

## Nur sued

FROM PAGE 16  
and disseminated false and fabricated information intentionally on social media to create chaos and make the law and order worse.

On Thursday, an attempt to murder case was filed against Nur and 28 others for their alleged involvement in the December 22 incident at Ducus office that left Nur and 27 of his supporters injured.

On Wednesday, Nur filed a complaint with Shahbagh Police Station accusing Chhatra League DU unit President Sanjib Chandra Das, General Secretary Saddam Hussain and 27 BCL and eight Moncho leaders for an "attempt to murder him".

Meanwhile, Santrash Birodi Chhatra Oikya, a new alliance comprising of 12 student organisations to create a democratic and terrorist-free campus, yesterday brought out a procession demanding punishment of the perpetrators in the December 22 incident and removal of DU proctor from his post.

Later, they held a rally on the campus where Rashed, joint convenor of Bangladesh Sadharan Chhatra Adhikar Sangrakhan Parishad alleged that the aim of filing the cases is to save the attackers including Sanjit and Saddam.

"We were attacked. We were admitted to the hospital and yet, we are being implicated," he said.

Faisal Mahmud, president of Bangladesh Chhatra Federation, alleged that the authorities did not hold the attackers accountable in the previous incidents, paving way for such attacks to recur.

Meanwhile, in a press release, Saddam, also the assistant general secretary of Ducus, said Ducus will hold a press conference at its office today over the recent spate of controversy.

## Car bomb

FROM PAGE 16  
No-one immediately claimed responsibility for the blast.

Al-Qaeda-linked Islamist group al Shabaab regularly carries out such attacks in an attempt to undermine the government, which is backed by the United Nations and African Union troops.

The most deadly attack blamed on the group was in October 2017 when a bomb-laden truck exploded next to a fuel tanker in Mogadishu, creating a storm of fire that killed nearly 600 people.

While al Shabaab carries out frequent attacks, the death tolls are often lower than the yesterday's blast. The group has sometimes not claimed responsibility for attacks that sparked a big public backlash, such as a 2009 suicide bombing of a graduation ceremony for medical students.

Three witnesses told Reuters that a small team of Turkish engineers were present at the time of the blast at the Ex-Control checkpoint, constructing a road from the checkpoint into the city.

A car belonging to the engineers was destroyed instantly in the blast, the witnesses said.

Somali Foreign Minister Ahmed Awad later tweeted that two of the Turkish engineers died in the blast.

Many of the dead were "students with ambition, and hardworking men and women", he wrote.

Turkey has been a major donor to Somalia since a famine in 2011, and together with the government of Qatar is funding a number of infrastructure and medical projects in the country. In 2017, Turkey opened a military base in Mogadishu to train Somali soldiers.

The checkpoint is also a tax collection point for the government, Ali Abdi Ali Hoshow, a foreign affairs ministry official, said on Twitter.

After the explosion, 55-year-old Sabdow Ali, who lives nearby, said he left his house and counted at least 13 people dead.

## 7-year-old

FROM PAGE 16  
Victim Nazifa Akter, student of grade I, went missing on Thursday noon. Next morning, her parents filed a general diary with Savar Model Police Station. In the evening on the same day, a police team recovered Nazifa's body from Mokshedul's flat, said AFM Sayeed, officer in-charge of the police station.

The duo was detained for quizzing on the same day. Later in custody, the couple admitted to police that they killed the girl, he added.

Quoting the accused, the police official said the couple first tried to snatch the gold earrings from her. As she started crying, they strangled her to death.

The couple also sold the earrings at a local store at Tk 1,800, he added.

The accused borrowed Tk 3,000 from Nazifa's mother Fatema a few months ago. Recently, Fatema started putting pressure on the couple to return the money. The couple tried to snatch the earrings to repay the money, the OC said.

A wailing Fatema told The Daily Star that she never thought that the neighbouring couple could do anything of this sort.

"I demand justice," she added.

The couple was sent to jail via court yesterday evening, said the police official.



A protester holds a sign depicting French President and reading "Let them come and get me!" on the Place de la Bourse in Paris during a demonstration called by the "Gilets Jaunes" (Yellow Vests) movement yesterday, as part of a nationwide multi-sector strike against French government's pensions overhaul.

PHOTO: AFP

## Turning the lights on for the poor

FROM PAGE 16

lakh people, conducted 589 eye camps, and visited 920 educational institutes for free eye treatment, he said.

The hospital is run by the Bangladesh National Society for the Blind (BNSB), an NGO, which held the first eye camp in Moulvibazar in 1974.

Since 1986, it became a fully-fledged hospital, funded largely by donors, including the health ministry.

Syed Mushahid Ahmed Chunnu, general secretary of the hospital's 17-member executive committee, said their mission is the prevention of blindness by creating mass awareness and early intervention.

"We are providing 50 percent of our services for free for poor patients in both inpatient and outpatient care. It is also completely free for children and students," he said.

