

BANGLADESH  
UPDATE



244

New cases in 24hrs



15,73,458

Total cases



27,939

Deaths



15,37,518

Recoveries

GLOBAL  
UPDATE



5,143,154

Deaths



255,990,277

Total cases

# Cops arrest drug dealer for 28th time

She has 51 cases filed against her

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Police arrested a female drugs trader, who has 51 cases filed against her, in Buddhimanpara of Chuadanga town Wednesday evening.

The arrestee is Shipra Begum, 60, of Chuadanga's Buzrukgarh village.

Yesterday, a Chuadanga court sent the arrestee to jail after police produced her before it in a case filed in September.

According to police, Shipra's late husband Babul Uddin was also involved in narcotics trade. An accused in 14 drugs cases, he died in 2015.

Their son Ali Hossain is now serving a 32-year jail sentence in Chuadanga jail in a drugs case.

Mohammad Mohsin, officer-in-charge of Chuadanga Sadar Police

Station, said Shipra spent almost her entire life in trading narcotics. Her husband used to smuggle drugs across the border.

The woman married Babul in 1982. She took up drugs trading in 1991 and started selling narcotics brought by her husband from across the border. She was accused in the first case that year.

Shipra has so far been arrested 28 times. She had been behind bars for about 10 years in different cases, the OC told The Daily Star.

After coming out of jail in 2000, Shipra came to know that her son Ali Hossain also got involved in drugs trade. He was accused in five drugs-related cases, the OC said quoting the arrestee.

In 2014, Ali Hossain was sentenced to 32 years in prison in a drugs case.

# Judge leaves court after disagreement with colleague

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A judge of a two-member High Court bench yesterday left the court proceedings following a disagreement with his junior colleague over keeping an Anti-Corruption Commission official present during its functions for communicating its directives promptly.

Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder, presiding judge of the bench, expressed dissatisfaction and went away from the virtual proceedings of the bench around 11:00am after Justice SM Mozibur Rahman, the other member of the bench, opposed his views on the issue, court sources said.

The HC bench has been hearing and disposing of cases related to corruption allegations for a long time.

Yesterday, the two judges expressed opposing views after ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told the bench that his client needed time for assigning an official to the court as the commission has a shortage of manpower.

Justice Nazrul said ACC officials, who are not tasked with investigation and are not burdened with important tasks, can be kept present before the court for conveying its directives to the ACC transparently and expeditiously as its lawyers cannot appear before it regularly.

Disagreeing with Justice Nazrul, Justice Mozibur said the ACC has a lot of work and also questioned the necessity of keeping its official present in the courtroom.

Justice Nazrul said it was difficult for him to run the court proceedings if his colleague disagreed with him.

In reply, Justice Mozibur questioned if two judges were needed for this bench.

At one stage, Justice Nazrul switched off his laptop and left.

Around eight to 10 minutes later, Justice Mozibur also left the virtual courtroom.

The judges did not attend the court proceedings further yesterday.

Earlier on November 17, the HC bench verbally ordered the ACC to keep an official at this bench during its functions.

Being informed about it, Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain brought a change in the HC bench through assigning Justice SM Mozibur Rahman to another bench.

Another judge has been assigned to the bench led by Justice Nazrul Islam Talukder, court sources said.

Asked about the matter, ACC lawyer Khurshid and Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin refused to make any comment.

# Khaleda fighting for life: BNP

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can still be solved, but if she does not get proper treatment, she can "get into any situation" at any time, he said.

Khaleda has been suffering from chronic kidney conditions, decompensated liver diseases, unstable haemoglobin, uncontrolled blood sugar, arthritis and other age-related complications.

Family members of Khaleda applied to the government to allow her to go abroad for better treatment but the government rejected the plea.

Law Minister Anisul Haque told the parliament that the government would proceed according to the law regarding the request to send BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia abroad for treatment.

Asked about a statement from the law minister, Fakhrul said, "What the law minister said on this issue is not right. According to Section 401 of the CrPC, the government can suspend or pardon the conviction with or without condition.

"In the case of Khaleda Zia, the government spontaneously suspended the conviction, but did not pardon her."

Khaleda was sent to jail on February 8, 2018, in a corruption case. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, she was given a temporary release on certain conditions on March 25 last year. The term of her release has been extended four times so far.

Along with other health

complications, she contracted coronavirus in April this year. She recovered while under treatment at home, but as other health complications cropped up, she was admitted to Evercare Hospital on April 27.

On October 12, she was admitted to the hospital as her temperature had started fluctuating. At that time, a lump was found on her body and she was in the hospital for around three weeks.

The BNP chief was admitted to the hospital again and moved to the CCU, nearly a week after she was discharged from the same healthcare facility.

Considering the situation, the BNP will sit for a mass hunger strike demanding the release of the party chief Khaleda Zia and permission for taking her abroad.

