

Retain people’s confidence, trust

PM tells AL councillors

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the Awami League leaders and activists to work to retain the confidence and trust of the people and help the government’s strides to build a poverty-free Bangladesh.

“It’s seen that if anybody gets elected as a parliament member, he or she cannot succeed in the next elections as he or she cannot keep up the people’s confidence and trust,” Hasina, also the AL president, said while exchanging views with party councillors of different cities and districts at the Gono Bhaban in the evening.

The PM added, “So, bearing this in mind, you’ll have to always stay beside the people of your locality and work for their welfare.”

The councillors, who came to the capital to join the recently held national council of the party, greeted Hasina on her re-election as the AL president for the 9th consecutive term.

“If you think, you were made an MP for this time only, and that’s why you will sit idle after making whatever you can and will be victorious again by earning huge money ... that will not happen,” she said.

In this connection, the PM mentioned the comment of Tarique Zia in which he proudly said that no one would be able to remove the BNP from power if he could make Tk 2,000 crore.

“But the BNP could not stay in power after making thousands of crores of taka. The party could not remain in power as they indulged in unbridled corruption, terrorism, and militancy, and unleashed inhuman torture and repression on the opposition leaders and activists,” she said.

Ex-CJ Mahmudul Amin Chy passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former chief justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury passed away in Dhaka yesterday afternoon due to old age complications. He was 85.



Justice Mahmudul breathed his last at his Dhanmondi home, Supreme Court Spokesmen Md Saifur Rahman told The Daily Star.

He left behind two daughters, a son and a host of well-wishers to mourn his death, he said.

His body will be kept at the SC premises this morning to allow people to pay their last respects to the departed soul.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held there at 10:30am.

The former justice will be laid to eternal rest at the graveyard adjacent to the shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal (RA) in Sylhet.

Mahmudul Amin was the 11th chief justice of the country who served from March 1, 2001, to June 17, 2002.

Born in Sylhet on June 18, 1937, Mahmudul Amin passed matriculation from Sylhet Government Pilot High School and graduation from MC College, Sylhet.

Subsequently, he took a bachelor’s degree in Law at Dhaka City Law College.

He started his career as a lawyer in Sylhet district bar in 1960 and was appointed as a judge at the High Court in 1987. He was appointed as an Appellate Division judge in 1999.

Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Attorney General Mahbubey Alam expressed deep shock and sorrow at the death of Mahmudul and prayed for the salvation of the departed soul.



Shanties demolished in the capital’s Rupnagar area in an eviction drive by Ministry of Land, Public Works Department and National Housing Authority yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

‘Indian Yaba’ getting in

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sold at Tk 80 to 100 in Teknaf.

“I have been bringing in cattle for long. Now additionally I carry a small bag of yaba pills,” he said, on condition that his name has to be withheld.

The Daily Star got this picture of yaba smuggling after a two-week investigation last month in Fatehpur. This correspondent talked to people involved with the tricky nexus, local sources and law enforcers to get details of this illegal trade.

COWBOY THE CARRIERS
Yaba smuggling through Fatehpur under Panka union gained pace over the last one or two years.

At least a dozen such cowboys, who reside near the zero point, carry yaba pills into the country. They start for the border in the middle of the night and come back before sunup, at times with Indian cattle, said three of them.

Sometimes they go in a group of two or three and sometimes alone. They always carry a small bag in which they keep a towel, lungi and some dry food as they need to cross a canal to get to the border, they said.

On return, they keep the cattle in a cowshed and hand over the pills to the dealers.

“The suppliers throw the pills from the other side of the border fence putting those inside small polybags wrapped in clothes,” said one of them.

The cowboys get the consignment almost daily, but the suppliers avoid September and October when there is no crop harvest along the borderline. “It is because the crops can be used to hide the bags,” explained the man.

They get Tk 10,000 per consignment. In each consignment, they carry in around 5,000 to 6,000 pills.

“Earlier, we used to bring in phensedyl,” said one of them.

