

Justice Sinha’s trial begins

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The trial of the money laundering case filed against former chief justice Surendra Kumar Sinha and 10 others started at a Dhaka court yesterday with deposition of the complainant.

Four accused in the case -- Farmers Bank Ltd’s former first vice-president Swapan Kumar Roy, the bank’s vice-president M Lutful Haque, M Shahjahan and Niranjana Chandra Saha -- were granted bail after they surrendered before the court.

Former chief justice SK Sinha and three other accused in the case were on the run.

On August 13, Judge Shaikh Nazmul Alam of the Special Judge’s Court-4 of Dhaka framed charges against SK Sinha and 10 others.

The same court recorded statement of complainant Syed Iqbal Hossain for an hour. Later, defence lawyers cross-examined the witness. The judge then fixed August 25 for next hearing of the case.

In his statement, Anti-Corruption Commission’s director Syed Iqbal Hossain told the court that during his inquiry he found that two persons -- M Shahjahan and Niranjana Chandra Saha -- opened two current accounts at Gulshan Corporate Branch of the bank on November 6 of 2016.

The following day they submitted two separate applications for sanctioning an amount of Tk 4 crore as loan.

Soon after getting the applications, the then branch manager and others,

without scrutinizing the applications, signed and the same day and they forwarded those sanction letters to the concerned principal office for next course of action.

The principal officer, violating the bank rules and regulations, on November 8, 2016, issued two pay orders of Tk 4 crore in the name of M Shahjahan and Niranjana Chandra Saha to their current accounts.

On November 9, 2016, the amount of money was deposited to a savings account of SK Sinha at Sonali Bank Ltd’s Supreme Court Branch in the capital.

SK Sinha had withdrawn the money in cash and through pay orders on different dates and transferred those money to different places.

So the bank officials, in collusion with other accused, sanctioned the loan even though they had no sole power to do so, the complainant continued.

The complainant also said that Shahjahan and Niranjana were very poor and they have no ability to run any business even though they have introduced themselves businessmen.

Moreover, the accused submitted a deed of 32 decimal property of Sashtri Roy situated in Savar which does not fulfil the terms and conditions of the bank rules.

After getting their involvement with money laundering through fake documents, the inquiry report was submitted to the commission officer in July last year.

Justice Sinha resigned from his post on November 11, 2017, from abroad.

3 APBn men held

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Meanwhile, Rab began their interrogation of OC Pradip, suspended Inspector Liaqat Ali and Sub-inspector Nandadulal Rakshit yesterday. Around 10:30am, Rab officials went to Cox’s Bazar District Jail and took them into their custody, said jail Superintendent Mozammel Hossain.

Cox’s Bazar Sadar Hospital’s Resident Medical Officer Shaheen Mohammed Abdur Rahman Chowdhury told The Daily Star that three arrested police officers were brought in for a health check-up at 11:45pm. “We did a medical check-up, and they were sent to the office of Rab-15 afterwards,” he said.

The investigation officer will be able to interrogate them for the court-granted duration of 7 days.

On Monday afternoon when Rab Director General Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun visited Baharchhara, the investigation officer had informed him that when Liaqat stopped Sinha’s car, he came out of the car with his hands raised in the air, and was immediately shot.

Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) directed the commercial banks to freeze the accounts of eight people, including Cox’s Bazar Police Superintendent ABM Masud Hossain.

Also included in the list are the suspended officer-in-charge of Teknaf police station Pradip Kumar Das, his wife Chumki Karan and his brother Dilip. Film actor and stunt artist Elias Cobra, who has been accused by certain media of having had telephone conversations with Pradip on the day Sinha was killed, also had his bank accounts frozen by BFIU.

“We are still investigating the accounts, so we cannot comment on anything,” said BFIU chief Razee Hassan.

Photography trailblazer

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masters in Bangla Literature and Library Science from Dhaka University. In 1956, she started her career as a photographer at Begum, fortnightly news magazine advocating the rights of women. She covered many national and international events.

She worked as a photographer with renowned filmmaker Satyajit Ray in three of his films. Sayeeda was a librarian at Dhaka University’s Bangla department from 1974 to 1986.

After the Liberation War, she volunteered as a nurse at Holy Family Hospital for a while.

Sayeeda had her first international exhibition in 1956 after participating in the International Photo and Cinema Exhibition in Germany’s Cologne. In the same year, her photos were displayed in an international photography exhibition held in Dhaka and later exhibited in international competitions in Japan, France, Sweden, and Cyprus.

In an interview with The Daily Star in 2012, Sayeeda recalled her first camera and how she became passionate about photography.

Her first camera was a small Kodak box-camera, gifted to her by Lutfunnessa Chowdhury, a close friend of Sayeeda’s elder sister eminent academic Hamida Khanam.

