



A couple receives marriage certificates from a provincial officer as they ride elephants during a Valentine's Day celebration at the Nong Nooch Tropical Garden in Chonburi province, Thailand, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Suspects slipped out

FROM PAGE 12
America, Europe, Middle East and Asia, said PBI, a specialised police unit, in a report.

The report, however, did not mention how the accused managed passports and crossed immigration. Neither did it say the time the accused fled the country.

The PBI found that 23 militants, who are accused in different terrorism related cases, have gone into hiding after obtaining bail with their family members and relatives having no idea about their whereabouts.

The police unit prepared the report after over two years of investigation and visits to present and permanent addresses of around 3,700 militants named in the PBI database.

They are the accused in different terrorism-related cases filed since 2000.

The PBI also inquired at the courts for information.

Recently, the report, along with a list of militants on the run, was sent to Police Headquarters and various other police units, including the Special Branch (SB) and Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU).

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the list and the summary of the report. "Forty-one militants who were freed on bail do not appear before courts," reads the report.

"After talking to the family and local sources it's learnt that 18 of them are now living abroad while 23 others do not maintain any sort of communications with their family members. People of their localities do not even know their whereabouts," it said.

Those who were their bail guarantors could not give any information about their location, the report added.

PBI Chief Deputy Inspector General Banaj Kumar Majumder admitted preparing such a report.

"We carry out research on different topics and the research on the militants is one such work," he said last week, when asked why PBI made this report while it is dedicated to investigating crucial cases.

He, however, refused to give further details, saying it was a confidential document.

Acknowledging the PBI list, Monirul Islam, chief of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of DMP, said the CTTC along with police stations concerned is also trying to nab those hiding abroad and those not appearing before courts.

"We are looking for initiatives to bring back those who are living abroad," he told The Daily Star.

But how these accused managed to flee the country remains a big question while counterterrorism officials always consider them a threat.

Special Branch officials said if anyone is applying for a passport they need a police verification report where police would mention if he or she is accused in any criminal cases.

Requesting anonymity, they said it is

up to the Department of Immigration and Passport (DIP) whether it would issue or deny passports to anyone accused in criminal cases.

ATM Abu Asad, additional director general of the DIP, said they do not issue passports to anyone if they learn from a police verification report that the individual is accused in a criminal case.

He, however, said one can commit a crime after getting a passport, which they are not supposed to know.

WHO'S LIVING WHERE
With the PBI list, The Daily Star correspondents went to the houses of some of the suspected militants who have been on the run.

Abdul Matin Biswas is one of them.

Arrested 12 years ago in Gaibandha for his connection with a banned militant outfit, he came out of jail on bail around a year later and has been on the run since.

Matin is also accused in two other terrorism cases filed with Shibganj Police Station in Chapainawabganj and Jhenidah Sadar Police Station.

The suspect is now in South Africa, according to the PBI report.

The district correspondent of this paper visited his home village in Laxmipur of Kotchandpur upazila in Jhenidah on February 6 and learned that none of Matin's family members live there anymore.

Matin studied up to class-VIII in his village and then moved to Arappur area in the district town.

Abdul Kuddus, one of his neighbours, said they heard that around eight to nine years back Matin left the country. Now his wife is living at his home in the district town with a son and two daughters.

Saleh Al Arif, from Bishwanath upazila in Sylhet, is another suspected militant who was arrested while preparing to bring out a procession in the city on February 21, 2014.

An active member of Hizb-ut Tahrir, he was found with the organisation's leaflets and banner, according to case documents.

He obtained bail and fled the country.

Police later submitted a charge sheet, and his trial began in 2016 in his absence in a Sylhet court and the case is still under trial.

As per the PBI report, Saleh has moved to Portugal from Sweden.

But, according to international media reports, he was living with his family at Rochdale in Manchester in the UK.

His father Jalal Uddin came under attack in Rochdale in February 2016. Islamic State supporters killed the man, who was a respected Imam in the Bengali community, the reports said.

Saleh talked to the media after Islamic State supporter Mohammed Syeed was handed a life sentence for helping murder his father.

The case of Shafiq, another accused militant as per the PBI report, is different.

He is now living in the US.

Son of Kayum Mondol of Dewalabari village of Melandaha in Jamalpur, Shafiq passed Secondary School Certificate (SSC) in 1992.

He was the Melandaha Government College unit president of Bangladesh Chhatra League in 1995, three locals said.

He passed Bachelor of Arts from the same college and later became the vice-president of Jamalpur district BCL, they said.

Though the PBI mentioned that he was accused in three cases, local sources said he was actually accused in four cases -- one filed under the Explosive Substances Act in August 2005 and three others in May 2005.

Police pressed a charge sheet against him in two cases. He was acquitted by a court in one of the cases in 2008 while the complainant withdrew the other.

Shafiq got a DV lottery and managed a passport from Mymensingh regional passport office in 2006 and left for the US where he has been living since.

The locals said the cases were filed on political ground as the BNP-led alliance government was in power at that time.

His family is involved in Awami League politics, they added.

Shafiq's father is a member of Melandaha upazila AL advisory committee while his other brothers are also holding posts of the union AL.