The carriers claimed they were told that these pills are produced in some houses in Malda of India.

The Daily Star managed to talk a group of five narcotics traders in the border area. They also said they are getting the pills at cheaper rates as their counterparts in India “manage to manufacture yaba” there.

“Sometimes, we get 1,000 pieces of yaba at Tk 25,000. But the quality of those pills is not good,” said one of them.

He claimed that police held them sometimes but released them in exchange for money, an allegation the district police denied outright.

According to the drug dealers, Chapainawabganj, Sylhet, Cumilla, Jamalpur and Mymensingh are the points through which the Indian pills enter Bangladesh.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of an intelligence report that reads

around 18 Bangladeshi and five Indian nationals are involved in the yaba smuggling at Fatehpur border.

However, none of the listed dealers were available for comments. This correspondent visited their addresses as mentioned in the report, but the family members said they were out of homes.

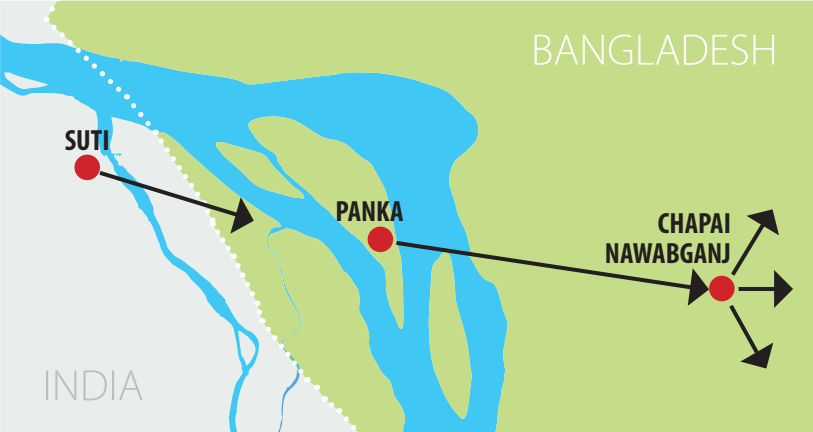
Some locals said these people have long been involved in drug trading.

The report also contains details of the five Indian nationals involved in the smuggling. All of them are from Suti area of Murshidabad district in India.

INDIAN YABA?

On October 7, Border Guard Bangladesh’s 60 Battalion claimed to have recovered 5,900 pieces of Indian yaba tablets and detained an Indian smuggler in Jamtola area of Cumilla district.

The detainee was identified as Rezaul Hossain alias Liton, 19, of Jomirtila of Sipahijala district in India.



A case was filed with Burichang Police Station of Cumilla in this connection, according to a BGB press release.

During interrogation, Rezaul told law enforcers that he was tasked with delivering the pills to a Bangladeshi and he was paid Tk 10,000 for this.

On September 17, BGB 35 Battalion arrested a woman named Mazedha Begum, 35, with 1,897 pieces of “Indian yaba tablets”, reads another release of BGB.

Asked about this, Lt Col Iqbal Hossain, commanding officer of BGB 60 Battalion, told The Daily Star on December 3 that they called it “Indian yaba” as it came from India with an Indian national.

He said they know smugglers changed routes but they have no specific information whether those pills were produced in India.

However, a high official of BGB, requesting anonymity, told The Daily Star on December 3 that they learnt some smugglers are producing the pills in India, especially in some areas of Agartala.

“We are yet to get the specific

location or details about it,” he added.

Contacted, AFM Masum Rabbani, director (operation) of the Department of Narcotics Control, said they have no specific information that Indian smugglers are producing yaba pills.

“If you can provide us with evidence, it would definitely help us,” he added.

Expressing similar views, Lt Col Md Mohiuddin Ahmed, director (operation) at the BGB headquarters, said on December 5 that a huge number of yaba is now entering Bangladesh through Jamalpur, Mymensingh, Sylhet and Cumilla borders.

