

Police claim

FROM PAGE 12

they switched off their phones.

The police official said they went into hiding willingly due to various family and personal problems.

Talking to The Daily Star, Siam, however, said, "I did not know that he was staying at our house for the last eight days."

"After Adnan went missing, we even had a human chain in Rangpur with school friends," he told our correspondent over the phone yesterday afternoon.

On top of that, none of the locals noticed the car that carried Adnan and his friends in the area.

Only Nishat Nahar, Siam's mother, said the car took the group to their house and returned. It then went back to that house on last Friday to take them.

"During that time, I also talked to my mother about Adnan being missing but she did not tell me anything," Siam said.

"I was angry with my mother when I went to my home last Friday and heard that they left my house," he added.

Siam and Adnan, who remained missing from June 11 to June 18, were childhood friends and studied together at Lions School and College in Rangpur.

From then on, Adnan used to visit Siam's house regularly.

The residents of houses that are just 15-20 meters away from the house where Adnan and his companions stayed did not notice them at the house in those eight days, they said.

AM Abdul Majid Uddin Khan, chairman of Boali Union Parishad, his wife Nazreen Chowdhury, and their son Asif Khan live right beside Siam's house.

Contacted, Majed, who is also the elder uncle of Siam, said, "As I am the running chairman of this union parishad, I remain busy with many activities. I do not get the time to go to Siam's house. We do not know that Adnan was hiding at Siam's house for the last seven days."

Siam's younger uncle Sohail Nawaz Khan lives with his family only 10 yards away from Siam's house.

Contacted, he said that he and his family did not know anything.

However, he also said, "I heard the news of Adnan's disappearance on television."

While talking to Siam's mother, a woman working next house, entered Siam's house but Siam's mother did not allow her to enter the house.

When this reporter later tried to talk to house help, she refused to talk and said, "I do not know whether Adnan and his companions were here."

Asked why Siam's mother did not tell anyone about Adnan, she said, "Antar [Adnan's nickname] had forbidden me from that."

"That day he came to our house with Abdul Muhith, Firoz Alam and Amir Uddin and asked me for shelter for a few days."

Adnan told Siam's mother that some people were following him for some days and he was threatened, she said.

Talking to the locals, villagers and shopkeepers around the village, this correspondent found no one that saw a car dropping Adnan at the village.

A new campaign

FROM PAGE 12

The Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi said today that there was no possibility of any summit meeting between India and Pakistan on the Bangladesh issue until the massacre of Bangladesh was completely stopped. Addressing a crowded press conference Indira Gandhi made it clear that India was fully prepared to meet any fresh aggression by Pakistan. "We are also prepared to foil all attempts of Pakistan to create communal troubles and disruption in our country," she added.

The prime minister said that it was very unfortunate that some people in Kashmir had started comparing Kashmir with Bangladesh and had even described the Kashmir Chief Minister as Yahya Khan of Kashmir. "Either it is deliberate mischief or it shows how misinformed the Kashmiris are," Gandhi added.

BELGIAN ENVOY VISITS

EVACUEE CAMPS

C Kerremans, Belgian ambassador in India compared the exodus of refugees from Bangladesh with that of the evacuation of his countrymen in 1940 when his country was overrun by the Germans. He told newsmen at Dum Dum Airport today that the only difference between the two was that "in our case it was a total war." The international bodies, the ambassador said, besides giving aid to India should also find ways and means by which these unfortunate people could go back to their homes.

REFUGEE NUMBER EXAGGERATED: TIKKA

The Military Governor of East Pakistan General Tikka claimed that India had seriously exaggerated the number of East Pakistan refugees crossing its borders. The total number of refugees from Bangladesh entering India had not exceeded one million, he added. Talking to newsmen Tikka Khan noted that railroads and bridges between Dhaka and Chittagong destroyed in the fighting were still damaged. Only one bridge, he said, had so far been repaired.

Shamsuddoza Sajen is a journalist and researcher. He can be contacted at sajen1986@gmail.com



Iran's outgoing President Hassan Rouhani meets with Iran's President-elect Ebrahim Raisi in Tehran, Iran, yesterday. Ultraconservative cleric Raisi was elected president with just under 62 percent of the vote, according to figures released Saturday by Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli.

DU students charged dorm, transport fees despite closure

FROM PAGE 12

development fee by 50 percent for the 2019-20 academic year.

According to the decision made at its Academic Council Meeting on June 1, DU will conduct the final exams of different departments and institutes, which were delayed by 15 months. Before sitting for the exams, students must fill up forms (regarding the previous year's fees). The submission of the forms will begin online tomorrow.

