quasi-civilian government denied using chemical weapons against rebels from the Kachin ethnic minority during clashes in the north of the country.

The US official said Washington had held talks with Myanmar's civilian government and military over the issue and "stands ready to assist Myanmar" to destroy the weapons.

Myanmar was the 191st State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, which came into force in 1997 and is monitored by the OPCW for compliance, reported AFP.

In 2005, London-based rights group Christian Solidarity Worldwide accused the former military junta of using chemical weapons against rebels from the Karen community.

RARE COURT MARTIAL

The US allegation comes as Myanmar faces growing international legal pressure over its treatment of another minority -- the Muslim Rohingya,

thousands of whom were forced to flee to Bangladesh in a huge military operation in 2017.

Soldiers, police, and Buddhist villagers are alleged to have razed hundreds of villages in the remote western Rakhine state, torturing Rohingya as they fled, carrying out mass-killings and gang-rapes.

Myanmar says the army was fighting a legitimate counter-insurgency campaign against militants who attacked security posts.

Spokesman Zaw Min Tun told Reuters via telephone that soldiers and officers from a regiment deployed to Gu Dar Pyin village, the site of an alleged massacre of Rohingya, were "weak in following the rules of engagement".

In a statement published on its website, the army said the soldiers being court martialled were involved in "accidents" in Gu Dar Pyin.

The Associated Press reported the existence of at least five mass graves in the village, through interviews with survivors in refugee camps in Bangladesh and time-stamped cellphone videos. Myanmar denied the allegations made in the AP report.

The country is facing a wave of international pressure over its treatment of the Rohingya, with cases filed against it at courts around the world.

Myanmar's leader Aung San Suu Kyi, winner of a Nobel peace prize for her past defiance of a military junta that had led the country for decades, is set to travel to the Hague for hearings starting in December at the International Court of Justice.

Gambia, a tiny, mainly Muslim West African state, lodged a lawsuit accusing the country of genocide after winning the support of the 57-nation Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Myanmar says the international efforts violate its sovereignty and has vowed to carry out its own investigations into the allegations.



The 17th span of the under-construction Padma Bridge is being taken near 22th and 23rd pillars yesterday for installation.

PHOTO: STAR

Trustee board, Bidisha

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Bidisha, former second wife of Ershad, has been staying at President Park in the capital's Baridhara since November 14. She alleged that her son, who has a learning disability, was not getting proper care and food there.

She told journalists that she went to President Park upon request from her son who wanted her to stay there and take care of him.

"After entering Eric's room, I found that he was very afraid. He was so hungry that he could not even speak," she said.

Speaking at a press conference at the JP chief's Banani office on November 22, trustee board acting chairman Maj (retd) Khaled Akhtar rejected all the allegations and said Bidisha was staying at President Park illegally.

Before his death in July, Ershad on April 7 donated all his movable and immovable properties to the trust. The board members are Eric, Ershad's

personal secretary Shamsuzzaman Mukul, his cousin Jahangir, and Maj (retd) Khaled.

The former military dictator didn't include his wife Raushan Ershad and brothers in the board.

Ershad in his wealth statement, submitted to the Election Commission before the last year's national election, mentioned that his yearly income was Tk 1.08 crore.

Khaled, also a JP presidium member, at the press briefing said all the expenses of Eric would be met from the trust's fund as mentioned in its document.

He said the trust was responsible for taking care of Eric, not his mother. He argued that Bidisha can take care of her son as the mother, but cannot stay at President Park which is a property of the trust.

Citing the document of the board of trustees, he said none but Eric would be able to live at Ershad's President Park residence.

"If she [Bidisha] wants to keep her

son with her, she can stay at any place except the residence of HM Ershad," said Khaled.

GDS FILED WITH POLICE

Bidisha said a general diary was filed with Gulshan police station on November 18 on behalf of Eric, mentioning that his life might be at risk if the board members were given the responsibility of taking care of him.

