

2013 MAYHEM

Two central Hefajat leaders remanded

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed three Hefajat-e-Islam men, including two its central leaders, on a five-day remand in connection with the mayhem in the capital in May 2013.

They are Hefajat-e-Islam assistant organising secretary Mufti Shakhawat Hossain Razi, assistant secretary general Maulana Monzurul Islam Afendi and activist Mufti Fakhru Islam.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Morshed Al Mamun Bhuiyan passed the order after Investigation Officer Harun-Or-Rashid, an inspector of Detective Branch (DB) of police, produced the trio with a ten-day remand prayer in a case filed with Paltan Police Station, court sources said.

The three accused were arrested from different areas of the capital on April 14.

The same day, Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Abu Syeed placed Hefajat-e-Islam assistant publicity secretary Mufti Sharifullah, on one day remand after Ayan Mahmud, an inspector of Jatrabari Police Station and also the investigation officer of the case, produced him before the court with a seven-day remand prayer in a case filed under the Special Powers Act with Jatrabari Police Station on May 6, 2013.

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With no available work amid the lockdown, many workers -- like this man sleeping on a rickshaw-van near Chattogram city's Nupur Market -- have no other choice but to pass the days staying idle. With their income sources disappearing, daily earners are struggling to make a living for themselves and their families. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Poor bearing the brunt yet again

Lockdown snatches away income source from the vulnerable

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

Last year's prolonged shutdown had left Ainal Haque with no option but to give up driving inter-city buses and take up driving a three-wheeler to survive the economic shock.

Now, with the new lockdown in place, he described how the fresh restriction has affected him.

"I live in a mess with others. Every day, I've to pay Tk 120 for food and rent. But for the last two days, I couldn't pay," said Ainal, who was talking with two fellow drivers near the capital's Dhalpur Community Center yesterday afternoon.

Ainal's situation shows how people from the low-income group, who are still distressed because of last year's economic shock induced by Covid-19, have again started feeling the pinch due to the lockdown.

Ainal transported a passenger from Monwara Hospital in Siddheshwari to Kajla that day. "I got Tk 200; that's all I got since the morning," he said.

"Last year, I remained jobless for a long period during the shutdown. Then I thought of driving CNG [auto-rickshaw], as the small vehicles are usually allowed to ply on the road even during the restriction," he said, adding that he used to be a driver of Balaka Service, which plies Dhaka-Gazipur route.

While these people are worrying about their livelihood, the inflation rate is trending upwards.

According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), the average inflation rate rose to 5.47 percent in March, from 5.02 percent in January this year. Food inflation rate increased to 5.51 percent.

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A police officer stops two motorcyclists at Sylhet city's Chowhatta area yesterday to question why they are out during the lockdown. Lawmen have been stationed at different points of the city to ensure people abide by restrictions.

PHOTO: SHEKH NASIR

Second day of lockdown sees more people, lax monitoring

STAR REPORT

Although there were not that many people and only a handful of vehicles or rickshaws on roads on the first day of the countrywide seven-day "strict lockdown" on Wednesday, the scenario quickly changed yesterday.

A good number of people as well as vehicles were seen on roads while monitoring by law enforcers was lax in many areas, according to reports from our correspondents.

Rickshaws and private cars dominated the streets in absence of public transport.

CHATTOGRAM

While visiting different areas including Bahaddarhat, Muradpur, Sholashahar Gate-2, Prabantak Intersection, Mehediabagh, Gol Pahar Intersection, GEC Intersection, Chawkbazar and Jamal Khan Road of port city, people were seen crowding on the street.

Asked, they said they came out of home for emergency purposes.

In some areas, police were seen asking people for "movement pass".

Titu Biswas was seen bargaining with a rickshaw-puller over fare as he wanted to go to Gol Pahar Intersection from Chawkbazar to tend to his brother who was undergoing treatment at a private hospital.

"My elder brother had a heart attack and has been undergoing treatment at a clinic. My sister-in-law stayed with him at night and now I'm going there," Titu said.

Asked if he had a pass, Titu said he tried but could not manage one. "If police ask me, I will explain to them my reason

for going out."

In Muradpur area, police were seen asking people for passes. Most did not have it. Some were told to return back while others were allowed to go on as they were able to convince law enforcers of their "emergencies".