Seeking anonymity, a residential student of Bijooy Ekattor Hall said, "We are not allowed admission until we renew our hall cards. And if we want to renew the card, those who are non-residential must pay Tk 1,000 and those who are residential have to

pay Tk 1,700.

"Why should we pay this money as all of us are having to live outside the halls for the past year and half?"

He also said they didn't use the university's transport facilities. "Then why pay Tk 1,080 for this purpose?"

Students, former leaders of Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU), and other student organisation leaders strongly criticised the authorities' decision and urged them to take a student-friendly decision.

Many are making posts on social media, protesting the decision of charging transport and residential fees.

Slamming the decision, former

DUCSU vice president Nurul Haque Nur, told The Daily Star, "Amid the pandemic situation, DU authorities should have been on the students' side. But they didn't do that. Their decision is totally illogical and unethical."

"We will talk with authorities in this regard immediately," said Saddam Hussain, general secretary of DU Chhatra League.

Speaking to the Daily Star, Foez Ullah, president of Bangladesh Chhatra Union, said, "From the beginning, we have been urging authorities of all educational institutions to waive the tuition fee due to the Covid-19 situation. But the DU authorities are taking extra fees, including transport, residential,

library and other fees. The decision to do so is in conflict with the values of the university."

According to the university transport office sources, the university was in an agreement with BRTC, where it would charge according to the trips made. If there is no trip, there is no money charged. With the current pandemic situation, there has been no trips.

DU Vice Chancellor Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman said, "Establishment services fees will not be reduced, as these services are continuing on a limited scale for the university's employees. However, students are not using these facilities as the university has been closed due to the pandemic situation."

S Asia failed to play due role

FROM PAGE 12

Contexts and Recovery - South Asian Perspective" organised by the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM).

Not only that, the government's weak capacity to enforce lockdowns, incapacity to contain virus transmission, collecting and administering vaccine rollout drive has worsened the situation in the region, they said.

Prof Rehman Sobhan said he does not see that the governments of the regions have come up with innovative solutions to the crisis.

He said people in bordering districts use to cross borders quite frequently even for less important reasons. And here, there was a responsibility of governments to control movement so that transmission could be stopped, the spread could be controlled.

"Collective responsibility was there but there was a collective failure," he said.

In the case of Bangladesh, he said there was a lack of enforcement of lockdown.

Days after the beginning of the lockdown, traffic jams were seen in Dhaka. As a result, the lockdown is seemed to have a questionable impact, he said.

He said Bangladesh has the lowest level of testing records, and as a result it is difficult to know the actual infection rate.

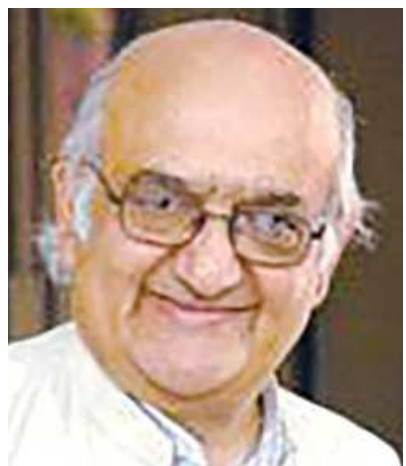
"We have no idea of what is the level of infection is. We are operating in a no man's land in terms of infection rate," he said.

In case of death, he said, the actual number of casualties might be higher

than the reported cases and added that there might be an underestimation of deaths.

Prof Sobhan also pointed out the lack of efficacy of lockdown measures taken by the governments as those were enforced without ensuring adequate support needed for poor and low-income people.

As a result, people had to come out



Prof Rehman Sobhan

for their livelihoods despite the risk of infection and spread. There has also been a weakness in the enforcement of lockdown by the government.

In the case of Bangladesh, the authorities could neither enforce lockdown properly nor could stop people coming from lockdown areas in bordering districts, he said.

So here it is also a case of no man's land, he said.

In terms of the recovery process,

the hope for high profile vaccination programme began very well with the collaboration of AstraZeneca and the first phase of the vaccine came very rapidly. But then the whole thing broke down. In the second wave, there was a big contract default on the part of Serum Institute who did not deliver two-third of its obligation to deliver, Sobhan said.



Prof Deepak Nayyar

So a significant portion of the people who got the first phase of the vaccine could not get the opportunity of the second dose, he said.

The vaccination programme is a classic example of the failure of the Indian government, said Prof Deepak. He said lockdown imposed in India just hours before its implementation had created a humanitarian crisis there.

Deepak said the crisis has caused

increased poverty and inequality.

"Services and informal sectors are standard victims," said Rehman.

He said stimulus funds channeled through banks and most of the funds went to known regular and known clients while many who needed support might be missed out on. He termed the situation as a business governance failure.