“I took my first photo in Kolkata. I was about 13 or 14 then. My first subjects were two Kabuliwalas who were passing by the Victoria Memorial,” she fondly remembered. “Rabindranath’s ‘Kabuliwala’ had made an impression on her my mind. As a result, I wanted to take a photo of a Kabuliwala,” she said in the interview.

Once she was visiting Kolkata for treatment, she went to see an exhibition, “Life” by an American photographer. There she first came across the artistic aspect of photography. “There were lots of pictures of people -- photos of their life, their feelings -- laughter, sorrow,

and grief. While watching those I began to comprehend that a photograph is not only a picture, it is an art,” she said.

Her work on Mother Teresa, Rabindra Sangeet singer Kanika Bandopadhyay, and Satyajit Ray were also exhibited in Dhaka.

In 1960, she received an award in All Pakistan Photo Contest and in 1985, she was honoured with the Unesco Award for photography. She received many other awards from several national and international organisations and was a lifetime member of Bangladesh Mahila Samity and Bangla Academy.

KM Khalid, state minister for cultural affairs, expressed deep shock and sorrow at the eminent photographer’s death.

Bangla Academy and National Awami Party (NAP) also expressed shock at her demise.

“Sayeeda Khanam was not only prominent in Bangladesh, but also was a name of photography movement in the entire subcontinent,” said Bangla Academy Director General Habibullah Siraji in a statement.

Cases pass 3k a day

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The overall positivity rate was 20.48 percent -- much higher than the global standard parameter of 5 percent which indicates that the transmission is under control.

More than 57 percent of the confirmed cases have recovered while the rest are undergoing treatment.

Of those who died yesterday, 35 were male and 11 female. Almost half of them were above 60 while 17 were between 51 and 60.

Twenty-three of the dead were from Dhaka Division, six from Chattogram, four from Rajshahi, seven from Khulna, two from Barisal, three from Rangpur and one from Mymensingh Division.

So far, Dhaka Division has seen the highest number of Covid deaths -- 1,791.



Wearing burial robes, two jute traders wait in front of the Motijheel headquarters of Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation during a demonstration yesterday. The protest was organised under the banner of Bangladesh Pat Babsayi Samiti demanding that the BJMC pay their due bills of Tk 265 crore against the supply of jute to state-run jute mills which have been shut recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Sudden visit aims to cement ties

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he came to Dhaka in early March this year ahead of Modi’s scheduled visit to Dhaka to attend the inaugural of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s birth centenary. Modi, however, could not come due to the pandemic.

Earlier in the day, Indian High Commission in Dhaka in a short statement said Shringla would “discuss and take forward cooperation on matters of mutual interest.”

“Our PM could not come and we cannot stop all our visits due to the pandemic. So, Secretary Shringla came for a visit. This shows the depth of our relations,” an Indian diplomat said.

This is the first visit by a high-level Indian official to Dhaka since the Covid-19 pandemic began in mid-March. Shringla is also expected to meet Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam and Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen today.

Our correspondent in New Delhi reports that Shringla’s visit to Dhaka comes after a high-level meeting PM Modi had with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Shringla last week where they discussed the state of India’s relations with Bangladesh and Nepal.

Meanwhile, an official at the Indian High Commission said India was looking at a roadmap for long-term relations with Bangladesh.

On the Hasina-Shringla meeting, the official said India proposed an air travel bubble meaning that flights will operate only between India and Bangladesh during the pandemic for medical patients and businesses.

Another official said they also discussed a possible virtual meeting of the Joint Consultative Commission, a foreign minister level meeting of the two countries.

Besides, Hasina appreciated the introduction of 10 Indian locomotives for transport of goods during the

pandemic, the official said.

The meeting also touched upon the connectivity and cooperation in post-Covid-19 economic recovery, assistance, including therapeutic and in vaccine, celebration of Mujib Borsho and the 50th year anniversary of Bangladesh’s independence and Bangladesh-India diplomatic relations next year, said officials.

The Indian officials could not say how India would have cooperation over vaccine.

Meanwhile, Indian newspaper, The Hindu, yesterday reported that Shringla’s visit comes when China is likely to provide nearly \$1 billion assistance to Bangladesh for an irrigation project on the Teesta, which has been at the centre of a water-sharing negotiation with India.

In a letter to the Economic Relations Division (ERD) last month, Bangladesh’s water resources ministry sought a \$983.27 million loan from China to implement a “Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project”.

The new project is adopted after years of wait for a water-sharing deal with India. Bangladesh and India failed to sign the Teesta water-sharing agreement due to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee’s last-minute opposition during the then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s visit to Dhaka in 2011. Even today, the issue remains unresolved and India continues to assure of striking the deal.