“We have information that these pills are mainly coming from Myanmar through different Indian states like Tripura and Mizoram,” he said.

He also doesn’t have specific information on yaba production in India.

“But we would raise the issue at the

director general-level conference of BGB and BSE,” Mohiuddin said.

CATTLE SMUGGLING LINKED

The majority of narcotics enter Bangladesh with the so-called cowboys involved in the cattle smuggling, said ATM Mojahidul Islam, the police superintendent of Chapainawabganj.

“If we can stop cattle smuggling, we would be able to prevent drug trafficking,” he said on December 2.

The official also said, “Since we cannot investigate across the border, we do not get the actual picture.”

The Chapainawabganj district police arrested 1,138 people last year for drug smuggling.

Sohel Rana, assistant inspector general at the Police Headquarters, said they have succeeded in wiping out the sources of narcotics in the country. And they are also keeping an eye on the smuggling activities and sources of drugs across the border.

There are other agencies for guarding the border and police closely work with them in combating narcotics, he added.

He dreamt big

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sincerely devoted themselves to building it.

Along with our founder editor, SM Ali, we interviewed Abed in the early days of this paper, sometime in 1992. In the interview he made a striking comment that has remained with me till today. He said something to the effect that ‘Most of us manage various levels of wealth, but the poor women in Bangladesh manage poverty, and as such they are, by experience, far better managers than men’. Whatever meagre resources they have and whatever little the men earn, with that the women feed the family, run the household, provide education for the children, healthcare to the extent possible and inject whatever they can with their own income generating activities. Our women’s minds are consumed by the singular thought of keeping the family afloat with whatever they have and somehow move forward.

Abed’s absorbing description of women’s role - as managers, planners and navigators of poverty-shackled families’ fortune - suddenly made clear to me the insight of giving priority to women in our development activities. Managing poverty makes a woman acutely aware of the bits of resources they have. This awareness makes them far more efficient user of that resource. That is principally why the rate of return of micro-credit is nearly 99 percent (compare that with the NPL of our elite borrowers) as almost all the borrowers are women - each being managers par excellence.

A unique feature of Abed’s vision was its scale. He dreamt big and made them come true as if it was the only way of doing it. Brac’s becoming the biggest non-governmental organisation in the world and employing about 2 lakh people was only but natural for him. A massive non-formal education programme which at one point ran 63,000 schools, the biggest immunisation campaign ever, the most widespread public health campaign in the form of oral saline project in collaboration with icddr, employing thousands to raise public awareness about empowerment, especially that of women, etc. were a part of his big dreams being realised. The oral saline project was the first ever door-to-door campaign to reduce death of children from widespread instances of diarrhoea, and it gave Abed that crucial confidence that public health habits could be changed and that he could do it by massive awareness campaigns through meticulous planning and disciplined organisation. This had a seminal impact on his self-confidence. He knew he could manage scale and he could now plan big. This was a turning point in Abed’s thinking and can be termed the real birth of Brac.

Did anybody ever imagine that Bangladesh, which has been on receiving end of global assistance, would end up assisting other countries? Brac now operates in 11 countries and has extended technical

and other assistance to many others. The non-formal education model that Brac pioneered is now replicated in several dozen countries across the globe in various forms.

Since he dreamt big, he knew that without institutions to sustain and carry them forward they would not go very far. This led him to build institutions and what a superb builder he turned out to be. Brac Bank, Brac Institution of Governance and Brac University are but a few examples. Then there are those he built in partnership with others, like Delta-Brac Housing, bKash, Guardian Insurance. There are numerous civil society bodies that he helped set by working behind the scene such as Campe, Ain-o-Salish Kendra, etc. He assisted many others in setting up their own organisations.

