



Cloaking her toddler with warm clothes to resist the biting cold, a mother rushes towards the train at Kamalapur Rail Station yesterday morning. In line with the government's 11-point instruction to curb the rise of Covid cases, trains have started carrying passengers at half the capacity.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Scripted to a T Syndicate making crores from unsuspecting victims by selling fake 'rare coins'

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

They first make some magnetic coins by melting copper wire.

Then, a special chemical is prepared, using shampoo, sanitiser and hand wash. This mix's job is to draw colourful marks on the coins. The coins are also dressed up with some interesting symbols.

Finally, they spread the news that some rare coins have been found in some remote area of the country among collectors, who work themselves up to a frenzy over the prospect of securing the coins.

When anyone shows interest to buy the coins, the syndicate calls them over for a meeting at luxurious hotels in the capital, to set the stage for their exorbitant demands.

They plan the conversation so well that the interested buyer is convinced that the coins are real.

They also convince the buyer that the coins are worth more than crores according to international standards.

The syndicate then bring out their ace. They tell the interested buyer that there's another buyer -- who is one of the syndicate's members, posing as a foreign coin collector -- who is willing to jointly buy the coins.

The syndicate then asks for advanced payment, to be split by the two buyers.

But as soon as the victim pays their share, the syndicate members simply disappear.

Using this very script, the syndicate has made over Tk 3 crore over the last couple of years.

Police's Detective Branch (DB) claimed to have unearthed this information after arresting four of its members from Manikganj and Dhaka in a special drive over the last two days.

The arrestees are Saiful Islam alias Bishnu, Saidul Islam Jihad, Sayed Mustakin and Matin Molla.

Police recovered around Tk 11 lakh and 42 different types of copper coins from their possession, said Mashir Rahman, deputy commissioner of DB police.

He also said all of the arrestees are accused in several cases.

The syndicate has around eight to nine members, who worked in three groups.

The first group is led by Saidul, who worked on spreading news of the discovery of the coins.

Saiful, the leader of the second group, acted as the one who came across the coins while working at his farm or bamboo field.

The third group is led by Mustakin, who poses as an interested foreign buyer, investigators said.

DC Mashir further elaborated their process. After the target is brought in for the meeting, Mustakin -- under the pretense of being a foreign coin collector -- comes in and says he has brought a chemist to check the authenticity of the coins.

This is when another syndicate member walks in dressed up as a chemist.

He checks the coin using some machines and approves of the coins' authenticity.

After this, the bargaining reaches a point where Mustakin offers to buy the coins jointly with the target collector, saying they can resell for higher sums.

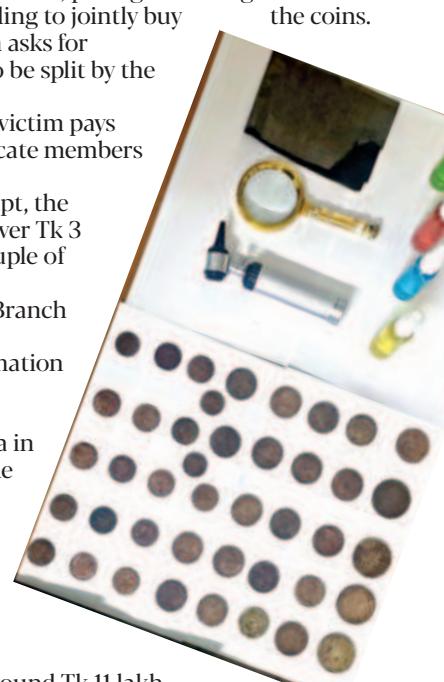
He then pretends to only have a portion of the money, asking the victim to pay the rest.

But once this money is paid, all contact is severed with the victim.

The Daily Star obtained some footage of the syndicate members' activities and minutes from the staged meetings.

DC Mashir Rahman said they are now trying to arrest the other members of the syndicate.

"People need to be cautious while making this type of deals as they can turn out to be fraudulent," he said.



It took 42 years, but they're finally out!

BSCIC reclaims 162 decimals of land from occupiers



PHOTO: COLLECTED

SUKANTA HALDER and ASIFUR RAHMAN

Way back in 1960, Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) bought 162

decimals of land from an Indian private company in Nolgola area of Old Dhaka, on the banks of Buriganga near Mitford Hospital.