There was, however, no confirmation of Shringla’s talk with the PM on the Teesta issue.

Diplomatic sources say certain developments have raised concerns in India recently.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan’s phone call to Hasina and Pakistan High Commissioner Imran Ahmed Siddiqui’s meeting with Foreign Minister Momen when Indo-China relations deteriorated could have

reportedly irked India, said the sources.

At least 20 Indian soldiers were killed in a clash between Indian and Chinese forces in Galwan Valley in mid-June. Besides, analysts said, China has come closer to Bangladesh during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In June, a Chinese medical team visited Bangladesh and then the Bangladesh Medical Research Council approved a Chinese company’s Covid-19 vaccine’s clinical trial. However, no final decision by the Bangladesh government has been taken yet, with medical experts suspecting geopolitical factors working behind it.

Bangladesh and India maintain a very close relationship -- one that Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen termed as “blood relationship” in reference to Indian’s assistance during the Liberation War of Bangladesh.

COVID-19 VACCINE

Bangladesh will explore all the avenues to get quick access to Covid-19 vaccine and choose one which will be safer and useful for Bangladesh, said Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen, UNB reported.

“As part of discussions with others, we’ll discuss the issue [related to the vaccine] with India. We should have all options and we’ll head for that one which will be safer and useful for us,” he told reporters at his ministry yesterday.

Masud said Bangladesh would discuss with India whether there is any scope for trial of the vaccine here.

The foreign secretary also mentioned countries like China, Russia, the USA, and the UK.

He said he would hold a meeting with visiting Indian foreign secretary tomorrow to discuss ways to further improve the relations between Bangladesh and India.

Mentioning India’s engagement in developing Covid-19 vaccine, the foreign secretary said, “We can update each other on the issue.”

Uncertainty clouds fate of over 85,000

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Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman told this newspaper yesterday.

Migrant rights activist Prof CR Abrar said many people in the rural areas paid either recruiting agencies or middlemen for overseas jobs. They fall in the category of migrant workers in distress.

The government should ask the recruiting agencies to return the money of such workers, he noted, adding that migrant rights groups have already raised the issue.

There is another category of intending migrants who have either applied for clearance from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) or already got clearance, Prof Abrar pointed out.

The authorities should give priority to them while sending workers abroad when the overseas labour markets reopen, he noted.

Baira data shows that 30,422 workers were waiting for visas till mid-July. At least 19,198 workers got visas this year while visa processing for 6,904 workers remained stalled from March for various reasons. Besides, flights of 3,078 workers were cancelled during the period.

The data was collected from only 328 of more than 1,200 member agencies of Baira, its Secretary General Shameem Ahmed Chowdhury Noman said at a virtual conference on July 15.

Baira member agencies had received demands for more than one lakh jobs before the pandemic, he mentioned.

According to BMET data, no overseas recruitment was made in April and May.

The situation was similar in June, said BMET Director General Shamsul Alam.

This was in contrast to the situation in January-March when about 1.81 lakh workers were hired for overseas jobs.

The Baira secretary general voiced concern that the country’s coronavirus situation might discourage foreign employers from hiring workers from Bangladesh even if the situation in the destination countries becomes normal anytime soon.

Prof Abrar said Baira should shoulder the responsibility of the workers who made full payments, and give them priority when the overseas labour markets reopen.

Shariful Hasan, head of Brac

Migration Programme, said that if the government fails to contain the novel coronavirus effectively, Bangladesh might miss out on the opportunities in the international labour market.

“The government must give priority to containment of the virus while making efforts to send workers abroad,” he added.

Talking to this newspaper over phone, Md Jahangir Alam, joint secretary (employment) at the expatriates’ welfare ministry, said fresh workers could not go abroad following the suspension of flights amid the pandemic.

Besides, the expatriate Bangladeshis who returned home on vacation faced problems in going back to their workplaces, he mentioned.

The official said efforts are on to ensure that the aspiring migrants can reach their overseas destinations once the situation becomes normal. The ministry has written to different labour-recipient countries to this end. Besides, Bangladesh missions in those countries have stepped up diplomatic efforts.

He further said the ministry’s activities regarding labour recruitment are going on.

Covid-19 linked to type-1 diabetes in kids

REUTERS, London

Cases of type 1 diabetes among children in a small UK study almost doubled during the peak of Britain’s Covid-19 epidemic, suggesting a possible link between the two diseases that needs more investigation, scientists said yesterday.

While the study is based on only a handful of cases, it is the first to link Covid-19 and new-onset type 1 diabetes in children, and doctors should be on the look-out, the Imperial College London researchers said.

“Our analysis shows that during the peak of the pandemic the number of new cases of type 1 diabetes in children was unusually high in two of

the hospitals (we studied) compared to previous years,” said Karen Logan, who co-led the study.

