Mired in muck

Amid widespread allegations of irregularities and corruption in constable recruitment, the PHQ has decided to evaluate written exam answer sheets in upcoming

after the home ministry's approval. Before this, SPs were tasked with evaluating the answer sheets and taking interviews, before finally recruiting constables in their districts.

recruitments. Last month, a new

recruitment policy came into force

"Police constables will be recruited in line with the new policy.... If allegations of corruption are proven against any police member, he will not be spared," Inspector General of Police Benazir Ahmed told a police event at the PHQ on September 14. THE FORGERY IN NARAYANGANJ

On May 24, 2019, the PHQ issued a circular for recruitment of constables across the country. In Narayanganj, among the hundreds who sought the now-

lucrative post were the 18 "lucky" young men who eventually landed the job. They are Md Humayun Kabir, Md

Akram Hossain, Md Russel Sheikh, Md Sumon Ahmed, Kabir Mia, Md Sajib Prang, Md Apirul Islam, Md Raihan Ali, Md Firoz Ali, Md Ripon Hossain, Md Sabuj Hossain, Md Russel, Md Sujon Ahmed, Md Tofael Khan, Md Sohel Rana, Md Sadrul and

The Daily Star could not independently verify their documents, but the PHQ inquiry found forgery so blatant that it is hard to miss.

Five candidates submitted land sale deeds bearing exactly the same registration number (7508). They are Ripon, Sajib, Sabuj, Md Russel and

Three others -- Humayun, Russel Sheikh and Sujon -- provided land sale deeds also bearing an identical number, 7491/19. Similarly, Akram, Ripon and Firoz's papers bore the number 7492/19 while that of Apirul and Raihan 7995.

The land sale deeds of 11 of the 18 constables are under the same mouza and same daag and khatian, having the same CS, SA and RS numbers. Their papers show each registered their land on June 16, 2019, just 23 days after the circular.

Usually, national identity cards, citizenship certificates and educational certificates are enough to prove permanent residency. The enquiring officers ask for land sale deeds when they have reasons to believe that the papers are fake.

However, although many of the deeds bore the same registration number with the same date, the district police verification overlooked it to recruit the 18 constables, said the enquiry report recently seen by The

The PHQ enquiry held six subinspectors (SIs), who conducted the verifications, and four inspectors including officers-in-charge (OCs) "utter negligence" in duty.

"The committee submitted the report on the basis of its findings," said Md Talebur Rahman, assistant inspector general at the PHQ.

Asked why they did not recommend any action against SP Harun, Talebur, who led the inquiry, said they only acted within the scope of the inquiry.

A number of senior and midranking police officials said the SP, being the ultimate approver and hiring authority, could not avoid his responsibility.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, they said they suspected "a good amount of bribe" behind the

recruitment. 'ALARM RAISED, BUT SILENCED'

Two of the sub-inspectors now facing departmental enquiry said they had clearly raised the flag about some background information about 10 of the 18 candidates, despite pressure from the high-ups to produce positive reports.

"Even then, they were recruited," one of them told The Daily Star recently.

Besides, former Rupganj OC

Mahmudul Hasan, who forwarded verification reports of 15 of the 18 constables, said he detected the potential forgery in the land sale deeds and alerted his superiors, only to be shut down.

"I informed the SP sir about the anomalies and sought his suggestions. He asked me to forward the reports on human grounds," Mahmudul, now posted at DMP, said.

The two sub-inspectors -- Farid Uddin and Shamim Al Mamun -did the background checks of 10 constables, each dealing with five verifications.

Farid said he mentioned all the discrepancies in his reports and that he never thought the candidates would get the job.

Shamim said he found all the five land sale deeds to be authentic, but raised the flag about their permanent addresses, which he mentioned in his reports. He too wondered how the five still got hired.