A natural corollary of institution building is the need for management with particular emphasis on its financial aspects. In all the institutions Abed built he ensured the highest level of management with financial discipline being at its core. Brac’s microcredit programme, which gave out loans to the tune of \$4.2 billion this year alone, functions without any blemish. All global donors like the World Bank, ADB, Soros Foundation, Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation, and many others extend resources to institutions set up by Abed literally without too many questions simply because they have enormous faith in Abed’s management standards. UK’s DFID has a strategic partnership with Brac which is unique.

As a highly skilful manager he knew exactly where to control and where to delegate, where to be tough and where to be flexible, where to listen and adopt and where to listen and ignore.

He was tireless in his efforts to improve quality of the things he did and the institutions he built. I often received teams from global consulting companies doing research on how to improve functioning of various projects undertaken by Brac. Almost twenty years ago I spoke to consultants tasked with planning Abed’s eventual succession. I couldn’t help but marvel at the long-term vision of this man.

It is a testimony to Sir Fazle Hasan Abed’s versatility of talents that he received global awards for his contribution in five very crucial areas - education, agriculture, public health, financial inclusion and community empowerment. Any one of the above areas would consume a life time’s work for any talented person. But to have attracted the world’s attention to these critical areas of development and to be recognised for extraordinary contribution in each of them requires a range of extraordinary abilities that only a few leaders in the history of social transformation can lay claim to. His level of vision, courage, and tenacity simultaneous with originality and managerial ability make Sir Fazle Hasan Abed a unique leader among men. We proudly stand in his shadow.

Modi defends CAA

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Addressing party supporters in New Delhi -- who cried “Modi! Modi!” at the mention of the law -- the 69-year-old said Muslims “don’t need to worry at all” -- provided they are genuine Indians.

“Muslims who are sons of the soil and whose ancestors are the children of mother India need not to worry” about the law and his plans to carry out a national register of citizens (NRC), Modi told the crowd of thousands.

Accusing the main opposition Congress party of condoning the recent violence by not condemning it, Modi said opponents were “spreading rumours that all Muslims will be sent to detention camps.”

“There are no detention centres. All these stories about detention centres are lies, lies and lies,” he said.

He ruled out going back on the citizenship law issue and asserted the law does not have anything to do with Muslims who are Indian citizens

nor does it snatch away anyone’s citizenship.

“The Citizenship Amendment Act is not for Indian citizens. This has been said in parliament (last week). The Act is not aimed at snatching anybody’s citizenship but at giving citizenship,” he said and urged the agitators not to resort to violence in the interests of the country.

“No new refugee (from the three countries) will benefit from CAA,” he said referring to the law which seeks to give Indian citizenship to those who have come to India from the three neighbouring countries till 2014.

Modi said the opposition parties were not able to reconcile with his growing acceptance in the Islamic world some of which like the UAE conferred their highest civilian honour on him and India’s strong ties with the Islamic countries like Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Iran, the UAE, Bahrain and Qatar.

Moncho, BCL men attack Nur

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anything until 72 hours pass,” Mohammad Alauddin, resident surgeon at the casualty department, told this newspaper last night.

He said two of the injured left for a private hospital while the other three, including Nur, were shifted to cabins from the emergency unit at the DMCH last night.

This is the second time Nur came under attack from Moncho activists.

Witnesses said around 50 activists of a faction of the Moncho, led by its President Aminul Islam Bulbul and General Secretary Al Mamun, marched towards Ducusu building at 12:30pm following a Moncho programme on the DU campus.

Nur, who was entering the Ducusu building along with his supporters at that time, got locked into an altercation with the Moncho leaders.

After a while, Nur entered the Ducusu office.

Minutes later, DU BCL President Sanjit Chandra Das and Saddam went to the spot.

As Moncho activists and some

BCL men started hurling brick chips at the VP’s office room, Nur asked the staffers at the Ducusu building to padlock its main gate.

The staffers unlocked the gate as Ducusu AGS Saddam moved towards it, witnesses told this newspaper.

Later, Sanjit and Saddam, along with their followers, went to Nur’s office room and asked him why he had brought “outsiders” to the Ducusu building.