Since 2005, the hospital has a specialised paediatric unit, the first such unit in Sylhet division, with the support of Orbis International, an international NGO. Treatment for children 16 years and below is affordable or free for the poor.

Mohammad Siraj, 60, a resident of the Shahpur area in Habiganj Sadar said, "I have been suffering from pain in my eyes for a long time. For the last few days, I have been receiving treatment and getting medicine from the

hospital. The last visit cost me Tk 100. Since it is not a big amount to spend, we are happy."

Minhaj Uddin, 45, a local of Kazir Bazar in Sylhet city, said he spent two days in the hospital for his eye operation. "I had to pay only Tk 100 in total, including the bill for surgery, medicine, and even daily meals."

Husna Begum, 55, of Ichapur village in Sreemangal upazila, said the hospital is a blessing for the poor. "I have been taking treatment here for one month and my eyes are now okay. I like coming here because there is no chaos and confusion," she said.

The hospital is manned by 134 full-time staffers, including 14 doctors and 32 nurses, who specialise in biometry, A-scan, B-scan, laser treatment, Minor operations, one-stop cataract clinic, glaucoma unit, diabetic

unit, ocular microbiological laboratory, intraocular lens and phaco service, screening service, special paediatric unit and optical and dispensing service, said the hospital's administrative manager Mohammad Ehsanul Mannan.

According to the information provided by the hospital, 1,00,877 received treatment at the hospital in 2016. The numbers went up to 1,03,536 and 1,04,680 in 2017 and 2018.

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VIDEO

## Nasa Mars robot

FROM PAGE 16

the robot was nearing completion.

In February, it will ship the rover to Florida's Kennedy Space Center where its three sections will be fully assembled. A July launch will send the rover to a dry lake bed on Mars that is bigger than the island of Manhattan.

The four-wheeled, car-sized rover will scour the base of Mars' Jezero Crater, an 820-foot-deep (250-meter-deep) crater thought to have been a lake the size of Lake Tahoe, once the craft lands in February 2021. The crater is believed to have an abundance of pristine sediments some 3.5 billion years old that scientists hope will hold fossils of Martian life.

"The trick, though, is that we're

looking for trace levels of chemicals from billions of years ago on Mars," Mars 2020 deputy project manager Matt Wallace told Reuters. The rover will collect up to 30 soil samples to be picked up and returned to Earth by a future spacecraft planned by NASA.

"Once we have a sufficient set, we'll put them down on the ground, and another mission, which we hope to launch in 2026, will come, land on the surface, collect those samples and put them into a rocket, basically," Wallace said. Humans have never before returned sediment samples from Mars.

The findings of the Mars 2020 research will be crucial to future human missions to the red planet, including the ability to make oxygen on the

surface of Mars, Wallace said. The Mars 2020 Rover is carrying equipment that can turn carbon dioxide, which is pervasive on Mars, into oxygen for breathing and as a propellant.

If successful, Mars 2020 will mark Nasa's fifth Martian rover to carry out a soft landing, having learned crucial lessons from the most recent Curiosity rover that landed on the planet's surface in 2012 and continues to traverse a Martian plain southeast of the Jezero Crater.

The Soviet Union is the only other country to successfully land a rover on Mars. China and Japan have attempted unsuccessfully to send orbiters around Mars, while India and Europe's space agency have successfully lofted an orbiter to the planet.

## Big fish still off

FROM PAGE 1

against a businessman, government officials, and controversial leaders of different fronts of the ruling party and their family members for illegally acquiring wealth worth about Tk 446 crore.

It also froze about Tk 362 crore in different bank accounts and wealth worth about Tk 78 crore.

The Tk 446 crore is ironically almost the exact number Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation asked from the government last year to buy raw jute so that it could continue production in full swing. It got only around Tk 80 crore and had to cut production.

Following the anti-casino drives, ACC Chairman Iqbal Mahmood on several occasions hinted at investigating the illegal wealth of about 187 people, including some ruling party lawmakers and influential corrupt people. He said they had made a list.

The commission wrote to Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau of Singapore asking for information on individuals who gambled at the country's casinos in the last five years.

The ACC also sought banking information of over 150 people from Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit.

Some ruling party lawmakers – Shamsul Hoque Chowdhury, Pankaj Debnath and Nurunnabi Chowdhury Shaon – are on the list.

However, no cases have been filed against the lawmakers.

A source at the commission said, "We're progressing cautiously. We're scrutinising and verifying information before taking any step against the lawmakers."

ENQUIRY INTO HOSPITAL PROCUREMENT ANOMALIES  
This year the anti-graft watchdog also launched extensive enquiry into

procurement anomalies at different hospitals across the country.

In 2019, the ACC filed about nine cases against doctors and contractors for misappropriating around Tk 52 crore during procurement of machines and medicines for Azimpur Maternity Hospital, Chattogram General Hospital, Rangpur Medical College Hospital, Sathkhira Sadar Hospital, and Faridpur Medical College Hospital.

