

## Schoolboy stabbed to death in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A school student was stabbed to death by unknown miscreants in the capital's Shyampur area yesterday afternoon.

Nayan Islam, 16, was a grade IX student of RK Chowdhury High School, said police.

Nayan was found lying in a pool of blood in Balurmath area of Dholaipar around 2:30pm. He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead around 3:15pm, said Sirajul Islam Hasib, who took him to the hospital.

The victim's father Kamrul Islam said his son did not go to school yesterday. "We do not know who stabbed him," he said.

Mofizul Islam, officer-in-charge of Shyampur Police Station, said they were looking into the matter. The body was sent to the hospital for autopsy.



Underneath the Mayor Hanif Flyover and right in front of the market near Fulbaria Bus Stand, the road that used to be functional for vehicle movement had turned into a makeshift market. Before, at least rickshaws could pass through this road, but now, a rope has been set up at the mouth so that no vehicles can pass. As a result, pedestrians have to bend, twist and turn to get across. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## RICE IMPORT Find alternative sources: PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has given directives to take measures to import rice from alternative destinations to cover the dent in the food stock.

The government has already begun selling rice at subsidised prices and plans to sell 7.65 lakh tonnes of rice to more than 1.5 crore people from low-income backgrounds in three months under the Open Market Sale and Food Friendly Programme.

To cover up the stock depletion, the government is importing five lakh tonnes of wheat from Russia and 3.3 lakh tonnes of rice from Vietnam and India. It has already signed an MoU with Myanmar to import another 2 lakh tonnes of rice.

However, the PM asked officials not to be dependent on it, but rather explore more markets to refill food stock, said Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam.

The directive came at the cabinet meeting chaired by Hasina at the Prime Minister's Office.

Later, the cabinet secretary briefed reporters at the secretariat.

Mentioning that the food grain situation has been discussed at the cabinet meeting at length, Khandker Anwarul said currently, there are more than 20 lakh tonnes of food grains in stock in the country.

He said agreements have already been made with different countries to import the amount of rice that will

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# The ordeal of putting drug traders behind bars

Convictions in narcotics cases on decline; absence of witnesses, faulty probe blamed

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

Although Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) shows rising drug cases and arrests in its annual round-up every year, more than half of the cases end up in acquittals.

In fact, the conviction rate in narcotics cases has been decreasing over the past eight years, with the rate coming down to 40 percent in 2021 from 64 percent in 2014, according to DNC's Annual Drug Report 2021.

For this, DNC officials and lawyers blamed faulty case filings, weak investigation and case statements, and absence of credible witnesses.

Take, for instance, the case of Arif Hossain and Korban Ali.

The youths were arrested 18 years ago with 80 bottles of Phensedyl near Rahmat Camp in the capital's Pallabi area. Following the arrest, DNC inspector Nazrul Islam filed a narcotics case against the two on May 30, 2004.

On July 20 that year, Abdul Mannan Gazi, a DNC inspector and the case's investigation officer (IO), pressed charges against the two accused. Six people, including the complainant and IO, were made prosecution witnesses in the case.

But the IO and another witness did not appear before the court for testimony.

After a long-drawn-out trial, Special Tribunal for Prevention of Public Safety Disturbances of Dhaka on April 10 this year acquitted Arif and Korban, as the charges brought against them could not be proven.

In the verdict, the judge said there was no witness to the offences, and prosecution failed to present the other witnesses before court, even after 102 dates were passed for the case's disposal.

YEAR	CASES	ACCUSED	TRIAL DISPOSED CASES		
			PUNISHMENT	ACQUITTED	TOTAL
2014	11,723	12,590	1,716 (64%)	973	2,689
2015	10,548	11,300	892 (47.6%)	981	1,873
2016	9,773	10,465	2,356 (42%)	2,992	5,348
2017	11,612	12,651	1,016 (40%)	1,528	2,544
2018	13,793	15,116	592 (42%)	843	1,435
2019	17,305	18,346	642 (39%)	1,012	1,654
2020	17,304	18,321	310 (43%)	412	722
2021	20,598	21,992	661 (40%)	1,003	1,664
2022 (April)	8,007	8,707	300 (49%)	311	611

Mohammad Anwer Shahadat Shawn, special public prosecutor at the tribunal, told The Daily Star, "Those who were made witnesses to the seizure told the court that they did not know about the matter. For this, the charges against the accused could not be proven."

"Absence of witnesses is a major reason behind the low conviction rate in narcotics cases," he added.

A total of 73,312 cases are now pending with the court for disposal, according to DNC's report. It shows that the conviction rate was 64 percent in 2014, when 11,723 narcotics cases were filed, in which 12,590 people were accused.

In 2021, the number of both cases and arrestees rose to 20,598 and 21,992, respectively, but only 40 percent of cases were disposed of that year.

