




Relief 'embezzler' wins award for service to poor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A local Awami League leader widely criticised for misappropriating rice meant for poor people has won an award for making "special contributions to social service".

Shah Alam, industries and commerce affairs secretary of Brahmanbaria AL, was awarded by the Department of Social Services on National Social Services Day 2021 on Saturday.

Photos of him receiving the award from the deputy commissioner in the presence of other officials and local dignitaries went viral on Facebook yesterday.

Amid criticisms, Deputy Commissioner Hayat-ud-Dowla Khan wrote a letter yesterday evening, asking Deputy Director Masudul Hasan Taposh of the social services department to explain in 24 hours how Alam got nominated for the award.

The deputy commissioner told The Daily Star that he simply handed over the award because Alam was nominated by the social services department.

People expressed shock as it was only in April 2020 that Alam's dealership of the government's Open Market Sales (OMS) programme got cancelled after an investigation found that he added the names of his wife, daughter, and several relatives on the list of beneficiaries who are supposed to be poor people hit hard by the lockdown.

On April 1, 2020, the government announced that it would sell rice at a subsidised rate of Tk 10 a kg to beggars, transport workers, rickshaw pullers, labourers, street vendors and transgender people.

Alam used his power as an OMS dealer, who is in charge of distributing the rice in different neighbourhoods of

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6



People carrying an accident victim on Moulana Bhasani Road near the High Court in the capital. He was later sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for treatment. Inset, right after the accident, another man runs across the road while talking on the phone, ignoring the risks.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



4 describe to court grief caused by PK Halder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four depositors of People's Leasing and Financial Service (PLFS), a non-banking financial institution, yesterday described their plights and sufferings before the High Court for not getting back their money from PLFS.

They said they could not get back their money as Proshanta Kumar Halder, popularly known as PK Halder, and his accomplices have embezzled a huge amount of money from the organisation and laundered it abroad.

The four are: Nashid Kamal, former Dhaka University teacher and daughter of former chief justice Mustafa Kamal, Samia Binte Mahub, a former official of a private firm, Md Tariqul Islam, an official of Khaled Mansur Trust, a welfare organisation, and Md Shawkat-Ur Rahman, a freedom fighter and former director of DU gymnasium.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

Student dies in police custody

Family claims he was tortured, killed

SUSHANTA GHOSH

A 30-year-old student of law died in custody four days after he was arrested by the Detective Branch of police in Barisal.

Family members of Rejaul Karim Reja said that he died because of torture and that there were numerous injury marks in his body.

Reja died yesterday morning at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH) where he was being treated in police custody.

Director of the hospital Bakir Hossain said the young man died of excessive bleeding through his rectum and urinary tract.

Grieving family members said Sub-inspector Mohiuddin Mahi of Detective Branch (DB) in Barishal beat up Reja, leading to his death.

A three-member committee headed by a deputy commissioner of Barishal Metropolitan Police was formed to investigate the matter.

Police officers also said that Reja was a drug dealer and an addict and that he died because of complications related to his addiction.

Reja's uncle Abdul Berek Hawlader said SI Mohiuddin arrested Reja around 8:00pm on December 29 at a roadside tea stall near his home on Hamid Khan Road in the city.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Go to polls and prove your worth: Bangabandhu



Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman speaking at the 25th foundation day function of Bangladesh Chhatra League at Ramna Green on January 4, 1973.

January 4, 1973

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

NO ALL-PARTY GOVERNMENT

Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today rejects the opposition's suggestion of an all-party government before the polls to ensure free and fair elections. He refuses to grant the status of a "political party" to the opponents of the present government. He makes his point saying the parties who are now clamouring for an all-party government had the security money of their candidates forfeited in the last elections.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

PLUNDER OF SANGU FOREST

Probe body fails to visit affected area

BGB denies it entry for 'security reasons'

SANJOY KUMAR BARUA

A member of the probe committee, formed by the forest department following a recent report of The Daily Star, has said the BGB on security grounds didn't let them enter the Sangu reserve forest, hampering their efforts to assess the level of destruction there.

"It is really very disappointing for us that the BGB did not allow us to enter the reserve forest yesterday [Saturday] for security reasons," Deputy Chief Conservator of Forest Md Zaglul Hossain, also a member of the committee, told The Daily Star.

The five-member probe committee was formed after The Daily Star published a report on the destruction of the Sangu

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Nasa launching missions to study the sun



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Nasa is launching two missions that will attempt to understand the sun and the potential danger it poses to earth.

The two newly approved missions will look at heliophysics, or the sun and its effects on the objects around it. They will do so in the hope of better understanding the space weather that is driven by the sun.

That weather can potentially endanger human technology and the work of space travellers, and researchers hope that further study of it could allow for it to be better predicted in the hope of

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

KSA FLIGHTS RESTART Backlog of migrants to take a month to clear

RASHIDUL HASAN

It will take around a month to clear the backlog of some 10,500 Saudi Arabia-bound Bangladeshi expatriate workers who were stuck in the country due to the Gulf nation's two-week suspension of all international flights.

Saudi Arabia's General Authority of Civil Aviation yesterday announced

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6



PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 4

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:00 5:30 7:00
JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:35 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

27 more die, 835 get Covid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-seven people have died from Covid-19 in the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, read a press release issued by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

With this, the total number of deaths reached 7,626 and the death rate was at 1.48 percent.

At least 835 new infections were recorded in the meantime, taking the total number of infected people to 516,019, added the release.

Against a total of 10,925 tests in those 24 hours, the positivity rate was 7.64 percent and the overall positivity rate is 15.83 percent.

At least 978 Covid-19 patients have recovered as well in this period.

The total number of recoveries now stands at 460,598 and the recovery rate at 89.26 percent.

Among the 27 dead, 16 were males and 11 were females.

Three of them aged between 41 and 50 years, five between 51 and 60,

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



The factory of Konka refrigerators in Narayanganj's Sonargaon upazila caught fire around 11:00am yesterday. Thirteen fire engines doused the fire after almost two-and-a-half hours of work. One engineer of the factory was injured as he tried to escape the fire by jumping off the building.

PHOTO: SANAD SAHA SANY

New curbs as nations fight resurgent virus

S Korea says third wave of Covid being contained

AGENCIES

Countries across the world tightened restrictions on their populations yesterday to fight a resurgence in the coronavirus, as the European Union offered to help drug companies expand vaccine production to improve distribution "bottlenecks".

From local curfews to alcohol bans and complete lockdowns, governments are trying to tackle a surge in cases.

The coronavirus has killed more than 1.8 million people globally since emerging in China in December 2019, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP.

But experts fear the worst is yet to come, predicting a sharp rise in infections and deaths after weeks of holiday gatherings.

French police booked hundreds of New Year revellers for flouting anti-Covid measures at an illegal rave.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said yesterday he was "reconciled" to the prospect of tougher restrictions to combat spiralling coronavirus cases, as a row flared over whether schools should reopen.

"It may be that we need to do things in the next few weeks that will be tougher in many parts of the country," Johnson told the BBC's The Andrew Marr Show.

"I'm fully, fully reconciled to that."

Britain recorded 57,725 new cases on Saturday, its highest total of the entire pandemic.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1