Fakhrul said the party earlier announced to form a human chain in front of the National Press Club protesting the price hike of oil, gas and public transportation, but that was later suspended.

Instead of the human chain, it would now sit in for a hunger strike from Saturday.

He said the mass hunger strike programme will be observed from 9:00am to 4:00pm in Dhaka and all the district headquarters.

Regarding the venue, Fakhrul said, "If we do not get any venue, we will observe our programmes at our party headquarters."

# Fix root cause, ensure their return

FROM PAGE 1

seminar at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies yesterday.

He said Bangladesh abstained from a UN resolution on Myanmar in June this year as it did not include the violation and repatriation of the Rohingyas, but only the restoration of democracy.

"The UN General Assembly resolution has political implications. It creates pressure on Myanmar though it is not mandatory," Momen said.

The member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the European Union tabled the resolution, which was co-sponsored by 107 countries, the highest since 2017. Apart from the EU & OIC members, the resolution received cross-regional support, with co-sponsorship from the US, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, Japan, and Republic of Korea, among others.

Momen said China and Russia did not object to the resolution, which means they want solution to the crisis.

In a statement, Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Rabab Fatima, said the resolution called upon Myanmar to address the root causes of the Rohingya crisis, fulfil its obligations under the bilateral agreements with Bangladesh, and cooperate fully with the special

envoy of the secretary general on Myanmar and all the human rights mechanisms of the UN.

It maintained a strong focus on the ongoing justice and accountability processes and called for renewal and effective implementation of the MoU between Myanmar and UNHCR and UNDP in an effort to create conducive environment in the Rakhine State of Myanmar.

Some 750,000 Rohingyas fled brutal military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine State, and despite deals with Bangladesh, Myanmar failed to create conditions conducive for the voluntary, safe and sustainable return of the Rohingyas.

Rabab Fatima highlighted the growing desperation of the Rohingyas in Bangladesh with no progress in repatriation that led to several security concerns and cause of instability for the entire region.

"This resolution should now serve as an impetus for real actions in achieving a durable solution to the protracted Rohingya crisis through their safe and dignified return to their homeland in Myanmar," she added.

"The adoption of the resolution today [yesterday] with a strong mandate will bring hope to the Rohingyas that they have not been forgotten," said Ambassador Fatima.



Bikers stuck in traffic at Bangla Motor intersection occupy the pavement on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue yesterday. Often such blatant violations of traffic rules go unpunished.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

# Phantom export raises alarm

FROM PAGE 1

The server of the National Board of Revenue was accessed through the "highly secure" Automated System for Customs Data, which is an integrated customs management system for international trade and transport operations of import, export and transit procedures.

In previous incidents that cost the NBR several crores of Taka in dodged taxes, a gang logged in the server using the credentials of the two other CHC officers whose IDs were supposed to be deactivated. Customs is currently investigating why the accounts were not deactivated on time.

In the latest incident, the customs documents show MY Foods Ltd, Nabihha Agro Ltd and Olive Sourcing exported mango drinks, dry cake, puffed rice, spices and biscuit to the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Malaysia, Denmark and the Maldives.

The 24 non-existent shipment of goods are worth Tk 12.78 crore, according to Letter of Credits (LCs) opened with Trust Bank Ltd and Sonali Bank Ltd.

Government incentive for an export of this value is 20 percent, which in this case is estimated to be around Tk 2.55 crore.

Contacted, CHC Deputy Commissioner Mizanur Rahman said the motive behind the phantom export could be to get hold of the incentive. But there might be other motives.

According to the record in the NBR server, the shipments were "exported" between September and October this year. The clearing and Forwarding (C&F) agent was Banalata Agency.

By using the credentials of Alam and Mahbubar, the scammers marked the phantom shipments from "yellow" to "green", which means they can shipped and the NBR has no objection. 'Yellow' means the goods are being assessed. Mahbubar's ID was used to change the status of 23 of the shipments.

But customs officials recently found out that goods of 23 shipments weighing 420 tonnes never arrived at the Chattogram Port. The other shipment is still waiting at a private container depot waiting to be assessed.

Deputy Commissioner Mizanur said his office informed the two banks not to proceed with the documents related to the 24 shipments.

Abdul Momen, proprietor of the C&F agency Banalata, said, "I did not submit any document related to the export as they did not send us any goods."

Contacted, Mohammad Rasel, deputy manager of MY Foods, said his firm had asked the CHC for suspending the bill of entries as the buyer cancelled the order. He said he had no idea why the NBR server recorded the export as completed.

"The question of enjoying [the

government] incentive [for exporters] does not arise since the goods were not exported and no money arrived in the bank from abroad," he said.

Twenty-two out of the 24 shipments belong to his firm.

