

NSU graft case accused 'goes missing'

He is the MD of Ashaloy Housing and Developers Ltd

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amin Mohammad Hilaly, managing director of Ashaloy Housing and Developers Ltd and an accused in the NSU graft case, has reportedly gone missing from Uttara.



His brother Rafiqul Islam Hilaly filed a general diary with Uttara West Police Station in this regard, said Shah Mohammad Akhtaruzzaman Elias, officer-in-charge of the police station. According to Rafiqul, Amin left his house in Uttara Sector-11 for his office around 8:20pm on Friday. He went missing on the way. His phone was switched off after he reached Uttara Sector-12.

Rafiqul said he contacted Rab, DB, PBI and the ACC, but all of them said that they did not arrest him.

On May 5, the ACC filed a case against six people, including five members of North South University's board of trustees and Amin, over laundering about Tk 304 crore.

"My brother is accused in the NSU corruption case. It is alleged that my brother [Amin] had bribed the NSU trustees Tk 304 crore," Rafiqul said.

"I am also the director of Ashaloy Housing. We did not bribe anyone. We sold lands worth Tk 500 crore to the NSU trustees," he added.

Contacted, OC Elias said they were investigating the allegations.

Four other accused in the case – MA Kashem, Benajir Ahmed, Rehana Rahman and Mohammed Shajahan – were sent to jail.

Libya anger boils over living conditions

AFP, TRIPOLI

Libya's rival leaders were under growing street pressure yesterday after protesters stormed parliament as anger exploded over deteriorating living conditions and political deadlock.

Libyans, many impoverished after a decade of turmoil and sweltering in the soaring summer heat, have been enduring power cuts of up to 18 hours a day, fuel shortages, and crumbling services and infrastructure, even as their country sits atop Africa's largest proven oil reserves.

Libya has been mired in chaos and repeated rounds of conflict since a Nato-backed uprising toppled and killed dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.



This and several other large holes dug in the middle of the road in Nayabazar over two months ago by Dhaka South City Corporation have been the cause of frequent mishaps and a constant inconvenience for the locals. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

'Deliberate act of terror'

Zelensky slams Russia as missiles rain down across Ukraine; US to send advance surface-air missile systems

AGENCIES

Missiles rained down on Ukraine killing many civilians and wounding dozens in built up areas as the weekend began, prompting President Volodymyr Zelensky to accuse Russia of state "terror".

After missiles hit a southern resort town, blasts shook Ukraine's southern city of Mykolaiv yesterday.

"There are powerful explosions in the city! Stay in shelters!" Oleksandr Senkevych, mayor of the Mykolaiv region which borders the vital Black Sea port of Odesa, wrote on the Telegram messaging app as air raid sirens sounded.

The cause of the blasts was not immediately clear, although Russia later said it had hit army command posts in the area.

Kyiv says Moscow has intensified missile attacks on cities far from the main battlefields in the country's east and that it deliberately hit civilian sites. Ukrainian troops on the eastern frontlines meanwhile describe intense artillery barrages that have pummelled residential areas.

Russia says it has targeted military sites and denies aiming at civilians. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said "Russian Armed Forces do not

work with civilian targets".

On Friday, strikes on a southern resort town left 21 dead and dozens wounded after missiles slammed into flats and a recreation centre in Sergiyivka, 80 kilometres (50 miles) south of Black Sea port Odesa.

Rockets struck residential properties in Solviansk in the heart of the embattled Donbas region, killing a woman in her garden and wounding her husband, a neighbour told AFP yesterday, describing debris showered across the neighbourhood.

The witness said the strike on Friday was thought to use cluster munitions which spread over a large area before exploding, striking buildings and people who were outdoors.

The attacks came after Moscow abandoned positions on a strategic island in a major setback to the Kremlin's invasion.

Victims of the Sergiyivka attacks included a 12-year-old boy, Zelensky said in his daily address to the nation, adding that some 40 people have been injured and that the death toll could rise.

"I emphasise: this is an act of deliberate, purposeful Russian terror – and not some kind of mistake or an accidental missile strike," Zelensky said.

"Three missiles hit a regular nine-storey apartment building, in which nobody was hiding any weapons, any military equipment," he added. "Regular people, civilians, lived there."

The attacks follow global outrage earlier this week when a Russian strike destroyed a shopping centre in Kremenchuk, central Ukraine, killing at least 18 civilians.

President Vladimir Putin has denied his forces were responsible for that attack and Moscow made no immediate comment on the Odesa strikes.

