

GRAFT CASE
Wife, daughter,
sister-in-law of
MP Papul seek
anticipatory bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lawmaker Mohammad Shahid Islam's wife, daughter and sister-in-law have sought anticipatory bail from the High Court in a corruption case involving Tk 148.41 crore.

Papul's wife Selina Islam MP, daughter Wafa Islam and sister-in-law Jesmin Prodhan filed two separate petitions with the HC on Thursday through their lawyer Mohirul Islam.

Anti-Corruption Commission's lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan, who received the copies of the petitions, told The Daily Star yesterday that the HC may hold hearing in this regard today.

The petitioners have sought anticipatory bail stating that the case has been filed against them with the intention to harass them, he said.

The ACC filed the case with its integrated district office in Dhaka on November 11 against lawmaker Mohammad Shahid Islam, popularly known as Kazi Papul, who is now detained in Kuwait,

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Demanding immediate arrest of two leaders of Hefajat-e-Islam and Islami Andolan Bangladesh, hundreds of protesters demonstrate blocking Shahbagh intersection yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

REMARK ON BANGABANDHU'S SCULPTURE
Mamunul, Faizul
declared 'unwanted'

Muktijuddho Moncho
demonstrates at Shahbagh

STAR REPORT

Activists of a faction of Muktijuddho Moncho yesterday blocked the capital's Shahbagh intersection for an hour, demanding arrest of two leaders of Hefajat-e-Islam and Islami Andolan Bangladesh for opposing establishment of Bangabandhu's sculpture.

Several hundred people took to the street at Shahbagh intersection around 4pm and blocked all the roads leading to the intersection, mounting sufferings for commuters. Many vehicles were seen stuck on roads or trying to find an alternative route to avoid gridlock caused by the blockade.

During the demonstration, activists placed their seven-point demand, including the arrest of Mamunul Haque, joint secretary general of Hefajat-e-Islam, and Syed Muhammad Faizul Karim, senior naib-e-amir of Islami Andolan.

Their other demands include setting up sculptures of Bangabandhu at every educational institution, districts and upazilas; imposing ban on religion-based politics to maintain communal harmony; stopping political activities in mosques and madrasas; overhauling madrasa education system and formation of monitoring cell to prevent sexual assault on students; and taking necessary steps to play national anthem, hoisting national flag and establishing Shaheed Minar at educational institutions across the country.

Protesters initially gathered at the base of Raju Memorial Sculpture at Dhaka University and later moved to Shahbagh.

"We are declaring Mamunul and Faizul unwanted across the country... We will go for tougher movement if they are not arrested immediately," said Moncho president Aminul Islam Bulbul. Leaders of the platform also issued a 24-hour ultimatum to arrest the duo.

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Mro people's protests and
Bangladesh's obligations

A look at int'l instruments of rights for indigenous communities

LAW DESK

Fresh protests have erupted in Bandarban among Mro people against the initiative to build a five-star hotel and amusement park at Kaprupara, Dolapara and Shong Nam Hung of 302 Lulaing Mouza and 355 Sepru Mouza in the hilly district.

According to Mro community members, the relationship they have with the lands and territories is a defining feature and crucial element of their lives. Expressing solidarity with the protests, some sixty-two eminent citizens issued a statement.

The statement outlined how the proposed plan or initiative violates the constitutional norms on respecting and protecting cultures, the CHT Regulation 1900, Bandarban Hill District Council Act 1989 and CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act 2001.

This initiative also makes us revisit Bangladesh's position and attitude toward indigenous people.

Historically, Bangladesh has shown indifference toward undertaking international obligations for indigenous people. The present private development initiative, if implemented, would certainly be attributed to the country's omission of and attitude towards such people in general.

All around the world, some of the most pressing human rights challenges facing indigenous peoples

primarily derive from pressures on their ancestral lands, territories, and resources due to development and extraction activities.

An inevitable consequence of such activities is continuation of threats to their cultures. The current protests just highlight one part of the pattern of exploitation leading to human rights abuse.

Internationally, the primary and most comprehensive instrument that concerns human rights of indigenous peoples is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on September 13, 2007.

Bangladesh was one of 11 countries which abstained from voting for or against the declaration, and since then, it has consistently maintained the position.

Article 26 (1) of the declaration acknowledges indigenous peoples' right to the lands, territories, and resources that they have traditionally owned or otherwise used, and Article 26 (2) mentions the lands, territories, and resources that they possess under indigenous customary notions of ownership. Article 26 (3), on the other hand, requires states to give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories, and resources.

The declaration, although non-binding, is a significant document

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CLIMATE-VULNERABLE AREAS

Most women faced
violence from close
ones amid pandemic

Finds MJF study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A majority of women and girls in six upazilas vulnerable to climate change faced violence by close ones during shutdown enforced amid the coronavirus pandemic, says a Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) report.

Findings of the report, "Identify Impact of Covid-19 and Amphan over Rights of Women and Girls and Their Livelihood in Climate Vulnerable Locations" were shared during a webinar jointly organised by MJF and The Daily Star yesterday.

MJF, along with Inspira Advisory and Consulting carried out the study. Field data for the study was collected in September. The six upazilas are: Patharghata of Barguna, Shyamnagar of Satkhira, Gaibandha Sadar and Phulchari, and Rangamati Sadar and Naniarchar.