It said Eric wanted to stay at President Park with his mother.

On November 22, another GD was lodged with the same police station by Khaled on behalf of the board of trustees. The GD said Bidisha entered President Park illegally and the board was fearing that it might pose a threat to Eric's life and assets.

Bidisha and Ershad got married in 2000. They divorced five years later. The couple fought a legal battle to have the custody of Eric.

A court delivered a verdict in favour of Ershad and granted Bidisha visiting rights.

Shut illegal brick

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The court asked the environment secretary to submit the committee's report before it by January 5.

The HC bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice KM Kamrul Kader passed the order after Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh filed a writ petition seeking necessary orders.

During yesterday's hearing, petitioner's lawyer Manzill Murshid told the HC that the capital's air pollution was alarming and that directives from the HC were needed so that the authorities take necessary steps.

The lawyer recently submitted a supplementary writ petition seeking necessary HC orders to reduce air pollution in Dhaka.

Yesterday, Deputy Attorney General Abdullah-Al-Mahmud Bashar told the court that the capital's air was polluted mainly due to the operation of illegal brick kilns outside the city.

Following the same writ petition, the HC on January 28 this year issued a rule asking the government as to why the inaction of the administration to curb air pollution in Dhaka city should not be declared illegal and as to why it should not be directed to take effective steps to stop air pollution in the city.

The capital had the worst air quality in the world on Monday, according to Air Visual, an air quality measuring application.

The alarming situation reportedly prompted the government to chalk out immediate measures to give city-

dwellers some relief.

"The level of air pollution is alarming. Just a few days ago, air quality of Dhaka was the third or fourth worst in the world. But now it tops the ranking," said Shahab Uddin, minister for environment, forest and climate change, who presided over an emergency inter-ministerial meeting on Monday.

Last year, Dhaka's air was ranked third most polluted in the world according to an air quality data compiled by the World Health Organisation for megacities with a population of 14 million or more.

Barrister Toufiq Inam appeared for Dhaka North City Corporation, while Sayeed Ahmed Raja stood for Dhaka South City Corporation.

17 spans

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completed a few months ago. It was stored at a temporary platform on the bank of the Padma.

The 17th span was supposed to be installed a few days earlier. But it was delayed due to poor navigability of the river.

Officials said the 18th span of the bridge is scheduled to be installed either on December 4 or 5.

The construction work of the long-cherished Padma Bridge had started in December, 2015. The first of the 41 spans (superstructure) of the bridge was installed on September 30, 2017.

The government is building the bridge with its own fund.

Once the construction of the bridge is completed, the capital will directly be connected with 21 southern districts through road and railways.

'BSF jawans beat Bangladeshi dead'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A Bangladeshi cattle trader was beaten to death allegedly by Indian Border Security Force and Indian cattle suppliers yesterday.

Abdul Gani, 33, was from Chakulia village in Damurhuda upazila of Kushtia.

He was mercilessly beaten by BSF men and some Indian cattle suppliers over previous enmity, said a cattle trader who accompanied Gani to India yesterday.

The cattle trader alleged that Gani had a business feud with some Indian cattle suppliers and when they cross the border, the Indian cattle suppliers picked him up and took him away, he said.

Another trader said Gani was beaten by cattle suppliers and BSF jawans.

Gani died in Chuadanga General Hospital around 8:30am after he was brought back.

Contacted, Lt Colonel Khaliquzzaman, director of Border Guard Bangladesh-6 in Chuadanga, said they do not know who attacked Gani and that they sent a letter to BSF to know about the facts.

Dhaka

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eyes, she sought out the best for her country and all those she loved. She was a peacemaker among friends and family. It was evident that she practiced a principle of strong character and faith in Islam, said her bio.

Abinta was born in Dhaka in February 1997 to Ruba Ahmed and Md Ehsanul Kabir. An only child, she was nurtured in an atmosphere of love and care, and brought up with a strong, unwavering sense of morals. "My parents are the main authors of my story," Abinta once wrote.