On Friday, Zelensky hailed a new chapter in its relationship with the European Union, after Brussels recently granted Ukraine candidate status in Kyiv's push to join the 27-member bloc, even if membership is likely years away.

Norway, which is not an EU member, on Friday announced \$1 billion worth of aid for Kyiv including for reconstruction and weapons.

And the Pentagon said it was sending a new armament package worth \$820 million, including two air defence systems and more ammunition for the Himars precision rocket launchers the United States began supplying last month.

Jubo League leader hacked to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A Jubo League leader was hacked to death by criminals in Mymensingh city's Gondropa area on Friday night.

The victim was identified as Parvez Mia, 30, a resident of the same area, police said.

Parvez was the ex-president of Akua Union Ward 2 unit of Jubo League, said Shahinoor Rahman, convener of Mymensingh city Jubo League.

Quoting the victim's family members and locals, Kotwali Police Station OC Shah Kamal Akanda said Parvez had an altercation with local grocer Dilip Mia during an arbitration.

Dilip got involved in another altercation with Parvez around 8:30pm on Friday when the latter was on his way home. At one stage, Dilip and his associates hacked him indiscriminately with sharp weapons, leaving him badly injured.

The Jubo League leader was rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital where he died around 10:30pm, the OC said.

No mobiles for Narail students inside schools, colleges, madrasas

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

The district administration has asked all schools, colleges and madrasas in Narail to make sure that students do not bring mobile phones to the institutions.

It has also directed them to hold meetings with students and their parents after the coming Eid holidays to ensure this.

The development comes after the public humiliation of Swapan Kumar Biswas, acting principal of Mirzapur United Degree College, on June 18.

A mob forced the teacher to wear a garland of shoes around his neck over a Facebook post by Rahul Dev Roy, an HSC student of the college.

The district administration in a letter sent to the educational institutions on June 28 said teachers should work diligently to strictly implement its instruction.

Youth lands in jail over raping girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A Cox's Bazar court yesterday sent a man to jail on charges of raping a two-and-a-half-year-old girl in the district's Ukhiya upazila.

The accused, Dildar Miah, 25, is a resident of Haldipalong area in the same upazila.

Quoting the victim's family members, police said the girl was playing near her home at Asrayan project in Haldipalong on Thursday afternoon. At one stage, Dildar took her to a secluded place and raped her before fleeing.

Hearing the screams of the child, locals rushed her to the upazila health complex, said Imrul Kayes Chowdhury, chairman of the local union parishad.

The victim's father filed a rape case with Ukhiya Police Station on Friday accusing Dildar. Police later arrested the accused.

Botched execution leaves it unusable

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The NHD is supposed to be completed by December this year.

In his letter to the World Bank on March 2 seeking \$250 million budget support for fiscal 2022-23, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said the database would be used to disburse this year's social safety net allocation of Tk 113,576 crore.

If the faulty NHD is used, it will not be possible to correctly identify the poor and the ultra-poor and bring them under the social safety net programmes and lift them out of poverty, the IMED report said.

When the project was taken up in 2013, it was decided that the computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) and intelligent character recognition (ICR) methodologies would be deployed to capture information from the form of 37 questions.

But there were too many inconsistencies in the data collected from 3.5 crore families from 64 districts in three phases in 2017 and 2018, according to the report.

"Even though several consultants were appointed, there are inconsistencies in the database. That's why it seems that the consultants

did not perform their tasks properly."

In 2016, 545 data entry operators were recruited but they were not given any defined tasks or responsibilities.

The BBS also did not assign an experienced officer, as a result of which the project could not be implemented properly.

Although the terms of reference for editing the collected, data capturing and correction were well articulated, the contracted firm did not edit the data adequately.

And the issue with data editing was not raised in the meetings of the

project implementation committee (PIC) and project steering committee (PSC), according to the IMED report.

The project had many IT consultants and senior programmers of BBS working on it but they did not do any noticeable work.

Subsequently, an erroneous database has been created.

Since the project's implementation began in July 2013, there should have been at least 35 PIC meetings. In reality, there were only nine PIC meetings and 15 PSC meetings.

Because of the scanty

meetings, important decisions and project implementation were delayed.

If the errors detected in the database are not corrected, it would not be possible to meet the objectives of the project: effective targeting of the poor and the ultra-poor.

Many names were erased and there are numerous content errors, Shahnaz Arefin, secretary of the statistics and informatics division, told journalists after June 26's meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council.

The problems arose as

the database was shifted twice and each time the entries got replaced wrongly.

"We are rectifying it now. This should be done by September."