A total of 58 people, including hospital superintendents, civil surgeons, and contractors, were implicated in these cases.

In a unique move, the commission in December asked the cabinet to blacklist 13 medical equipment suppliers for their alleged involvement in the misappropriation.

HOTLINE  
Launched on July 27, 2017, the ACC's hotline service "106" is gradually becoming popular, and received around 36 lakh calls until November this year, said ACC officials.

According to the ACC, they conducted a total of 890 drives in 2019 based on these calls and sent 825 letters to different government offices for taking necessary measures.

Following enquiry into allegations made through the hotline, ACC officials filed cases as well.

For instance, on December 10, the ACC filed a case against a couple for embezzling about Tk 4.97 crore from a bank account by forging signature.

CAUGHT RED HANDED  
The number of cases in which government officials were caught taking bribes increased this year despite the ACC chairman's warning that the ACC would be tough on such people.

In 2018, the ACC filed 15 cases after catching government officials in the act. As of December 5 of this year, the number of these cases is 22.

Compared to that of last year, the

number of cases filed and charge sheets submitted by the ACC increased to 319 and 298 from 216 and 236.

Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said while the commission has indeed been proactive in taking actions against relatively low- and mid-level public officials, it has yet to show concrete results in terms of holding to account the influential corrupt people.

"Kingpins of some of the much talked about financial and banking sector scams, like the Basic Bank scam, have remained off the hook," he added.

On the handling of the corruption allegations regarding the casino and procurement lords, he said it remains to be seen if the actions taken by the ACC would be deep and robust enough to include godfathers.

Pointing out some of the commission's weakness, he related how the gross injustice done to Jahalam in the hands of the ACC had adversely affected its reputation, casting doubt about the credibility of its investigation process.

"The ACC has struggled throughout the year to manage allegations of investigative inefficiency and corruption of a sizable number of its own officials including a very senior ACC official caught in illegal transaction against whom actions had to be taken," he said.

The ACC Commissioner Mozammel Haque Khan, however, stated that these mistakes would help the ACC to rectify and prevent repetition in future.

In reply to questions about action taken against financial sector kingpins, Mozammel said, "It's not true that we are not catching the big fish. We've caught MDs [managing director] and DMDs [deputy managing director] in different corruption cases."

DHAKA SUNDAY DECEMBER 29, 2019, POUSH 14, 1426 BS

## Vietnam ex-minister gets life sentence in bribery case

AFP, Hanoi

A court in Vietnam sentenced a former communications minister to life in prison Saturday for receiving millions of dollars in bribes, as the hardline administration presses its anti-graft drive against once-powerful figures in the communist state.

Nguyen Bac Son was charged alongside his then-deputy Truong Minh Tuan with receiving \$3.2 million in bribes to approve the 2015 purchase of a TV firm that would have lost state-run telecommunications firm Mobifone \$300 million.

The two-week trial in Hanoi for the men -- once members of the powerful communist party central committee -- ended Saturday, according to state-run media Tuoi Tie.

Son, a minister from 2011-2016, was sentenced to life in prison while

Tuan -- who took over as minister until he was fired in July last year -- got 14 years in prison.

"The defendants' behaviour caused bad opinions in society, resulting in especially huge losses for the state," state media quoted the verdict as saying.

It also "caused \$300 million in losses to state coffers," the verdict said, though the transaction was never fully completed.

Son reportedly admitted wrongdoing before the court and asked for leniency, while Tuan said he was "shameful for his mistakes", said Tuoi Tie.

Prosecutors had initially proposed the death penalty for Son, but he was spared after he returned the money on Friday before the verdict's announcement.

## Follow rules

FROM PAGE 1

Shahjalal International Airport.

Hasina also inaugurated Biman Bangladesh Airlines' two newly inducted Dreamliner 787-9, named "Sonar Tori" and "Achin Pakhi", as well as a new mobile application of the national flag carrier on the sidelines of the ceremony.

The premier said everyone has to follow the security rules of the airports and none will be allowed to bypass those.

If anyone creates obstacles to following these security rules, then that person will be stopped [from flying]. I will do it and you all have to remember this."

She said she receives information if anyone wants to commit corruption or bypass any rule. "Everyone has to remember that. We have attached special importance to the security of the airports."

The PM asked all passengers to obey the security rules and regulations that are practiced at airports internationally.

Hasina also directed the authorities concerned to take special care of the expatriates who earn valuable foreign currencies for the country.

"We export manpower and earn huge amount of foreign currencies. We have to look after their [expatriates] facilities. Make sure that they are not harassed at airports. Special attention has to be given to this matter."

Briefly describing various development programmes of the

government to improve the services of Biman, the PM said it would not be wise to give everything to the private sector to improve passenger service.

In this connection, she said the government has procured three more small aircrafts from Canada to increase Biman's market share in the domestic routes. The planes would be available soon.