One of his six brothers Mahfuzul Haque Mafle is the incumbent chairman of No 4 Nangla Union Parishad and president of the union AL.

Talking to The Daily Star, Mafle said, "We have given necessary information to all the agency members whoever came to us."

He refused to discuss the issue any further, saying he was busy.

THE REMAINING OTHERS
The PBI list mentioned the countries where the remaining other suspects are living now.

Saifullah of Narayanganj is now living in Malaysia; Abul Kalam of Narsingdi in Dubai; Md Ismail Hossain of Chandpur in Maldives; Junnon Shikder of Cumilla in Syria; Khandaker Mohammad Kamaluddin alias Saker in Saudi Arabia; Didar of Habiganj in Agartala, India; Golam Hossain Pramanik of Rajshahi in Singapore; Russle Hawlader in Malaysia; Md Zakir Hossain of Rajshahi in Dubai; Rashedul Hasan of Meherpur in Saudi Arabia; Hafez Mahmud Hasan of Faridpur in Europe; Md Khwaja Mollah of Khulna in India, and Mahfuza Begum of Narail in India.

Kamaluddin alias Saker, an accused in a 76kg bomb plot in 2000 against now Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, then opposition leader, got acquitted when the verdict of the case was delivered.

[Dwoha Chowdhury also contributed to this report]

Their numbers shrinking in Teknaf

FROM PAGE 12
Ma Ching alleged that they had to leave their ancestral home after receiving threats on their lives from Rohingya criminals.

"A refugee camp was set up in Domdomia Rakhine Para [in 2017] for Rohingyas who fled Myanmar for fear of persecution," said Maung Tunhla Rakhine, secretary of Bangladesh Indigenous Forum's Cox's Bazar unit.

Rakhine families in Rochai Rakhine Para, locally known as Naya Rakhaine Para, in Teknaf's Nhila area alleged that they also had to give up their ancestral land due to oppression and land-grabbing by local influential people and threats from Rohingya criminals.

There is now a Rohingya refugee camp in Naya Rakhaine Para, said Maung Tunhla.

Maung Ting Aung, who relocated to Chowdhury Para in 2001, said he along with his family left Naya Para after receiving threats from Rohingya criminals.

The victim Rakhine people said they have no hopes of returning to their ancestral land as the authorities concerned are yet to take any action against the criminals and influential people who intimidated them.

Citing statistics from a book titled Rakhinadorsho authored by Mongseng Ching, Maung Tunhla said there were a total of 113 Rakhine paras in Cox's Bazar with 11,641 families. But the numbers have now come down to only 23 and 2,558 respectively.

The Rakhine population in Cox's Bazar has decreased significantly due to oppression and land grabbing by local influential people, said Maung Than Hla, president of The Rakhine Buddhist Welfare Association.

The population of the community in Cox's Bazar was around 70,000 only 20 years ago, but now the number has dropped to about 30,000, he added.

Prof Robaet Ferdous of Dhaka University's mass communication and journalism department said most of the Rakhine community people

left the country over the years due to insecurity.

"Criminals first attack the houses of Rakhine people, then their business outlets and prayer houses. If they fail to evict Rakhine people from their land, they rape their girls," said Robaet.

"This is nothing but a process of exterminating the entire indigenous population in our country."

He expressed fear that the number of Rakhine people in the country might drop to "zero" in future.

Asked about the eviction of Rakhine people, Cox's Bazar Additional Deputy Commissioner (general) Zahid Iqbal said, "I joined Cox's Bazar office last month. I am not aware of the allegation that local Rakhine community members are leaving their ancestral home in the face of threats from Rohingya criminals. I have to check whether there are any official complaint regarding eviction of Rakhine people and grabbing of their land."

4 held

FROM PAGE 12
A rape case was filed against the four with the police station, he said.

According to the case statement, the accused forcibly took her to an abandoned room of a house of Saiful and gang-raped her on Wednesday night when she was returning home from a friend's house at Gazirchat.

All the arrestees were produced before a Dhaka court yesterday, OC Ziaul added.

8 more die

FROM PAGE 12
Bangladesh reported its first novel coronavirus cases on March 8 last year and the first death on March 18.

Tripura MP

FROM PAGE 12
station would grant access to people in Bangladesh to visit the traditional Dumbur Mela, organised on Makar Sankranti -- considered an auspicious event in the Hindu calendar.

The fair attracts lakhs of tourists from around the regions and if Land Custom Station (LCS) is established in Raishyabatri, Dumbur fair will get international flair and would be immensely beneficiary from a commercial perspective and also strengthen economic aspects of the state, the parliamentarian explained.

US, WHO push

FROM PAGE 12
and concerns over coronavirus variants that first emerged in Britain and South Africa forced ever tighter border controls.

New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern yesterday announced a three-day lockdown in the country's biggest city Auckland, after three Covid-19 cases emerged, the first local infections since late January.

New Zealand, which had gone more than two months without local infections before the January case, is to start inoculating its 5 million people against the new coronavirus on February 20, receiving the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine earlier than anticipated.