CHC officials said that they received MY Foods's letter on Wednesday. An official involved in the investigation said, "The exporter sought cancellation after the customs suspended the bank account activities of the organisation."

Since the matter is being investigated, there is no room for cancellation at this point.

Nabiha Agro Ltd and Olive Sourcing did not respond when The Daily Star tried to contact them.

**FRAUDULENCE MORE FREQUENT**

CHC recently identified that records of 11 imports were tampered with in the NBR server. Officials suspect that the actual number of such scams is much higher.

Last week, The Daily Star published a report on fraudsters using the credentials of two customs officials to have nine imported shipments released, costing the NBR several crores in dodged taxes. CHC formed a four-member probe committee after the report was published.

In 2019, customs intelligence uncovered a series of breaches in the server between 2016 and 2018 that allowed firms to evade large sums in taxes.

# Their wait never seems to end

FROM PAGE 1

Repression Prevention Act, are supposed to be finished within 180 days after the lower court concerned accepts the case.

On December 6 last year, the HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman directed Dinajpur's Women and Children's Repression Prevention Tribunal to quickly finish the proceedings and submit a compliance report to the court by March 31 this year.

Issuing a voluntary order, the HC asked local police to produce witnesses in the case to the tribunal on the dates scheduled for hearing. The bench also ordered the Dinajpur tribunal to indict the public prosecutor concerned if he does not properly play his role in finishing the trial.

The HC further ordered the officials concerned of the district to take necessary steps and ensure proper treatment of the child at government expense.

The bench issued the directives following an article published by rights organisation "Amrao Pari", on an online portal -- Women Chapter -- on November 22 last year, describing the miserable conditions of the child and her family.

The Dinajpur tribunal, however, is yet to deliver verdict on the case although it has finished hearing witness statements, Ataulah Nurul Kabir Nayan, panel lawyer of Amrao Pari, told The Daily Star on October 1.

"The Nari O Shishu Nirjatan Daman Tribunal of Dinajpur has not finished the trial proceedings and has not delivered its verdict yet, which is a clear violation of the HC directive and the provision of the law," he argued.

The Covid-19 pandemic may be another cause for the tribunal's failure in finishing the trial proceedings of the case, he added.

**JUSTICE DELAYED, INDEFINITELY**

The above-mentioned case is one of tens of thousands that are filed under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000, which could not be disposed of within the stipulated period.

According to a Supreme Court study report of 2019, at least 31,539 cases filed under the act remained

pending with the trial courts for more than five years.

After the courts had disposed of 54,618 cases from January 1 till December 31, 1,68,393 such cases were pending, the SC study report added.

No study reports were prepared for 2020 and 2021 as the regular functions of the courts were suspended for a long time due to the Covid-19 pandemic, said Supreme Court Spokesman Md Saifur Rahman on different occasions.

The delays in finishing the trial proceedings occur when witnesses are not produced before the courts by the police and prosecutor on scheduled dates. It also happens due to repeated adjournments of hearings and overload of cases at the courts while there is a shortage of judges, court sources said.

They added that Covid-19 has posed a severe challenge to the quick disposal of almost all types of cases, including those filed under the Women and Children Repression Prevention act.

Rights activists have pointed out on numerous occasions how the lengthy trial proceedings put financial and emotional distress on the victims and their family members, and how the delays act as deterrence for others from pursuing justice and provide impunity to perpetrators to get away with their crimes.

Ain O Salish Kendra, a leading rights organisation, highlighted that the incidents of violence against women had gone up in 2020 compared to previous years.

At least 1,627 women were raped or gangraped across the country, of whom 53 were killed after rape and 14 died by suicide. The number of rape victims was 1,413 in 2019 and 732 in 2018, ASK mentioned in its annual report.

**WHY DELAY ADDRESSING DELAY?**

Law Minister Anisul Huq earlier told this correspondent that the SC authorities have issued practice direction on the trial courts concerned for disposing of the cases filed under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act within 180 days.

He also said he has directed the prosecutors concerned to take necessary steps so that the trials of all

cases are finished quickly.

Meanwhile, the SC administration has noticed that tribunal judges, prosecutors and police officers of the cases filed under the act are not abiding by the provision of explaining reasons for not completing trials within the stipulated time.

SC Registrar General Md Ali Akbar on December 27 last year issued the notification asking them to submit reports in 30 days on the trial delays to the authorities concerned of the SC and government.

The notification said there is a provision under section 20 of the act that says that trial proceedings must be completed within 180 days of the tribunal accepting cases for trial.

If the trials cannot be completed in 180 days, the tribunal judges, prosecutors or police officers will have to submit separate reports explaining the delay to the SC in 30 days under section 31(ka) of the act, but the provision is not being followed, the SC administration said in the notification.

Akbar also said the same notification had been issued on November 27, 2016.

