

Ex-SP Babul's complaint will be probed Says home boss

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former SP Babul Akhtar's complaint of torture by the PBI chief and five other police officials would be investigated, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said yesterday.

On Thursday, Babul, who is now in jail in connection with the murder of his wife Mahmuda Khanam Mitu, complained to a Chattogram court that chief of Police Bureau of Investigation Banaj Kumar Majumdar and five police officials had him tortured in custody.

Terming Babul "very cunning", the home boss said, "We have full trust in the PBI investigation."

The minister said this while talking to reporters after a seminar in the capital.

In the complaint, Babul claimed that he was physically and mentally tortured in PBI custody so that he would confess to the killing of his wife "as per the direction of the PBI chief".

The court fixed September 19 for passing an order on whether the complaint would be recorded as a case.

The minister said PBI investigated the case that was even filed 30 years ago and found the culprit. "I think PBI will not do any wrong."

In response to a query about enforced disappearances, he said, "Many have talked about the disappearance of thousands, then I asked for a list. A list of 76 people came from a human rights organisation."

Later, it was found that 10 BNP activists were on the list, who are staying in different places, he said.

"Of those listed, we are looking for 35, who were involved in arson attacks, and one was found in jail," the minister added.

Regarding ordinance of Myanmar security forces landing in Bangladesh, Asaduzzaman said, "We protested it."

"Our BGB made a protest to BGP [Border Guard Police] of Myanmar. The ambassador has been given a message through our foreign ministry. We have protested from the state level."



Boats full of hog plums at Kuriyana Bazar of Pirojpur, from where traders will send these to different districts on trucks. These plums of Barishal region is famous across the country. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

COUNTER-OFFENSIVE

Ukraine gains big in northeast

Russia abandons key bastion after Kyiv severs supply line; thousands of Russian troops face potential encirclement

REUTERS, Kyiv/Hrakove

Moscow abandoned its main bastion in northeastern Ukraine yesterday, a sudden apparent collapse of one of the war's principal front lines after Ukrainian forces moved to encircle the area in a shock advance.

The state-run TASS news agency quoted Russia's defence ministry as saying it had ordered troops to leave the area around the city of Izium in Kharkiv province, saying they would be sent to reinforce operations elsewhere in neighbouring Donetsk.

The announcement came hours after

Ukrainian troops captured the city of Kupiansk further north, the sole railway hub supplying Russia's entire frontline across northeastern Ukraine. That left thousands of Russian troops abruptly cut off from supplies across an entire stretch of front that has seen some of the most intense battles of the war.

Ukrainian forces have recaptured dozens of towns and villages held by Russia for months, since bursting through the frontline earlier this week. Early yesterday, Ukrainian officials posted photos of their troops raising the country's blue and yellow flag in front of city hall in Kupiansk at dawn.

"To achieve the stated goals of the Special Military Operation for the liberation of Donbas, it was decided to regroup the Russian troops located in the districts of Balakliia and Izium for the purpose of increasing efforts in the Donetsk direction," TASS quoted Russia's defence ministry as saying.

Ukrainian officials stopped short of confirming that they had recaptured Izium, but President Volodymyr Zelensky's chief of staff posted a picture on social media of grapes. The word "Izium" means "raisin" in Ukrainian and Russian.

Lure of good days

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In many cases, women workers who go to Saudi Arabia are not properly informed about their employer and work conditions," Okup Chairperson Shakirul Islam said.

The women also lack the skills for the jobs and orientation to the food habits and language of the host country, he added.

There should be a system ensuring that the Saudi employers report to the Bangladesh mission before sending back the workers, he said.

Shariful Hasan, chief of Migration Programme at Brac, said abusive Saudi employers must be blacklisted.

The recruitment agencies often select vulnerable women migrant workers through intermediaries without properly evaluating whether the worker has the skills or whether she is ready to migrate, he added.

The Bangladesh government and its mission in Saudi Arabia should keep in touch with the workers, he said.

In 2019, the government directed that the women undergo a medical check up when they enrol for training, there should be a 30 day residential training, and the recruitment agent should provide the worker with a smartphone before the flight.

Shariful said the directives should be strictly implemented.

Shameem Ahmed Chowdhury Noman, secretary general of the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira), claimed that most of the women return home early because of homesickness.