UAE's probe

FROM PAGE 12
Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, UAE prime minister and Dubai's ruler, shared the coloured image on Twitter.

"The first picture of Mars captured by the first-ever Arab probe in history," he wrote.

The mission is designed to reveal the secrets of Martian weather, but the UAE also wants it to serve as an inspiration for the region's youth.

Hope became the first of three spacecraft to arrive at the Red Planet this month after China and the US also launched missions in July, taking advantage of a period when the Earth and Mars are nearest.

Closure of schools extended

FROM PAGE 12
30, the day the 2020 HSC results were published, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said if everyone follows health guidelines properly, the coronavirus pandemic will come under control and the government will be able to reopen educational institutions very soon. The government will observe the situation in February.

"If a good situation prevails in February, then we'll take steps to reopen educational institutions on a limited scale...we have a plan like that," the PM added.

Candidates of SSC and HSC exams would get priority when in-person classes resume and steps will be taken to bring as many students as possible to classes maintaining social distancing, said a top education ministry official.

PUBLIC EXAMS, SCHOOL ADMISSION CANCELLED

The pandemic led to the cancellation of the Higher Secondary Certificate and equivalent exams, originally slated for April 1, 2020.

The government also cancelled Primary Education Completion, Junior School Certificate and their equivalent exams due to the pandemic.

Secondary and primary students were promoted to the next classes this year without any annual examinations.

To avoid health risks amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the government moved to enrol students at schools for all classes for the next academic session on the basis of a lottery.

Because of the pandemic, the government could not hold the Textbook Festival on January 1 when textbooks are handed to primary and secondary students for free.

The authorities also delayed introduction of the new curriculum by a year.

Fire 'catastrophe' destroys 100 fuel tankers on Afghanistan-Iran border

AFP, Islam Qala

At least 100 oil and gas tankers have been destroyed by fire in a "catastrophe" at Afghanistan's biggest trade crossing with Iran, causing millions of dollars of losses, officials said yesterday.

The huge blaze, which broke out Saturday afternoon at Islam Qala port 120 kilometres (75 miles) from the western city of Herat, has been contained and an investigation launched into its cause.

"We were told that 100 or 200 tankers have been destroyed, but this number could be higher," Jailani Farhad, spokesman for the governor of Herat province, said after visiting the scene.

During the blaze looters descended on the site, stealing goods that were being imported and exported across the

border, Younus Qazi Zada, the head of the Herat Chamber of Commerce said.

"The catastrophe was much bigger than imagined," he said, adding: "Unfortunately, irresponsible people have looted a large number of goods."

Qazi Zada said initial estimates were of "millions of dollars of losses".

Farhad added that investigators needed more time to examine the extent of damage.

Videos posted on social media on Saturday night showed the towering fire and huge clouds of thick black smoke billowing into the sky.

On Sunday security forces opened fire on a vehicle, killing one man, after the driver failed to stop at a checkpoint that had been hastily set up to prevent suspected looters from entering what was left of the customs office compound.

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Memo No. 46.203.8600.061.07.43.2020-734/2 Date: 14-02-2021

Invitation for e-Tender Notice

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|--|---|--|
| 1. | Ministry/Division | Local Government Division. |
| 2. | Implementing agency | Department of Public Health Engineering |
| 3. | Project/program name | National Sanitation Project (Phase-III). |
| 4. | Sl. No. | e-Tender ID |
| 1. | 547155 | |
| Description of work | | Opening/closing date |
| Construction of 01 No. Public Toilet (Civil, Sanitary, Electrical works & Running water supply etc.) at Kartikpur Bazar of Shokhipur Thana of Bhedorganj Upazila of Shariatpur District under National Sanitation Project (Phase-III) DPHE, during the FY-2020-2021. | | 01-Mar-2021 Time: 11:00 |
| 5. | Name, designation and address of official inviting tender | Md. Fazlul Haque, Executive Engineer, DPHE, Shariatpur district, Shariatpur. |
| 6. | This is online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. Interested persons/firms can see details in the website: www.eprocure.gov.bd | |

Md. Fazlul Haque
Executive Engineer, DPHE
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'Democracy is fragile'

FROM PAGE 12
McConnell, believe Donald Trump was guilty of a 'disgraceful dereliction of duty' and 'practically and morally responsible for provoking' the violence unleashed on the Capitol. " Biden said.

He said he was thinking about Capitol Police officer Brian Sicknick, who was killed during the siege of the Capitol on January 6, others who bravely stood guard, and those who lost their lives.

He lauded the courage of those who made efforts to protect the integrity of US democracy, including Democrats and Republicans, election officials and judges, elected representatives and poll workers.

"This sad chapter in our history has reminded us that democracy is fragile. That it must always be defended. That we must be ever vigilant. That violence and extremism has no place in America. And that each of us has a duty and responsibility as Americans, and especially as leaders, to defend the truth and to defeat the lies," he said.

The Democratic president said the task at hand was to end what he called "an uncivil war and heal the very soul of our nation."

'JUST BEGUN'
Trump on Saturday welcomed his acquittal in the US Senate on an impeachment charge and said his political movement "has only just begun."

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