At Double Mooring, police vigilance was not seen in many areas. People were seen moving freely either on foot or by rickshaws or private vehicles. Lax monitoring was also seen in Kotwali area. Additional district magistrate Sumani Akter said 10 mobile courts of the district administration were in different areas of the city since Wednesday.

Asked about the increasing number of people on roads, she said, "We are trying our best but if people are not aware, it is hard to monitor every area with limited manpower."

BARISHAL

Rickshaws dominated the streets of Barishal city yesterday.

Most shops and markets were closed but kitchen and wholesale markets remained opened and crowded.

Hawkers and vendors occupied the sidewalks while people rushed in to purchase food items in the afternoon. People were seen gathering in areas including Bazar Road, Falpatti, Port Road and Girja Mahalla throughout the day.

Monir, a hawker, said, "How can we survive if we do not sell our products?"

Fruit seller Ganesh Dutta echoed him. "This is the season of watermelon. If we cannot sell, the fruit will rot."

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'Using expats as gold carriers'

CID arrests three of smuggling syndicate; hunt on for ringleaders

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

With the help of Bangladeshi carriers, who worked in Dubai, an international gold smuggling syndicate has been smuggling gold bars to Bangladesh, found a recent investigation by Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

They came up with the information while investigating a case filed with Patenga Police Station in the port city over recovery of 160 gold bars, found underneath three seats of a Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight at Chattogram Shah Amanat International Airport on October 15 in 2020.

CID also arrested three carriers who were directly involved with the syndicate, officials said. They are Helal Uddin, Abul Hossain and Rubel.

Of them, Helal hails from Fatikchhari of Chattogram, Abul from Feni's Chagalnaiya and Rubel from Cox's Bazar. CID officials said the syndicate members are active in Bangladesh and Dubai.

"Helal carried 40 gold bars out of the 160 from Dubai. While investigating, CID identified Helal first and gleaned information about the syndicate after arresting him on March 4," said Shahnewaz Khaled, special superintendent of police in Chattogram.

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Rape, abuse in edu institutes gone on for too long: MJF

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While incidents of child sexual abuse are on the rise in educational institutions, there is very little discussion at the national level on this unfortunate issue, speakers observed at a webinar yesterday.

They said child sexual abuse is on the rise mainly due to the lack of surveillance and accountability in educational institutions, especially in qawmi madrasas.

Although attempts had been made to conceal the incidents of rape and sexual harassment in qawmi madrasas and other educational institutions for so long, the incidents have come to the fore recently, they said.

Organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), the webinar titled "What to do to stop child abuse/sexual exploitation in education institution" was moderated by MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam.

In her speech, Shaheen Anam said, "The issue of sexual harassment in educational institutions should be brought under the culture of accountability. Parents send their children to educational institutions in good faith. It is a matter of great concern for

them if children are being abused there."

MJF Violence Against Women coordinator Arpita Das presented a keynote at the webinar. According to data from nine national dailies from January to March this year, a total of 20 students have been raped and faced sexual harassment in the educational institutions, Arpita said.

In addition, 21 children in madrasas and safe homes have been tortured during this period, she added. Although schools are shut due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the madrasas were open.

Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) lawyer advocate Abdus Rashid said, "Currently, the incidents of male children rape, which is regarded as 'unnatural offenses' mentioned in section 377 of the Penal Code 1860, are dealt with through magistrates' courts, and are taken very lightly."

Advocate Rashid also stressed the inclusion of rape of male children in the Women and Children repression Act 2000 for ensuring justice for them.

Professor Riyad Chowdhury of the Madrasa Education Board said, "We have to take a holistic approach to stop sexual harassment and torture in general

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SECOND WAVE OF COVID-19

Patients suffer as SBMCH struggles with manpower

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

Even those who need treatment are wary of visiting the Covid-19 unit of Sher-e-Bangla Medical College and Hospital (SBMCH) at Barishal, citing a major lack of resources and a dirty environment.

The isolation unit at SBMCH is the only medical centre dedicated to treating Covid-19 in the division of Barishal and adjoining districts of Madaripur and Shariatpur. The unit began its journey last year, promising to have 150 beds.

However, the number of beds at the unit never exceeded 100, and as the country battles the second wave of infections, doctors and health workers are struggling to treat an increasing number of patients. After all, during the first wave, the unit had seven times more manpower.

Last Friday, there were 146 patients admitted at the Covid-19 unit, with at least 46 of them staying on the floor.

