

'We try to ensure no one is denied justice'

In conversation with PBI chief Banaj Kumar

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and HASAN MEER

Formed in 2012, Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) has earned a reputation for solving the seemingly unsolvable, "sensational" and difficult cases. This specialised unit conducts criminal investigations and digital forensic services by the order of court and Police Headquarters (PHQ). In an interview with The Daily Star, PBI chief, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Banaj Kumar Majumder spoke about the organisation's work process, achievements, challenges, constraints and future plans.

The Daily Star (DS): How did PBI start its journey?

Banaj Kumar: The National Integrity Strategy formulated by the government referred for an independent investigation body to deal with cases. Besides, the demand for such a unit was also raised from the court, which eventually gave shape to PBI. Set up in 2012, PBI started investigating cases from 2015.

Generally, the Detective Branch (DB) and police stations investigate cases, which are part of district police. If anyone feels that justice has not been served, then they can apply for re-investigation by the Criminal Investigation Department.

Even after that, they may feel they did not

get justice. So, keeping that in mind, the independent investigation body -- PBI -- was formed. We started with 900 personnel, which was later increased in 2017. Now, we have around 2,182 officials working in the unit.

DS: What are your major focuses and processes during an investigation? Is there any time-frame?

Banaj Kumar: PBI has the authority to take over investigation of cases related to murder, rape, robbery, arms and narcotics filed with different police stations. Besides, the court and Police Headquarters (PHQ) can handover any case to us, and a person can come to us for investigation through court.

Since 2016, we have received around 17,503 cases filed with police stations (GR) and 67,442 filed with court (CR) till date. Of the cases, PBI has already completed investigation of 14,247 GR cases and 61,431 CR cases.

For investigating cases, we mainly focus on two issues -- the truth behind the incident and documentation. We also keep an open eye so that the accused are not denied justice as well. For example, a person may have been present during a murder but did not take part in it. So, that person needs to be framed with appropriate charges.

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Wrapped in bright red blankets, a set of prematurely born twins arrived at the emergency department of Chattogram Medical College Hospital yesterday. They were born on the island of Kutubdia at Cox's Bazar, but the Upazila Health Complex did not have the necessary treatment facilities for premature birth. The family travelled all the way to Chattogram city to ensure neonatal care for their newborns.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN



Barrister Ziaur Rahman Khan laid to rest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP chairperson's advisory council member and four-time former lawmaker Ziaur Rahman Khan was laid to rest at Dhaka's Banani graveyard yesterday.

Ziaur, also a senior lawyer of the Supreme Court, died of coronavirus on Saturday at the age of 75. He breathed his last around 10pm at Impulse Hospital in the capital.

Ziaur is survived by his wife, a daughter and a son.

Hailing from the village of Balia, Ziaur was elected MP four times -- in 1991, twice in 1996 and in 2001 from Dhaka-20 constituency (Dhamrai) with BNP's ticket.

He resided at Dhanmondi-7.

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Buet introduces preliminary tests for admission

SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) has decided to hold a preliminary entrance test for the 2020-21 honours academic session. This will be held before aspirants sit for the final admission test.

Compared to last year, the introduction of the preliminary exam will pave the way for almost double the students to sit for the test this year.

According to a press release by the university authorities, admission seekers will be required to sit for preliminary selection exams, from which candidates will be selected for the final exam, scheduled to be held on June 10.

The preliminary test will be held over four shifts across two days.

The country's most coveted destination for engineering and technology education took the unusual decision as the Higher Secondary Certificate exam was not held this year due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

According to university sources, 12,000 examinees sat for last year's admission tests, in line with the universities' strict requirements for SSC and HSC exam results. But after the new decision, almost 24,000 students will get a chance to sit for the preliminary test.

Talking to The Daily Star, Prof Dr Khandaker Shabbir Ahmed, chairperson of Buet's admission test committee and also dean of architecture and planning department, said, "As the HSC exam was not held this year, students will be given the opportunity to participate in our admission tests on the basis of their SSC exam results."

"Since a lot of students scored a GPA 5 in SSC, this means more students will get the chance to appear for the admission tests than before. We have therefore decided to introduce the preliminary testing system," Prof Shabbir said.

"From the preliminary tests, 6,000 top students will be allowed to participate in the final admission test," he explained.

On Saturday, the university authorities also decided to extend the deadline of the application process due to the lockdown situation. Originally marked for this Saturday, the deadline is now set for 3pm of May 3.

Schedule for the test will remain unchanged unless the ongoing lockdown is extended, Vice Chancellor Prof Satya Prasad Majumder told The Daily Star.

Additionally, seating arrangement for the tests will follow health guidelines, with each student being allocated one bench.

The eligibility list for the preliminary admission test, scheduled to be held on May 31 and June 1, will be published on May 5. The eligibility list for the final exam will be released on June 5.

The list of selected candidates and the waiting list will be published on July 1.

CLOSURE OF BORDERS

More than 300 Bangladeshis stuck at India's Petrapole port

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

More than 300 Bangladeshis got stuck in India's Petrapole land port yesterday, as Bangladesh government on Sunday closed the border with India, due to a huge surge in Covid-19 cases in the neighbouring country.

Many of the Bangladeshis stuck on the other side are patients or students.

Benapole Immigration Officer-in-Charge Ahsan Habib said he received a letter to keep borders with India closed for the next 14 days.

But according to the letter, if anyone has special permission from the high commissioner, there will be no bar to travel.

Export-import between the two countries remains normal, said Benapole Land Port Acting Director Abdul Jalil.

He also said no passenger from Bangladesh can enter India, as per instruction of the government. Passengers from India cannot enter Bangladesh as well.

Benapole Immigration Health Department Medical Officer Habibur Rahman said 570 Bangladeshi passengers came from India on Sunday, and of them, three were diagnosed with Covid-19.