The corporation ran offices and warehouses there till 1977, when it was rented out to 33 entrepreneurs on a monthly basis.

But over time, the leaseholders stopped paying rent and started staying there by force. BSCIC issued its first eviction notice for them on March 16, 1983, but to no avail.

Despite repeated attempts since then, BSCIC could never evict the illegal occupiers, who kept going to court, seeking permanent ban on the notice, saying that they wish to buy the land, now roughly worth Tk 300 crore.

After 42 years of back and forth, BSCIC finally succeeded in reclaiming the land on January 2.

"We got the High Court verdict in March last year, but the leaseholders delayed their exit by applying for a temporary ban on the decision,"

said Akter Hossain Didar, law officer at BSCIC. "Finally on November last year, the court denied their application."

He said BSCIC had formed a 16-member committee, led by the director of industries development Mohammad Jakir Hossain, to deal with the matter. The committee jointly held an eviction drive, along with the executive magistrate and AC (land) of Dhaka, from December 30 to January 2.

These correspondents went to the spot on Saturday and found that the land was being cleared of the remnants of the occupiers' establishments.

Md Rasheedur Rahman, deputy general manager (planning) of BSCIC, said they are planning to build a multipurpose complex there.

Meanwhile, an official of BSCIC, wishing anonymity, said some of their staffers may have been involved to prolong the saga.

CHRONOLOGY OF DISPUTE

After getting the first notice to vacate the area in 1983, the leaseholders -- Nolgola BSCIC Warehouse Owners' Association -- filed a case with the fifth

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Motorcycles parked along the footpath take up a significant portion of this busy street right in front of the capital's Rajarbagh Police Hospital. As a result, traffic congestion has become a never-ending fixture around the area. This photo was taken yesterday.



ALOK NIBASH

Ensuring the care they deserve
First holistic cancer-care home launched in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

If a cancer patient goes to Dhaka for treatment, they have to find a room in a hotel or relative's house, where they will not have access to any specialised medical care.

Besides visiting the doctor, attendants may have to go to hospital frequently to seek emergency medical treatment for their patient.

Considering the situation of such critical patients, Bangladesh Cancer Aid Trust (BANCAT) yesterday launched "Alok Nibash", the first of its-kind cancer care home in Bangladesh.

Located at Block-A of Bashundhara Residential Area, the facility can house 24 cancer patients and attendants seeking treatment in Dhaka.

At Alok Nibash, patients will be provided with mental health support, physical wellness training, proper nutrition, and transport to medical facilities.

At present, there are four specially trained nurses, two ward staffers and other support staff to care for the patients.

Anis A Khan, senior vice president of BANCAT, said, "Our aim is to ensure that a patient gets the complete care they deserve throughout the treatment period, as care is the most vital element to increase the probability of a patient healing soon."

"The 'Alok Nibash' name symbolises succour, courage, shelter and care for cancer warriors," he added.

The launching ceremony of Alok Nibash was attended by Momminul Islam, managing director and CEO of IPDC; Murtaza Karim, country manager of EXPO Group; Imran Rahman, vice-chancellor and dean of School of Business at University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh; and many other distinguished personalities.

Don't pay heed to rumours

Says education ministry over school closure

UNB, Dhaka

The education ministry has urged the people of the country not to pay heed to any rumour over the closure of educational institutions due to the spike in Covid-19 cases.

"Quoting Education Minister Dipu Moni, it is being spread on social media that educational institutions will be closed for an indefinite period, which is a rumour, and the minister didn't give any statement in this regard recently," the ministry said in a notice issued yesterday.

"The government is monitoring the overall Covid situation and it will sit with the National Technical Advisory Committee on Covid again and will decide later," it added.

However, now the government is giving priority to ensuring vaccination of all students, added the notice.

PFIZER JABS US gives 9.6m more doses

UNB, Dhaka

The United States yesterday donated 9.6 million doses of Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine to Bangladesh, a gift from the American people.

This donation of Pfizer vaccine brings the US government vaccine contribution to over 28 million doses.

"Nothing has made me prouder as US Ambassador to Bangladesh over the past three years than the work we are doing together to combat the Covid-19 pandemic," said US Ambassador Earl R Miller.

This delivery of Pfizer vaccine doses is part of the United States' commitment to lead the global Covid-19 response by donating a billion doses of Pfizer vaccine around the world through 2022.