The specialised unit has only six doctors and two cleaners working in three shifts. There are 12 ICUs, but no specialists to manage those. Although an anaesthetist Dr Nazmul managed the ICUs with

his training, the effectiveness of the intensive care units has been questioned by patients due to the lack of experienced and trained nurses to tend to those patients.

One admitted patient's relative, Sirajul Islam, posted about his experience at SBMCH on social media. "I have to pay to get any work done around here, from oxygen supply to cleanliness. Last Friday a patient waited four hours for treatment and then died because he wasn't given oxygen," alleged Sirajul.

A cleaner told this correspondent that she is doing this work temporarily, and so she is accepting money for patients if they need her services.

A relative of one of the patients said, "We can't get any basic service here without money. The nurses don't pay attention. Doctors come around to check on patients only once, even then they are often on the phone."

Dr Nazmul, who is in charge of the ICU beds of the unit, said, "It is impossible to manage the ICUs for just one person. We are still trying, putting the work before any personal problems. But that is

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ONE-WEEK LOCKDOWN

US, UK, India suspend visa operations

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The foreign missions of US, UK and India in Bangladesh have suspended visa-related activities during the lockdown from April 14 to 21.

In a statement, the US Embassy in Dhaka said due to countrywide lockdown, the embassy has cancelled all immigrant and non-immigrant visa appointments from April 5 to April 20.

Meanwhile, non-immigrant appointments of April 8 have been rescheduled for May 11.

The US Embassy in Dhaka said it will remain closed for routine US citizen services from today throughout the duration of the lockdown.

All US citizen service appointments already scheduled for the week will be rescheduled soon, assured the embassy.

The embassy also reminded all US citizens in Bangladesh to practice sound personal security measures, which include following the laws and local government

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Barishal police start free oxygen service for Covid patients

OUR CORRESPONDENT, BARISHAL

Barishal Metropolitan Police (BMP) yesterday launched a service to provide free oxygen to Covid-19 patients, amid a surge of the infections in the city, much like the country.

BMP Commissioner Md Shahabuddin Khan inaugurated the service at Barishal Police Lines yesterday morning.

Additional Commissioner of Police (Headquarters) Proly Chisim, Additional Commissioner of Police (Crime and Prosecution) Enamul Haque, ADC (Crime) Akramul Hasan and other police official were present at that time.

"We will not only provide free oxygen, but also give technical support at homes and other places where it is needed," said Shahabuddin Khan.

The officials said a coronavirus management team has been formed for this purpose.

They have also been trained so they can deliver required services to people's doorsteps.

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Despite the ongoing restriction on public's movements, people were seen lazying around, talking to their acquaintances at a park in Noyabazar yesterday afternoon. While some had masks on the proper way, most went without one or wore it under their noses.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Three of a family among five killed in road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

At least five people, including three members of a family, were killed in a road accident in Gaibandha's Gobindganj upazila on Wednesday, the first day of the lockdown.

The accident occurred at Kalitola Bazar area around 3:30pm, when a covered van crashed into an auto-rickshaw parked on Dhaka-Rangpur highway, said police.

After the accident, locals rescued eight injured people from the auto-rickshaw and took them to the upazila health complex.

"Among the eight, one Zahid Hossain died before he reached the complex, and we had referred the others to Bogura and Rangpur hospitals, as their condition was critical," said Dr Kaniz Fatema, residential medical officer of the health complex.

The deceased were identified as Zahid Hossain (30) of Gobindganj, Anisur Rahman (32) of Palashbari upazila, Anisur's wife Razia Sultana (27) and mother Rehana Khatun (57), said Md Babul Ahmed, sub-inspector of Gobindganj highway police station.

Rehana died at Bogura's Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital, and Anisur and Razia succumbed to their injuries at Rangpur Medical College Hospital on Wednesday, said Babul.

The auto-rickshaw driver also died at the Rangpur hospital yesterday. Police were trying to identify the man, the officer said.

"No one died on the spot. Four died under treatment from 5:30pm to 7:30pm on Wednesday at different hospitals," said Khairul Islam, officer-in-charge (OC) of the police station.

Anisur and his family had come to Kalitola Bazar from Palashbari to meet a doctor. They were returning home, said the OC.

"We have seized the covered van, but the driver managed to flee. A case was filed with by the deceased's family," he said.