But the DDM, which would be receiving the cleaned-up database from the BBS, does not have its management information system (MIS), where the NHD would be housed, ready yet.

"We do not have a server to keep that database with us," Arefin said, adding that the BBS cannot be held responsible for the delay in DDM's failure to have an operational MIS yet.

Modern road, manual operation

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get the expected benefits," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

MANUAL OPERATION In September 2019, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at an Ecneec meeting instructed the authorities concerned to collect toll from long-haul vehicles on the national highways.

The PM in March 2020 opened the country's first expressway titled "Jatir Pita Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Highway". The 55km road was built at a cost of Tk 11,003 crore, making it the most expensive road (considering the expenditure in terms of length) in the country.

The finance ministry, following a proposal made by the Road Transport and Highways Division

in April 2021, approved a toll rate of Tk 10 per km for the time being as the authorities wanted to start toll collection from July that year.

But the authorities stepped back from their decision as structures needed for toll collection were not ready.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs in August last year approved a proposal to appoint Korea Expressway Corporation to collect toll on the expressway.

Although a KEC-led firm was selected through a direct procurement method, the RHD signed a five-year contract with it on June 29 this year.

As per the contract, the firm will collect tolls manually for the first six months. As it began

operation on Friday, tailbacks reached up to five km near Dhaleshwari Bridge toll plaza and Bhanga.

WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS? Currently, the toll plazas near the Dhaleshwari Bridge and in Bhanga have 12 booths each – six for either direction.

There will be toll plazas at the entries and exits in Abdullahpur, Sreenagar, Puliabazar and Maligram. There are booths at those points, but those are not ready for toll collection yet, an RHD official said.

Contacted, Najmol Haque, superintendent engineer (Narayanganj circle) of RHD, said there would be three systems for toll collection: Two booths will have an Electronic Toll Collection (ETC) system,

two others will have a touch-and-go system, and the rest two will be operated manually.

An ETC system identifies vehicles through radio frequency and the system automatically takes the toll money from the user's bank account. It does not require vehicles to stop for paying tolls.

In a touch and go system, motorists buy a card that has to be swiped on a machine at the toll plaza. The process doesn't take more than a few seconds.

The contractor will have to get the systems running in six months, Najmol said.

On Wednesday, when RHD signed the contract with the Korean joint venture, this correspondent asked RHD Chief Engineer AKM Manir Hossain Pathan why

the signing happened so late and why toll was being collected manually. But he did not give a direct answer.

"We did not sit idle. We have called for tenders following the procedure and we took measures to appoint a service provider," he said. "There could have been better preparation for a full-fledged system... but our efforts should not be questioned."

Khondaker Enayet Ullah, secretary general of Bangladesh Road Transport Owners Association, said unless there are more toll booths, traffic will see major bottlenecks during Eid rush.

He said there should be more publicity regarding the toll, so that road users get aware of it beforehand.

Covid air war being lost

Warn experts, urge proper ventilation of indoor spaces

AFP, Paris

The world is still not using one of its most effective weapons against Covid – properly ventilating public spaces – more than two years into the pandemic, experts warn.

At the moment there is a "fragile, armed peace" with Covid-19, said Antoine Flahault, director of the Institute of Global Health at the University of Geneva.

"In the hopes of stemming the tide of the pandemic and reducing mortality, we need to reduce the level of contamination, which the vaccine cannot do alone," he told AFP.

"We need a new phase – improving the quality of indoor air."

Covid-19 is primarily transmitted through the air. It is carried in large droplets or fine aerosols when an infected person breathes – and even more so when they talk, sing or shout.

In a closed off or poorly ventilated room, these aerosols can remain in the air for some time, moving around the space and greatly increasing the risk of infection.

While it is generally accepted that Covid can be transmitted within two metres (6.5 feet) via both droplets and aerosols, there is still no consensus on the importance of long-distance airborne transmission indoors.

A team of researchers from the UK Health Security Agency and the University of Bristol reviewed 18 studies in several countries on airborne transmission.

In research published in the BMJ this week, they found that people can infect each other when they are more than two metres apart.

We know one thing for sure: if you open a window, or well-ventilate a space, the virus-carrying aerosols dissipate like smoke.

Woman gang-raped

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(Pahartali) AKM Mohiuddin Selim said, "The victim arrived along with her baby... Due to heavy bleeding, her condition was very bad."

Wali Uddin Akbar, officer-in-charge of Akbarshah Police Station,

said, "She has no relatives in Chattogram. The police have been taking care of the victim and her baby, providing everything she needed at the hospital."

An official at Keraniganj (South) Police Station said the river police was investigating the case.