They contracted the virus in India and are now undergoing treatment at Jashore Sadar Hospital's Covid-19 unit.

Other than that, 11 passengers among 570 people who could not show any Covid-19 negative certificate were sent to Benapole Rajnigandha residential hotel for institutional quarantine, the official said.

Earlier, upon the recommendation of the health directorate, passenger travel from India to Bangladesh via land was suspended for 14 days, said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen.

Already, air travel between India and Bangladesh has been suspended since April 14 with the beginning of second wave of Covid-19 from the second week of March in Bangladesh.



Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq's death anniv today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 59th death anniversary of Sher-e-Bangla Abul Kashem Fazlul Huq will be observed today in the country.

Abul Kashem Fazlul Huq, popularly known as Sher-e-Bangla or Huq Saheb, was born on October 26, 1873, at his maternal uncle's house at Satura, a village in the southern part of Barishal district.

Huq was an eminent public leader who had held many high political posts, including the mayor of Calcutta (1935), chief minister of undivided Bengal (1937-1943) and East Bengal (1954), home minister of Pakistan (1955) and governor of East Pakistan (1956-58).

Maintaining health guidelines, the ruling Awami League will pay tribute to the great leader by placing wreaths at his grave at 9:00am, says an AL press release.

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Getting vaccines from single source via one org was suicidal: BNP

UNB, Dhaka

Voicing concerns over the Covid-19 vaccine crisis in the country, BNP yesterday said the government's decision to procure it by a single organisation from a single source was "suicidal".

"Our standing committee expressed deep concerns and anger over the uncertainty of Covid vaccine availability due to failure of and corruption by the government and importer Beximco Group," said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir.

Speaking at a virtual press conference to convey decisions of the party standing committee meeting held on Saturday, he said, "BNP warned earlier that the decision of giving the responsibility to a single organisation to collect vaccines from a single source could be suicidal."

He also said the government has committed a criminal offence by giving a pro-ruling party business organisation the responsibility to procure the vaccine, without thinking about the interests of people. "They [government] will have to face trial in the future for this criminal act."

Fakhru also said their party thinks the government should quit for committing the crime over vaccine procurement and its failure to ensure vaccines for people. "Amid such a big global pandemic and catastrophe,

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Vaccine not the only solution: Quader

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader has reminded everyone that vaccine is not the only solution to the coronavirus problem.

"Vaccine won't work if you don't wear mask all the time," he said at a virtual views-exchange meeting with officials of Cumilla Road Zone, BRTC and BRTA on Monday morning.

He joined the meeting from his official residence in Dhaka. Quader urged everyone to stand by people from their respective positions instead of doing politics.

"Life comes first before livelihood," he said. "Everyone has to follow hygiene rules to save lives during the pandemic."

The only vision of politics should be to stop this spread of the virus to save people, Quader added, saying that the government is working with this goal.

He said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is supervising everything.

Two brothers sent to jail in case under DSA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two siblings were sent to jail after they were arrested by police in a case filed under Digital Security Act (DSA) at Satkania upazila of Chattogram yesterday.

The arrestees are Md Towhidul Islam (27) and Hafez Mohammed Shahdat Hossain (22) of Sonakania union under Satkania.

They were held after Satkania municipality unit Chhatra League leader Abul Kalam Azad lodged a written complaint with the police station, said Officer-in-Charge Anwar Hossain of Satkania Police Station.

"The siblings use four Facebook accounts and from the accounts, they used to post and share anti-government posts mentioning the prime minister, Jubo League and Chhatra League. Getting a complaint, police arrested them and seized their phones on Sunday night."

"Police found the truth of posting offensive remarks against the prime minister after searching their phones," he added.

They were produced before a court, which sent them to jail.



With Ramadan coming amid a scorching heat wave this year, the demand for ice is on the rise, especially for the working class. Some enterprising youths buy these blocks for Tk 300 each from the capital's Sadarghat, crush them up into smaller units, and sell them to juice vendors and iftar sellers. The photo was taken near Shahbagh yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Youth dies after tractor overturns in Rajshahi

Contractors were using it to illegally move soil from RU

RU CORRESPONDENT

A youth was killed yesterday after a tractor carrying soil overturned at Choudhupai area near Rajshahi University.

The tractor was being used by contractors to illegally move soil from RU campus. The deceased Md Meraj (28) was working with one of the contractors. He was on the tractor when it overturned at around 3:30am yesterday in Choudhupai Fire Service area.

The vehicle skidded and overturned, said Sub-inspector Imran Hossain of Motihar Police Station told The Daily Star. A case was filed against the driver Ibrahim (25).

Following a tender last year, Rajshahi University had hired two contractors to excavate a pond inside the campus. The four-year deal did not entitle them to move or sell the soil that was being dug up.

However, contractors did not honour the terms of the tender, and continued to move the soil away from RU.

Meanwhile, the contractors -- Masud Rana, brother of a local Awami League leader, and Dablu Sarker, proprietor of Ohona Traders and general secretary of Rajshahi city AL -- have been illegally selling large amount of soil from RU for at least a month, defying the university authorities' order.

University authorities did not take any steps against them, except sending a few 'notices' to stop excavation.

Last Saturday, RU authorities in presence of university Vice Chancellor Prof M Abdus Sobhan held a meeting with the contractors where the latter agreed to stop soil lifting.

Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Anand Kumar Saha, also chairperson of RU agriculture project advisor panel, told The Daily Star, "Those contractors were not supposed to take more soil, as they reached an agreement on Saturday."

"Following an emergency meeting of project advisors yesterday, we decided to stop excavation project, which is a primary step of closing the contract with the contractors," said Prodip Kumar Roy, acting officer of the project.