On May 12, 2017, the HC bench led by Justice M Enayetur Rahim directed the SC administration to form a cell to monitor whether trials of the cases filed under the act are completed within 180 days.

The monitoring cell, headed by the registrar general of the SC, would report to the SC and the government for taking appropriate action against judges, public prosecutors and investigation officers who fail to assign causes for not disposing of the cases in time, said the HC directive.

Four years down the line, there has been little to no progress on the activities of the monitoring cell.

On March 3 this year, Akbar placed a report to the HC saying that a three-member cell, headed by him, has been formed to monitor whether the trials of the cases filed under the act are being completed within 180 days.

Asked, Akbar told The Daily Star on October 6 that his office has received some explanations from judges concerned for their failure in completing trials in time. But he could not provide further details.

# Being ready

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Sobhan went on to criticise the rules-based trading system under the World Trade Organisation.

"The WTO itself is going through its own crisis and it has already been sent to life support. The rules-based trading system is eroding because trades are now driven by regional and bilateral FTAs and Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement."

The US is the main violator of the rules-based trading system, he said, adding that the US has been changing the tariff on Chinese goods every two or three weeks based on political tension between the two nations.

"This makes completely no sense in terms of the rules-based trading system."

Although the developed countries in the Hong Kong Ministerial agreed to duty-free market access for all LDCs, only the US did not follow it.

The American government allowed 97 percent of the goods to enter its territory free of duty and unfortunately, the Bangladeshi apparel items are not included in the 97 percent package, Sobhan added.

The preparations for graduation must start today or tomorrow, said Syed Manzur Elahi, chairman of the Apex Group.

Bangladesh also needs to graduate to overcome its image crisis to the international buyers, he said, adding that buyers demand a big discount from the local suppliers because of the country's poor image.

Moreover, the international buyers also do not want to accept the letters of credit from local banks and need foreign banks like Citi and HSBC to validate them. The re-confirmation process adds 3 to 4 percent to the costs, he said.

The graduation will improve the image and credit rating of banks and the country's branding abroad, he said.

In the post-Covid world, the buyers are negotiating with the sustainability of their business in mind whereas in the pre-pandemic time they talked more about productivity, he added.

"We are extremely revenue-oriented but not investment-oriented. People are invited here for investment but the technologies are not here," he said.

# They can hurl

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with the treatment," he added.

The law minister said the BNP leaders argued that Khaleda could be released for receiving treatment abroad on humanitarian grounds and cited some instances in this regard, saying that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was allowed to go abroad in 2007-2008 despite having lawsuits against her.

"But ... the prime minister was never convicted in any case," he added.

"The BNP leaders are claiming that ASM Abdur Rab was sent to Germany from prison for treatment. But I don't know the section which was followed to send him abroad as it was during the martial law period. The martial laws don't go with the CrPC provision," the minister said.

"So, today when there is rule of law, I can't do whatever I wish," he said.

Earlier, speaking on a point of order, Gulam Mohammad Siraj demanded that Hasina sends ailing Khaleda to abroad, granting her bail within the next day or two.

"Otherwise, if anything happened to her [Khaleda], the Awami League will have to shoulder the responsibility for ever," he said.

The BNP lawmaker said, "If the condition of madam [Khaleda] seriously worsened, it might not be possible for us to stay in parliament due to the party's decision."

The treasury bench lawmakers protested the remarks of Gulam Mohammad Siraj.

The government released Khaleda from prison on March 25, 2020, suspending her sentence. The suspension was later extended.

# Tigers' first

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while left-hander Najmul Hossain will also be making a comeback to the team and will likely feature at number three.

Uncapped batsman Yasir Ali may also make his debut in the top order, giving skipper Mahmudullah the job of holding the innings together in the middle order alongside Afif Hossain, Nurul Hasan, and Shamim Hossain.

Taskin Ahmed and Mostafizur Rahman will lead the pace-bowling department while left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed and off-spinner Mahedi Hasan are expected to fill considerable vacuum left by the absence of Shakib Al Hasan in the spin department.

It will be interesting to see whether the team management opts for leg-spinner Aminul Islam or part-timers like Mahmudullah and Afif to complete the quota of the fifth bowler.

On the other hand, Pakistan are high on confidence, with Babar and Rizwan both in fine form and armed with the knowledge that Fakhar Zaman and Shoaib Malik can be devastating on their given day.

Leg-spinner Shadab Khan also had a good outing in the mega-event, but it will be the threat of left-arm seamer Shaheen Afridi -- who has provided the breakthrough for Pakistan on a consistent basis -- that Bangladesh have to be wary of.

Eyes will also be on the Mirpur pitch, which came under the scanner after producing low totals in recent times. It will be interesting to see whether the team management meets the demand for sporting tracks or if the tactic of exploiting home conditions holds true in the upcoming series as well.