The women who are sent back before the end of their contract do not get compensated on the logic that such workers do not have to pay the migration cost.

Contacted, Ahmed Munirus Saleheen, secretary of the expatriates' welfare ministry, said the government and the Bangladesh mission in Saudi Arabia provide legal support to the migrants.

He added that the ministry was working to make the upskill programme to two months' from one month.

Moreover, the government is negotiating with the Saudi authorities to set the monthly minimum wage at Saudi Riyal 1,500, he further said.

According to the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, Saudi Arabia employed 4.49 lakh Bangladeshi female migrants between 1991 and July this year.

Top criminals hold the reins from abroad

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the help of the foreign countries. But in many cases, the authorities in those countries do not bother much about helping, the official said, wishing anonymity.

The official said that criminals call their targeted people in Bangladesh using the phone numbers of a third country with the help of technology.

"For instance, a criminal staying in the UAE may call from a Nepalese number using VPN. So, it is difficult for us to trace them," he added.

Some officials said a lack of prompt coordination between police and ministries concerned are also to blame for the failure to bring back the criminals home even after their arrests.

Citing an example, two officials of DB and NCB, Dhaka, said they failed to bring Jisan from the UAE after he was arrested there in 2019 by Interpol.

The officials said the Police Headquarters sought permission and quick approval from the home and foreign ministries for sending a police team to the UAE to bring back Jisan, who used to manipulate tender bids and extort people and businesses in Dhaka.

But it took the police several days to obtain the clearance.

"Days before we had the clearance, Jisan managed to obtain bail from a UAE court. If we could reach there and present evidence of his crime, we

could have brought him back home," said a DB official, also an additional deputy commissioner of DMP.

An unverified copy of an Indian passport of Jisan shows that he changed his name to Ali Akbar Chowdhury, born at Silchar, Cachar in Assam on June 15 in 1972. DB officials said he also has a Dominican Republic passport and has a resident permit in Dubai.

WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?

Khandaker Tanvir Islam Joy reportedly fled to Malaysia soon after he was named on the list of most wanted criminals. But he landed in Kolkata sometime in 2003 and later secured Indian citizenship under the name of Md Tarekh Rana, said the officials.

He would travel freely to Malaysia and Singapore with an Indian passport. He allegedly called businesspeople to ask them for hefty sums of extortion money, said investigators.

His men stormed the office of a manpower recruitment agency in the capital's Hatirpool on May 14, 2006. They gunned down two employees and gravely wounded four others as the proprietor of the agency refused to provide Joy Tk 50 lakh.

He has a business in Canada where he was interrogated by Canadian Royal Police, but he was freed later as he was able to prove himself as Indian national Md Tarekh Rana, not Joy

Radicals out to swell ranks

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a list of suspected missing youths and gathering information regarding missing diaries filed with different police stations.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, a high official working with the CTTC, said they have already taken steps to make a list of those missing.

"We have recently been receiving complaints of missing people from different areas, which has now become a cause for concern. And so, we have taken the step to prepare a database," he said, preferring anonymity.

Law enforcers say the majority of those missing, mostly aged between 17 and 25, have been radicalised on online platforms.

Md Asaduzzaman, chief of the CTTC unit, told The Daily Star yesterday that they have "neutralised the outfit's organisational strength", but the "online threat" remains.

He said guardians have a major

role to play in this regard.

"For example, the families of the seven Cumilla missing boys were aware of the sudden changes [in their behaviour] and they even informed police after they went missing. If they had reported about the [alarming] behavioural changes earlier, the scenario would have been different."

Law enforcers, however, claimed to have found that the Cumilla seven were not only influenced online, but also in physical presence.

"They were being influenced for past year and a half through inter-group communications," said Lt Col Mashur Rahman Jewel, director of Rab's intelligence wing.

Sources said Ansar Al Islam is now recruiting members in two ways -- one through online platforms, while the other requires physical visits to mosques and madrasas.

After "brainwashing" young people, the outfit takes them to a centre for "physical training".

Security expert Major Gen (retired)

from Bangladesh.

Infamous "Seven Star" gang leaders Subrata Bain and Mollah Masud were reportedly arrested in India earlier but they were never handed over to Bangladesh though there is an extradition treaty between the two countries.