Tawohidul Haque, assistant professor at Dhaka University's Institute of Social Welfare and Research, said, "Many of the criminals

got acquitted due to faulty and incomplete investigation, improper presentation of cases in court, and weak statements of prosecution witnesses."

The acquittals are only fueling drug-related crimes in the country, as many criminals go back to the drug trade once they get out of jail, he observed.

Abu Jafar Salehin, a prosecutor of DNC, said they are trying to improve the conviction rate by ensuring the presence of witnesses. "We are sending summonses to witnesses and contacting them over phone."

Asked why they fail to produce credible witnesses, Jafar said he is not aware of any such issues.

Md Azizul Islam, additional director general of DNC, said, "We only make those who were present during arrests and creating seizure lists as witnesses." But in many cases, the witnesses do not appear, as they are not obligated to do so, he said.

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## Huge drugs haul from Dhaka flat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) in a drive yesterday seized huge quantity of synthetic narcotics from a flat in the capital's Banani area.

The recovered drugs included around 40 packets of Kush (each containing 10 grammes), 29 blotters of LSD, 30 grammes of cocaine, 400 grammes of ecstasy and 20 bottles of foreign liquor, said DNC officials.

DNC claimed that the drugs were brought from different countries.

According to DNC, the Kush was smuggled from the US, Cocaine from Barcelona, and LSD and ecstasy from Amsterdam, said Md Mehedi Hasan, assistant director of DNC, who led the drive.

"Along with the listed drugs, we have recovered three types of new drugs from the apartment that we have never seen in the country before," he said.

Mehedi said the drugs are scheduled to be sent to a laboratory for forensic analysis today. "We may be able to identify the type of the drugs once the report comes," he added.

Officials are currently verifying the list of people who frequented the place. The process of lodging a case was underway till filing of this report around 9:00pm last night.

## Cop impersonator held in Dhaka He mugged at least 1,500 people, mostly female students, say police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shakil Ahmed Rubel often impersonates police personnel to approach people.

He carries a handcuff, a pistol and a walkie-talkie. He rides a motorbike with a police sticker on it.

Shakil, along with his gang members, has targeted around 1,500 people so far -- mostly female students -- and used this fake image to mug them.

More than 150 of the victims were sexually harassed in the process.

Harun-Or Rashid, additional commissioner of DMP's detective branch, revealed this yesterday after arresting Rubel (28) and three others from different areas in connection with mugging a Dhaka University Student at Turag on August 25.

The other three arrestees are Akash Sheikh (22), Delwar Hossain (55) Habibur Rahman (35).

On August 25, the victim was on her way home to Kalyanpur from the university when Rubel intercepted her rickshaw and identified himself as a police officer.

He made her get on the bike, saying he had to take her to the police station as she was suspected to be carrying contraband.

He then took her to Turag, snatched all her belongings and harassed her sexually. At this point, a local witnessed the incident and intercepted Rubel. He fled away with his motorcycle after being confronted by the man.

A case was later filed with Turag Police Station in this regard police arrested him following a drive.

In yesterday's briefing, Harun said Rubel is accused in at least six cases of robbery and mugging with different police stations.

"He has even raped his targets during the mugging," Harun told reporters at the DMP media centre.



## Reconsider decision to use EVM: Shujan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) yesterday called on the Election Commission to reconsider its decision to use EVMs in up to 150 parliamentary seats in the next general election.

In a letter to Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal, Shujan yesterday said through holding elections using the current EVMs, it is possible for the EC, its subordinate officers, technical teams and those on election duty to intentionally influence the election results.

"The biggest problem in this case is the lack of confidence in the Election Commission and the EVMs. Clearing the doubt is the responsibility of the Commission, not ours," said Shujan in the letter.

Shujan also added the letter in a statement sent to media houses.

It said recently Shujan at an event presented the weakness of EVM and in reply, an election commissioner has challenged them to prove that it is possible to manipulate EVMs from outside. Shujan said another commissioner urged them to place evidence before the EC in this regard.

"Although we do not have EVMs with us and we

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## Partial committee of Swechchasebak Dal formed

UNB, Dhaka

BNP announced a five-member partial committee of its voluntary wing Jatiyatabadi Swechchasebak Dal yesterday, as part of its move to overhaul the party and its associate bodies before the next general election.

SM Zilani and Rajib Ahsan were made the president and the general secretary respectively, BNP senior joint secretary general Ruhul Kabir Rizvi said in a release.

Zilani was the former president of Swechchasebak Dal's Dhaka south city unit while Rajib was the ex-president of BNP's student wing Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD).

The party also announced the partial committees of Swechchasebak Dal's Dhaka south and north city units.



A group of female students of Dhaka University held a human chain in front of the Raju Memorial yesterday, demanding better services in the dorms. They placed a six-point demand that included the need for clean water and provision for a pharmacy, among others.

PHOTO: STAR