Both said there was pressure from their high-ups to give positive reports. Then Fatullah OC Aslam Hossain

who forwarded one verification report said he did it with an honest intention. The IO even submitted the picture

of a house on the land and citizenship certificate issued by the local chairman, said Aslam, now OC of Sarail Police Station in Brahmanbaria. Nazrul Islam, former OC of

Araihazar, said he simply forwarded the reports of three candidates after the verification done by a junior

'SP NOT THE SUBJECT HERE'

Harun protested his innocence, saying SPs were not responsible for background checks.

Asked about Rupganj OC Mahbub's informing him about the detection of possible forgery in the land deeds papers, Harun said, "It does not matter what someone claims verbally. The only thing that matters is what is written on paper."

He was apparently referring to an office order issued by all SPs to the respective OCs concerning the recruitment of constables.

"If any information regarding verification is found false, the investigation officers will be held responsible," the order issued after the circular read.

"I do not recall what the investigation officer wrote back then. The SP is not the subject here. You better ask the Police Headquarters as to what was written in the verification reports as we sent them to the Police Headquarters," said Harun, now a joint commissioner of cyber and special crime unit of detective branch (north) of DMP.

He joined this position only recently, after being promoted as an additional deputy inspector general Before that, he served as the deputy commissioner (Tejgaon division) of DMP amid controversies over some of his activities.

Barely a year after his appointment as Narayangani SP in December police stations, who endorsed the 2018, he was transferred to the PHQ verification reports, responsible for following allegations of abuse of

> He allegedly tried to extort Showkat Aziz Russell, chairman and managing director of Amber Group, by framing the businessman and his driver in drugs and arms cases in November

> Earlier in 2016, former government employee Delwar Hossain sued Harun, then Gazipur SP, and 17 others including three other cops over "forcibly taking control of 8.5 bighas of land worth TK 100 crore" in Bhogra area of Gazipur.

'NO ROOM FOR SUCH RECRUITMENT'

Former police chief Nur Mohammad said there was no scope for recruitment on "human grounds."

He acknowledged that SPs could not always verify the background checks done by junior officers. But, he added, the senior officer has

to shoulder the responsibility if there are proofs that he asked the IOs to

furnish positive reports. "On many occasions, senior officers took bribes but then blamed it on others [junior officers]," said Nur,

now an Awami League lawmaker.

Idled Thai taxis go green

art installation than a car park, and that's partly the point: to draw attention to the plight of taxi drivers and operators who have been badly hit by coronavirus lockdown measures.

The Ratchapruk and Bovorn Taxi cooperatives now have just 500 cars left plying Bangkok's streets, with 2,500 sitting idle at a number of city sites, according to 54-year-old executive Thapakorn Assawalertkul.

With the capital's streets deathly quiet until recently, there's been too much competition for too few fares, resulting in a fall in drivers' incomes. Many now can't afford the daily payments on the vehicles, even after the charge was halved to 300 baht (\$9.09), Thapakorn said. So they have walked away, leaving the cars in long,

Some drivers surrendered their cars and returned to their homes in rural areas when the pandemic first hit last year because they were so scared, he Thapakorn.

said. More gave up and returned their cars during the second wave.

"Some left their cars at places like gas stations and called us to pick the cars up," he recalled.

With new surges of the virus this year, the cooperatives were "completely knocked out," thousands of cars were given up by their drivers, he said.

The situation has left the taxi companies in financial peril, struggling to repay loans on the purchase of their fleets. Ratchapruk and Bovorn cooperatives owe around 2 billion baht (\$60.8 million), Thapakorn said. The government has so far not offered any direct financial support.

The taxi-top gardens don't offer an alternative revenue stream. The cooperatives staff, who were asked to take salary cuts, are now taking turns tending the newly-made gardens.

"The vegetable garden is both an act of protest and a way to feed my staff during this tough time," said



Farmers take part in a tractor protest march against the central government's agricultural reforms in Amritsar, India yesterday.