Sobhan said, "One of the big problems in South Asia is the low allocation for social protection. This is also worst governed sector."

There is also intervention failure, he added.

Prof Sobhan called for increased collaboration among civil society bodies in research and experience sharing.

"I will not bet a great deal of money on governments of South Asia," he said.

Rehman also talked about economic growth.

He said the pandemic and subsequent effect caused slowed growth in economic growth. India fell into recession. Bangladesh also suffered but it was not that much affected like India.

"Certainly, Bangladesh is in better shape than India," he said but raised doubts about the growth statistics.

"We are never really sure about the validity of statistics.... We are left in the grey area," he said.

Rehman called for increased collaboration among civil society bodies in research and experience sharing.

"I will not bet a great deal of money on governments of South Asia," he said.

Space reproduction

FROM PAGE 12

Scientists said they produced 168 offspring using mouse sperm cells that were stored aboard the International Space Station (ISS) for five years and 10 months and then rehydrated back on Earth, injected into unfertilized egg cells and transferred into female mice at a Japanese laboratory.

The sperm cells were exposed to radiation 170 times greater than sperm kept in ground storage for comparative purposes at the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency's (JAXA) Tsukuba Space Center. The higher radiation levels present in space are attenuated by Earth's atmosphere.

Crores siphoned

FROM PAGE 1

were seized from him.

Parvez, a graduate of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, maintained the four agent accounts with online gambling sites for the last seven months, earning up to Tk 1.5 lakh a day, said Tohidul Islam, additional deputy commissioner of CICC.

In four agent accounts, Parvez used to make transactions of up to Tk 50 lakh a day. On June 14, right before he got busted, Parvez deposited about Tk 82 lakh to different bank accounts in the country, according to Tohidul.

Parvez made a confessional statement before a Dhaka court yesterday after being on remand for three days.

"We have the details of over a dozen people with agent accounts similar to Parvez's. They are on our watch. Through these 2,300 gambling agent accounts, at least Tk 50 crore could be siphoned from the country in a single day," Tohidul said.

Officers have identified two individuals from Russia and Cyprus as the ringleaders.

"We would seek support from the Interpol to track them down," he added.

Gamblers in the country mostly spend the money on online casinos, betting on international sports like football or cricket, and games played on computers and other devices.

1xbet.com, melbet.com and linebet.com are popular gambling sites in Bangladesh. The sites are maintained from Russia.

The money won by the gamblers also reach their hands through illegal channels, officers said.

Besides, most of the money spent by the gamblers eventually end up at the bank accounts belonging on papers to apparel companies.

Such companies launder the money out of the country and hoodwink the law enforcers by lying on the documents related to the import of raw materials, according to the investigators.

Parvez told investigators that he first had communications with someone named Michel Victor, to whom he had requested for an agent account on the online gambling site 1xbet.com.

Victor then asked Parvez for his personal details. Once he provided the information, someone named Tom contacted him and asked him to deposit \$5,000 to the bank accounts of a Bangladeshi fashion house and an IT firm, investigators said.

After Parvez deposited the money, he had his agent account opened on the site, Tohidul said.

The money was later sent back to the agent in the form of cryptocurrency, which is illegal in Bangladesh.

"We have several local fashion houses and IT firms on our list. We are investigating their link with the gambling nexus."

Parvez told investigators that agents like him mainly receive money from local gamblers via the mobile financial services platform.

People like Parvez maintain several agent accounts with the MFS. Once a gambler deposits money through MFS, the agent makes sure that the money is laundered out of the country, it reaches the hand of the site operators.

The currency used by the sites are cryptocurrencies, the investigators said.

"We identified a couple of bKash agent accounts in the capital that are recipients of the money sent by the online gamblers. We learnt that the bKash accounts were opened using fake details and trade licenses," said a high official of the CICC unit, requesting anonymity.

Local agents like Parvez also use recognised online payment systems.

After receiving the money, the local gambling agents refill the gambler's account through online payment systems like Perfect Money, Skrill, PayPal and Net Hiller.

Once the account is refilled, the gambler can spend on the sites.

Perfect Money is popular now, said an official, adding that the gambling agents are now charging Tk 90 against one unit of Perfect Money.

Contacted, Abu Hena Md Razi Hasan, chief of Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU), said: "We are also receiving information about the use of online payment systems for gambling. We are sharing the information with the law enforcers."

Asked how people could open bKash agent accounts using false information, Shamsuddin Haider Dalim, head of corporate communication at bKash, said: "We always investigate if we receive any complaint regarding the use of agent accounts for criminal activities, and we take actions like suspending the account. We have two dedicated teams closely working with law enforcers and BFIU."

Besides, the agent accounts go through routine scrutiny, he added.