“When we investigated further, some of these children had active coronavirus or had previously been exposed to the virus.”

Logan said previous reports from China and Italy had noted that children were being diagnosed in hospitals with new-onset type 1 diabetes during the pandemic.

This study, published in the Diabetes Care journal, analysed data from 30 children in London hospitals diagnosed with new-onset type 1 diabetes during the first peak of the pandemic -- around double the cases seen in this period in previous years.

Twenty-one of the children were tested for Covid-19 or had antibody tests to see whether they had been exposed to the virus -- and five tested positive for novel coronavirus infection.

Type 1 diabetes causes insulin-producing cells in the pancreas to be destroyed, preventing the body from producing enough insulin to regulate blood sugar levels. The Imperial team said one possible explanation might be that the novel coronavirus’ spike protein might attack insulin-making cells in the pancreas.

“More research is needed to establish whether there is a definitive link ... but in the meantime we hope clinicians will be mindful of this,” Logan said.

BSF rescues Bangladeshi woman ‘trafficked’ into India

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India’s Border Security Force rescued a Bangladeshi woman, who was trafficked into India, from West Bengal’s North 24 Parganas district, an official said yesterday.

The BSF also arrested an Indian man over bringing her to the country illegally.

Acting on specific intelligence, BSF troops from the Bhithari border outpost rescued the woman around noon on Monday. The woman is from Gaibandha district of Bangladesh, the BSF official said.

The suspected human trafficker was identified as Tarial Gazi, a resident of Dharkhanda village under Swarupnagar Police Station in North 24 Parganas.

Head injuries killed the 3 kids in Jashore facility

Says autopsy report

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

The three teenage boys of Jashore Juvenile Correction Centre died of serious head injuries an autopsy report said yesterday.

Parvez Hasan Rabbi, 17, Russell Sujaan, 18, and Naem Hossain, 18, were killed in a fight at the centre on August 13, which also left 15 other teenagers injured.

Jashore General Hospital superintendent Dilip Kumar Roy said that the bodies of the three teenagers were found with injuries on their legs, back and head and they died mainly from head injuries.

The superintendent said the autopsy report has been sent to Jashore Civil Surgeon Sheikh Abu Shaheen.

After receiving the report, the civil surgeon said it was sent to the Jashore superintendent of police.

On August 14, some of the injured inmates, while being treated at the Jashore General Hospital, said the three were tortured to death as “punishment” for their involvement in a scuffle with the head guard on August 3.

On Monday night, four officials of the centre were suspended by the social services department.

The suspended officials are deputy superintendent Masum Billah, instructor Omar Faruque, instructor AKM Shahanur Alam and psycho-social counsellor Musfikur Rahman, said Asit Kumar Shaha, assistant director of Jashore Social Services Department.

Earlier, Abdullah Al Masud, superintendent of the centre, was suspended.

Roka Mia, the father of the slain Rabbi, filed a murder case with Jashore Kotwali Police Station the on Friday. Police have arrested five officers and eight teenage inmates of the centre in connection with the incident.

8 of a family

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Imarat Hossain Gazi, officer-in-charge of Phulpur police station, said they suspect that the driver was speeding.

Police handed over the bodies to the family yesterday afternoon.

The dead were identified as Rezia Khatun, 70, her daughter-in-law Ripa Akter, 28, and Rezia’s sister Parul Akter, 45, and brother Shamsul Haque, 60, of Moshakhali village in Gafargaon upazila; Miluara Begum, 60, her daughter-in-law Begum, 30, Begum’s daughter Bulbuli, 7, of Birunia village in Bhaluka upazila and Nabi Hossain, 30, hailing from Tarakanda upazila of the district.

Apart from Ratan and Shahjahan, the injured are: Habibur Rahman, 55, Mizanur Rahman, 28, Sohrab Hossain, 28, Shahjahan Mia, 45, and Sharful Islam, 35.

HC asks

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rule following a writ petition filed by Abul Fayez Bhuiyan, a resident of Laxmipur, challenging the legality of holding the office of lawmaker by Shahid Islam Papul.

Petitioner’s lawyer Advocate Sheikh Awsafur Rahman told The Daily Star that Kazi Shahid Islam Papul has submitted a Degree pass certificate to the EC along with the affidavit before the last parliamentary election but he said in the affidavit that he passed the Master’s degree.

Besides, Shahid Islam Papul, now an independent MP, did not submit his SSC and HSC certificates to the EC which is a fraudulence, and therefore, he cannot hold the office of MP, the lawyer said.

On June 6, Kuwait’s Criminal Investigation Department arrested Shahid on charges of human trafficking, visa trading, and money laundering. Deputy Attorney General Momtaz Parvin represented the state during the hearing.