DHAKA SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 19, 2021, ASHWIN 4, 1428 BS

Mystery shrouds FROM PAGE 12

Residential area of Cox's Bazar town,

was recovered from the beach's

Kolatoli Sugandha point on Friday

The two others were residents of

Oishik's body was recovered

Avra's body was recovered from

beach's Nazirartek point yesterday

around 12:30pm, said police and

bodies, police prepared the inquest reports. The bodies were then sent

to hospital for autopsy, said Sheikh

of Cox's Bazar Sadar Model Police

Station, while speaking to The Daily

over to their family members after autopsy. The process of handing over

the other is still underway."

Rahman Chowdhury,

behind their deaths.

"Two of the bodies were handed

Police were investigating the reason

Oishik and Avra went to Cox's

Contacted, Shaheen Md Abdur

Bazar in a group of six. The four others

of their group have been detained for

interrogation, OC Sheikh Munir said.

medical officer (RMO) of Cox's Bazar

District Sadar Hospital, confirmed

that autopsies of the bodies have been

Kaseduzzaman Selim yesterday told

some journalists that a police official

from Cox's Bazar told him over phone

that Oishik and Avra may have been

killed by the four other travel mates

and police were investigating into the

Oishik's

officer-in-charge

Immediately after recovering the

district administration officials.

around 3:00pm from the same area.

around 1:00pm.

Munir-ul-Gias,

Star yesterday.

Kotwali area of Jashore.

Girls shut out of high schools

NEWS

need female teachers to resume teaching," the UN's children's agency Unicef said.

Primary schools have already reopened, with boys and girls mostly attending separate classes and some women teachers returning to work. The new regime has also permitted women to go to private universities, though with tough restrictions on their clothes and movement.

Meanwhile, two people were killed when three blasts struck the Afghan city of Jalalabad yesterday, at least one of which targeted a Taliban vehicle, in the country's first deadly attack since the United States withdrew. "In one attack a Taliban vehicle

patrolling in Jalalabad was targeted,"

a spokesperson for Foreign Affairs

Minister Marise Payne said in a

US State Department spokesperson

Ned Price said that France was a 'vital

ally' and that the United States would

be engaged in coming days to resolve

The French foreign ministry

statement made no mention of Britain,

but the diplomatic source said France

considered Britain had joined the deal

with our (British) ambassador to know

what to make of it or to draw any

"We don't need to hold consultations

Le Drian said the deal was

"The cancellation (of the project)

and the announcement of a new

partnership with the United States

meant to launch studies on a possible

future cooperation on nuclear-powered

submarines, constitute unacceptable

He added that the consequences

"directly affect the vision we have of

our alliances, of our partnerships and

of the importance of the Indo-Pacific

mistake, a very, very bad handling of

"I think this has been a huge

behavior between allies and partners,"

he said in a statement.

in an opportunistic manner.

conclusions," the source added.

the differences.

unacceptable.

It's a stab in the back

a Taliban official who asked not to be named told AFP.

"Women and children were among the injured," he added. An official from the health department of Nangarhar Province told AFP that three people died and 18 were wounded, while several local media reported the attacks left at least two dead.

HORRIBLE MISTAKE

A top United States general admitted it had made a "mistake" when it launched a drone strike against suspected Islamic State (IS) militants in Kabul last month, instead killing 10 civilians, including children.

The strike during the final days of the US pullout was meant to target a suspected IS operation that US intelligence believed with "reasonable" but not peacekeeping.

contract, it was a partnership that was

supposed to be based on trust, mutual

understanding and sincerity," French

Ambassador Jean-Pierre Thebault told

The row marks the lowest point in

relations between Australia and France

since 1995, when Canberra protested

France's decision to resume nuclear

testing in the South Pacific and recalled

Australia's plan to build nuclear-

powered submarines under the new

pact could catalyze a nuclear arms

race in the Indo-Pacific region, reports

act more aggressively in the region,

Malaysia's Prime Minister Office said

Morrison on Friday rejected French

criticism that it had not been warned

about the new deal, and said he had

raised the possibility in talks with the

French president that Australia might

Macron in June that Australia had

Morrison insisted he had told

"I made it very clear, we had a

Australian Prime Minister Scott

especially in the South China Sea,"

in a statement yesterday.

scrap the Naval Group deal.

revised its thinking.