Abinta Kabir Foundation, was launched in 2017 to help underprivileged children get education. It was the best way to remember the woman for the values she stood for.

Cut emissions now or face disaster: UN

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greenhouse gas concentrations hit an all-time record in 2018.

The Paris deal committed nations to limit temperature rises above pre-industrial levels to "well below" 2C, and to a safer 1.5-C if at all possible.

To do so they agreed on the need to

reduce emissions and work towards a low-carbon world within decades.

Yet the UN found that even taking into account current Paris pledges, the world is on track for a 3.2C temperature rise, something scientists fear could tear at the fabric of society.

Even if every country made good on its promises, Earth's "carbon budget" for a 1.5-C rise -- the amount we can emit to stay below a certain temperature threshold -- would be exhausted within a decade.

In its own words, the UN assessment is "bleak".

Tk 38 lakh for a set of curtains!

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to investigate the alleged corruption and submit a report within six months.

The ACC recently led the enquiry and found seven persons involved in the irregularities. It also found that the corruption relating to Tk 10 crore could be the one of many.

Yesterday, the ACC approved the enquiry report and gave its nod to file a case in this regard.

"Tomorrow [today] the ACC will file a case accusing six persons," said ACC Deputy Director Shamsul Alam.

They are the-then FMCH purchase committee's Dr Ganopati Biswas, Associate Professor, Dr Minakshi Chakma, junior consultant and pathology department's Dr AHM Nurul Islam. The other accused are MS Anik Traders owner Munshi Sazzad Hossain, also the administrative officer of the National Institute of Diseases of the Chest and Hospital, one of the owners of the traders Munshi Farrukh Hossain and equipment supplier Abdullah Al Mamun.

The ACC dropped former superintendent Dr Md Omar Faruk Khan from the accused list following his death.

The enquiry by the anti-graft watchdog shone a light on the extent of the corruption.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare had allocated Tk 10 crore to FMCH for the 2014-15 fiscal year.

ACC sources said though no doctors, nurse and staff were recruited for the ICU, FMCH's superintendent office opened a tender to buy machines and equipment for the unit.

The three firms -- Ahmed Enterprise, MS Anik Traders and Ali Traders -- took part in the tender. These were all owned by the three brothers, Sazzad, Farrukh and Mamun.

The tender was opened for supplying equipment, such as oxygen generating plant, automatic scrub station, curtain set, digital blood pressure system, sucker machine, vacuum plant, downstream equipment, BIS monitoring system, head cardiac stethoscope and fiber

optic laryngoscope.

FMCH awarded the tender to Anik Traders. But when the DGHS received the bill, it balked at the high quote.

The DGHS then formed a committee to verify the price.

The committee visited the hospital in October this year and found the machines still lying in the storeroom.

It also verified that the prices of the machines were shown to be several times higher than the market price. Besides, some of machines were not supplied as per the specification.

The investigation also revealed that the hospital authorities had submitted a bill of Tk. 52.66 crore for buying several other machines, but the price there was also inflated as the machines should have cost only Tk 11 crore, said the DGHS committee report.

Contacted, Nurul Islam denied the allegation of the irregularities and said, "I only carried out orders, that's all."

The Daily Star could not reach Sazzad, his brothers, or the remaining accused for comments.

Rescued from a living hell

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reported our Habiganj correspondent.

Talking to the correspondent, Hosna's husband Shafiullah said a local broker sent her to Saudi Arabia through a Saudi recruiting agency three months ago promising her of getting a wage worth Tk 22,000 per

month.

The authorities were trying to send Hosna back home, the press release added.

The incident happened when a government delegation is in Saudi Arabia to attend a Joint Technical Committee meeting over resolving

problems of migrant workers, especially female workers, living in the Gulf country.

Earlier on November 15, another female migrant worker -- Sumi Akhter of Panchagarh -- was brought back home from Saudi Arabia through government assistance.