Nur replied that he had been in fear of attacks on him, and that was why he had some people around him for his security.

At one stage, Nur asked Sanjit why he had entered the Ducusu building though he didn’t hold any Ducusu post.

Sanjit replied, “After a while, you will come to know who I am.”

Sanjit and Saddam had an altercation with Nur, and left the office.

Around 12:45pm, Moncho activists and some BCL men, wielding wooden and bamboo sticks, stormed into Nur’s office, switched off the lights and beat up Nur and his followers, alleged one of the injured, Hasan Al Mamun,

convener of the quota reformists’ platform Bangladesh Sadharan Chhatra Adhikar Sangrakkhan Parishad.

The attackers also damaged furniture and a computer in the room, he said.

Some BCL and Moncho activists stood guard in front of the Ducusu building and beat up Nur’s followers, who tried to escape, claimed Mamun.

At one stage, the attackers left the Ducusu VP’s office. Nur and some of his supporters locked the room from inside and stayed there until the DU proctor went there to rescue them.

The injured include Bangladesh Sadharan Chhatra Adhikar Sangrakkhan Parishad joint conveners Faruk Hasan, Rashed Khan and Moshir Rahman.

Besides, Rukmiya Hossen Raj, Golam Kibria, and Zahidul Islam of Kabi Nazrul College, Ariful Islam of Jahangirnagar University and Aminur Islam, who introduced himself as Nur’s cousin, were wounded.

Contacted, Saddam said Nur and Moncho activists had a scuffle as the Ducusu VP brought outsiders to the

Ducusu building.

He further said the BCL had asked both the groups to maintain a congenial atmosphere on the campus.

Talking to reporters, DU Proctor Rabbani said, “Ducusu VP entered his office with outsiders but he did not inform us. We repeatedly asked him to maintain an environment conducive to education on the campus.”

Witnesses said Nur had entered the Ducusu building with a group of 30-40 followers, almost half of them students of educational institutions other than the DU.

Some of the them are students of Jahangirnagar University, Jagannath Sangrakkhan Parishad joint conveners Kabi Nazrul College and Govt Bangla College.

Contacted, Muktiuddho Moncho General Secretary Al Mamun, also ex-BCL deputy secretary for Liberation War and research affairs, claimed when general students learnt that Nur was holding a meeting with Shibir activists at the Ducusu building, they enquired him about it. But he “misbehaved” with them and they resisted him.

The Moncho, claimed to be comprised of freedom fighters’ children, was founded in October last year to counter the anti-quota demonstrations. It demanded reinstatement of 30 percent freedom fighter quota in all types of government jobs.

The central committee was formed with Professor AKM Jamal Uddin of DU sociology department as convener, and Asibur Rahman, son of the then shipping minister Shajahan Khan, as member-secretary.

Later, Mehdi Hasan, son of a freedom fighter, claimed himself to be convener of the platform, and told journalists that he knew nothing about the committee.

Bulbul and Mamun were made president and general secretary of both the central and DU units of the platform.

On October 10 this year, Prof Jamal expelled the two for their “anti-organisational activities”.

The duo issued a press release the same day, declaring that they still held the posts of president and general

secretary of the organisation.

Prof Jamal and the duo issued separate press releases on October 14. Prof Jamal said he had expelled Bulbul and Mamun, while the duo stated that they had expelled Jamal.

Since then, the platform made headlines due to its controversial activities. Its leaders and members have allegedly been involved in attacks on activists of rival organisations.

On October 20, its Bulbul-Mamun-led faction swooped on Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal activists at Madhur Canteen on DU campus over the Facebook bio of JCD General Secretary Iqbal Hossain Shyamol. Five JCD activists were injured.

Members of the other faction, led by Convener Jamal, padlocked Nur’s office on December 4, and demanded his resignation after an unverified audio clip went viral.

At least 15 people, including Nur, were injured in an attack carried out by the Bulbul-Mamun-led faction on December 17 after they staged protests against the NRC and Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) of India.