"It will provoke other powers to also

Malaysia expressed concerns that

its ambassador for consultations.

journalists in Canberra.

LOW POINT

the partnership - because it wasn't a lengthy dinner there in Paris, about

interest.

certainty" was planning to attack Kabul airport, said US Central Command commander General Kenneth McKenzie.

"The strike was a tragic mistake," McKenzie told reporters after an investigation.

McKenzie said the government was looking into how payments for damages could be made to the families of those killed. "I offer my deepest condolences to surviving family members of those who were killed," US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in a statement.

The UN Security Council voted Friday to extend the UN political mission in Afghanistan for six months, with a focus on development issues

our very significant concerns about

the capabilities of conventional

submarines to deal with the new

strategic environment we're faced

a matter that Australia would need to

make a decision on in our national

as the United States and its allies seek

additional support in Asia and the

Pacific given concern about the rising

presidency of the European Union,

which on Thursday released its strategy

for the Indo-Pacific, pledging to seek a

trade deal with Taiwan and to deploy

tried on Thursday to calm the French

outcry, calling France a vital partner in

Washington's Center for Strategic and

International Studies, called France's

heard from Secretary Blinken are not

enough for Paris - especially after

French authorities learned that this

agreement was months in the making,"

the conclusion that the Constitution

move "historic."

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken

Pierre Morcos, a visiting fellow at

'Reassuring words such as those

more ships to keep sea routes open.

France is about to take over the

influence of a more assertive China.

"I made it very clear that this was

The strain in multilateral ties come

with," he told 5aa Radio.

Pran Gopal set

FROM PAGE 12 yesterday.

completed.

Meanwhile,

Prof Pran will be formally

pronounced the winner of the by-polls after the deadline for withdrawal of candidature at 5:00pm today. On Thursday, Jatiya Party nominee

Lutfar Reza withdrew his nomination The seat fell vacant on July 30 after

Ali Ashraf, then MP of the constituency, died at a hospital in Dhaka. The by-poll was scheduled to be

held on October 7. Six candidates collected nomination oapers. Three were declared eligible on

September 14. Contacted, Prof Pran said, "I was prepared and expected to participate in

competitive election." NAP nominee Monirul Islam said, I have withdrawn my candidature due to a family issue. There is nothing else behind the withdrawal."

Country seems

his published articles for a Bangla daily, thought of amending some of them fearing a backlash.

"When we were compiling the write-ups published five years ago, we thought of changing some sentences given the situation we are in right now.

Restricting freedom of expression in the name of development is not a new phenomenon, he said

"This has been done in at least 100 countries. Of them, two countries came out victorious: China and Singapore. The remaining 98 countries ended up being poor and democratically fragile, he added.

By exploiting citizens' anxiety and insecurities in a rapidly changing and violence-prone world, the governments frequently act in the name of public good to take away people's rights, said Ahrar Ahmad, professor of political science at Black Hills State University in the US.

The governments are using technology to invade people's privacy, said Ahmed, also the director-general of Gyantapas Abdur Razzak Foundation.

Ironically, democracy was also undermined through the use of supposedly democratic means and instruments to consolidate the established regimes. This may be achieved by allowing

election but maintaining effective control over the process and its outcome, he said. Shahnaz Huda, a professor at the

Iniversity of Dhaka's law department, moderated the webinar.

Shahidul Alam, a prominent photographer and civil rights activist, and Shirin Parvin Haque, a trustee of Gono Bishwabidyalay, also spoke among others.

Thant for political solution Mukti Bahini made a raid in Baraganj Pakistan. These could soon add to area killing four enemy troops.

the suffering of the population unless conditions could be improved to the point where a large-scale relief programme could be effective, he said. ON THE WAR FRONT At Baliadanga, Satkhira, 62 freedom

fighters fought valiantly against a large Pakistani army of 1200 men. Seventeen freedom fighters embraced martyrdom during this operation.