In about 90 percent of the cases, husbands were the key perpetrators, said the report

The report says the cases of dowry increased during the virus outbreak as husbands or in-laws suddenly started demanding dowry or property of the women to cope with financial stress.

Addressing the webinar, MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam said like women across the globe, women in Bangladesh are facing various challenges amid the pandemic.

Inhabitants in climate-vulnerable areas were already facing various challenges while newer challenges emerged amid the pandemic, she said.

Domestic violence against women, especially by "intimate partners", has increased globally. Besides, incidents of child marriage increased and livelihood of women involved in small scale entrepreneurship was also disrupted, she added.

Moreover, work burden of women at home has also increased, she further said.

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GOPALGANJ SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY

No progress in ACC
enquiry against ex-VC

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

Over a year ago, a wave of protests swept Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University (BSMRSTU) in Gopalganj with the students taking to the streets over allegations of corruption and abuse of power against their vice-chancellor.

The protest and fast-unto-death programmes triggered a huge outcry and led to the resignation of Khondoker Md Nasiruddin from his post in mid-September, prompting the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to launch an enquiry into his corruption allegations.

But the promptness of the country's anti-graft watchdog apparently died down as it could not complete the enquiry in last one year.

Meanwhile, Nasiruddin is back at his old workstation at Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU), and now giving classes at the Department of Biotechnology.

"It shows if you have power, you can get away with even after indulging in corruption. It is as if withdrawal from the VC's post is only punishment for corruption," said Fatema-Tuz-Zinia, a third year student of the university, who faced wrath from the VC for a Facebook post.

A BSMRSTU teacher, wishing anonymity, said, "If Nasiruddin goes unpunished, many others will be encouraged to commit corruption."

ACC ENQUIRY HITS A SNAG

On November 5 last year, ACC appointed its Director Sheikh Md Fanafillah to enquire into allegation of bribe, corruption and anomalies in procurement, admission

and recruitment against Nasiruddin.

It also appointed Director General (special investigation) Sayeed Mahbub Khan to supervise the enquiry.

Fanafillah went to BSMRSTU to collect evidence and record statement of officers.

"He [Fanafillah] quizzed us on various issues. We provided him with documents of procurement anomalies," said an administrative officer of the university. "And that's all. Till now we don't know what had happened," he told The Daily Star recently.

This correspondent called up Fanafillah for his comment but he did not pick his phone.

Asked, ACC DG Mahbub said the enquiry officer went to visit the university once. "For the sake of enquiry, he needs to make field visit once again. But due to coronavirus, he could not go there," he said.

Replying to a question, he said, "Yes, it has been delayed. Hopefully we'll be able to complete the enquiry soon."

According to section 7 of ACC Rules 2007 (amended), an enquiry officer is bound to complete enquiry within 45 working days. For the failure, he may seek another 30 working days from the respective DG and commissioner.

Even after that, if the enquiry does not complete on time, the matter should be raised before the Commission which will either extend time or appoint another enquiry officer.

"If the enquiry officer fails to complete enquiry on time without appropriate reasons or refrain from applying for time

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SHAH MAKHDUM MEDICAL COLLEGE

Students protest
attack on peers
inside campus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Hundreds of students of Rajshahi's Shah Makhdum Medical College yesterday protested Friday's attack on fellow students allegedly by the college's managerial staff on campus.

They began a sit-in programme on campus at 11am and continued for two-and-a-half hours, demanding punishment for the attackers.

On Friday evening, college staffers reportedly beat students with sticks, rods and hammers when the latter entered the campus. Police rescued the injured students and admitted 11 of them to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

Later that night, Mehedi Hasan, one of the injured students, filed a case with Chandrima Police Station, accusing 21 persons, including the college's managing director (MD) Moniruzzaman Swadhin.

Yesterday, police arrested four of the accused, including college staffer Mithu and his wife Beauty, over the attack.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education, in a letter issued on November 2, directed the college to be shut down for providing substandard education.

The college's students had been demonstrating in the city for a long time, demanding action against poor educational facilities of the private institute.

Acting on the allegations, the ministry investigated and asked college authorities to improve facilities by December, 2019.

In February this year, the ministry conducted another inspection and found that the authority had not taken a single initiative to improve, and the November 2 letter mentioned that they did not show any interest to follow the directive.

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This one-way road at the capital's Kamalapur gets regularly blocked by BRTC buses parked on both sides, and the rickshaws waiting for passengers further exacerbates the situation. As a result, people coming in and out of the rail station go through a tough time to pass through the area. This photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Man held
with gold
worth Tk
1.43cr in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police early yesterday arrested an alleged member of a gold smuggling ring with 14 gold bars weighing 2.582 kilogrammes from Station Road area of the port city.

The arrestee is identified as Uttam Sen (35), said police.

A team of police led by Sub-inspector (probationary) Md Abdullah intercepted Uttam, noticing his suspicious movement. After searching him, law enforcers found the gold bars, said Officer-in-Charge Mohammed Mohsin of Kotwali Police Station.

The gold bars are worth Tk 1.43 crore, Mohsin added.

OC Mohsin said Uttam was heading for Dhaka but police arrested him before he could board a train.

"During interrogation, he said one Sanjit Dhar, a gold trader of the city's Hazari Lane area, gave him the bars. We are looking for him," he added.

A case was filed with the police station in this connection.