In the Mymensingh-Sylhet sector, Mukti Bahini exchanged fires with Pak troops in Manipur and Lakhipur areas. Three Pak soldiers were killed. On the same day, Mukti Bahini successfully repulsed a Pak attack in Berigaon and Badiptek in Sylhet. Five Pak troops were killed in this action. Another group of

In the Rangpur-Dinajpur-Rajshahi sector, Mukti Bahini exchanged fires with Pak troops in Chakramari area in Rajshahi district killing five Pak soldiers. On the same day, in another clash with the enemy troops in Baolia area, Mukti Bahini killed six enemy soldiers. In Khandakhan area, Mukti Bahini encountered with enemy troops, and three enemy soldiers were injured in this action. YÁHYA'S NEW TIME-TABLE FOR

POWER TRANSFER Yahya Khan announced a new time-

table for transferring power to elected civilians. He said, "after careful thought and detailed consultations with political leaders I have come to

which will be prepared by a committee of my officials should be presented to the National Assembly. Once the Assembly meets in its full strength that is to say when by-elections have been held the assembly shall discuss the Constitution." That meant by-elections would be held for vacant seats in the National Assembly and the Provincial Assembly from East Pakistan.

According to the new time-table, polls would be taken for elections to the two Assemblies simultaneously commencing from December 12, 1971 and would be conducted by December

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

the AL headquarters to hold the event

was removed soon after Quader gave

minister asked AL leaders not to join

any programme of these types of

Speaking to reporters after the

meeting, the AL general secretary said

this time the Election Commission

would be formed in an acceptable way.

Terming the Projonmo League an

the instruction.

organisations.

quoting Quader.

BNP, Quader said, "BNP has started hatching new conspiracies before the formation of the new Election Commission. The party is making evil "extortion party", the road transport attempts to make the commission controversial as the country is heading towards the next parliamentary elections.

'NO MORE CARETAKER GOVT'

Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzak yesterday said there would be no more caretaker or polls-time neutral government in Bangladesh to oversee national elections, reports UNB.

and neutral election will be held in the country through the Election Commission under a government elected by the people," he said.

"As per the constitution, a fair

Razzak, also an Awami League presidium member, said BNP has to get elected by the people by joining the national election if it wants to

No post for rebels in party

On September 9, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, also the AL president, pardoned 20 expelled dissidents after receiving letters apologizing.

The AL in July 2009 included a provision in its charter for expelling rebel candidates from the party.

At its national council in 2016, the AL adopted the same measure for rebels in local body polls stating that they would be expelled without being served any show cause notice. But the measures did not prove to be much effective to deter the rebels.

In the last national election in 2018, the party saw rebel candidates in almost all constituencies.

However, the latest warning from the AL secretary general apparently indicated that the party has adopted a slightly liberal attitude towards the

At yesterday's meeting, the AL general secretary dismissed any

possibility of holding an early national council of the party and national polls. The AL held its last triannual

national council in 2019. The next council is due next year while the next national election is scheduled to be held in 2023. Yesterday, Quader instructed party

leaders not to join any programmes of any "parasite organisation" under the banner of Awami League. After AL's assumption of power

in 2009, several hundred "parasite" organisations have emerged like mushrooms with Bangabandhu Sheikh names of Mujibur Rahman, his family members and the Liberation War tagged to their names. The AL general secretary directed

Bangladesh a programme by Bar Muktijoddha Projonmo marking its founding anniversary. A podium which was set up near

party leaders to stop organising

a search committee, formed by the president. There was representation from BNP also."

Coming down heavily on the return to power.

Election

"Some organisations are engaged in Speaking at a programme in Tangail, extortion. They are extortion parties. They just use the name of the party for their personal gain. Their activities are totally against the policy and ideology of our party," a meeting source said

"The outgoing Election Commission was constituted through