Commander Khandaker Al Moin, director of Rab's legal and media wing, said many top criminals fled the country due to law enforcers' continuous drives.

"We have found their link in different crimes in investigations. Their involvement in crimes is also disclosed by their accomplices arrested at different times," he told The Daily Star.

He said when they found the involvement of such criminals, they informed the Police Headquarters for necessary actions like informing Interpol or communicating with countries concerned to bring them back home.

Mohiul Islam, assistant inspector general of NCB, Dhaka, said the NCB constantly exchanges information related to the crimes of the accused in various cases with the NCB of different countries to bring the criminals back home.

Besides, absconding accused are also brought back under the extradition treaty or MLA (Mutual Legal Assistance) agreement, he added.

Abdur Rashid told this newspaper that young men leaving homes for "hijrat" clearly indicates that internal militant activities and recruitment are ongoing at the moment.

"The trend and numbers clearly indicate that the outfit is trying to regroup ... Law enforcers need to quickly trace those behind such activities."

Contacted, MM Hasanul Zahid, special superintendent of the Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU), said that Ansar Al Islam's current activities are mainly on social media platforms.

"They are trying to recruit members through online propaganda. We are alert and increasing our vigilance on these platforms."

The country witnessed a similar scenario when young boys started going missing from 2014 to 2016, which resulted in the Holy Artisan attack in Gulshan in July 1, 2016.

However, the outfit playing "influencer" at that time was the Islamic State inspired Neo JMB.

Lightning strike kills 3 children

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three children were found dead after being struck by lightning in Munshiganj's Tongibari upazila around 1:00pm yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Rabiul Islam, 12, son of Momin Ali; Sanjida Akter, 9, daughter of Saiful Islam; and Lamim Hossain, 12, son of Kamal Hossain. The three were cousins, who were visiting their grandfather's house in Dhamaran village.

They had gone to a nearby beel to pick water lilies with Sifat, another child from the neighbourhood, said Rajib Khan, officer-in-charge of Tongibari Police Station.

After the incident, Sifat, who survived, rushed home and asked the elders to help the others. The three cousins were then rescued by their families and taken to Munshiganj General hospital, where doctors declared them dead, he added.

The bodies were handed over to their families without an autopsy, upon their request.

3 fishermen die in Netrakona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

The bodies of three fishermen were recovered by police and locals in Netrakona yesterday.

The dead were identified as Diluar Fakir, 36, son of Fatik Fakir of Aatpara upazila's Koilong village, Rafiqul Islam, 35, son of Sawdagor of Madan upazila's Maghan Nayapara village, and Rasel Mia, 30, son of Fazlu Mia of Mohanganj's Banihari village.

According to locals, the victims drowned after they went fishing, despite rough weather, in a haor around 10:00pm on Friday.

Anjana Khan Majlis, deputy commissioner of Netrakona, said the bodies were handed over to their families yesterday afternoon.

At least 20 killed in Nigeria bus collision

AFP, Lagos

At least 20 passengers were burnt to death when a bus collided with another vehicle and caught fire in southwest Nigeria, police and an official said yesterday.

The accident at Lanlate in Ibarapa area of Oyo state on Friday, is the latest road crash in the vast west African nation of some 210 million people.

"It was a fatal accident. We counted over 20 human bodies burnt completely," Gbenga Obalowo, the chairman of Ibarapa district, told AFP.

Your sleep might 'predict'

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age" and identify variations in sleep most closely linked to mortality.

Sleep age, they say, is an estimated age of a person based on the characteristics of sleep that are linked to their health.

Previous research has documented that sleep is one of the first things that is disturbed in many disorders.

Scientists cited the example of Parkinson's disease patients and said that in most cases, they violently

act out dreams some five to 10 years before other symptoms show.

Assessing different features of individuals' sleep, the new study found that sleep fragmentation, when people briefly wake up several times at night without remembering it, was the "strongest predictor" of mortality.

Researchers say this kind of sleep disruption is different from when a person realises they are waking up, as reported in sleep disorders like insomnia and sleep apnea.

PM to leave for UK, US

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Assembly in New York.

Global economic crisis stemming from the Russia-Ukraine war, addressing the supplies of commodities, especially energy and food, climate change and Rohingya crisis will be some of the highlights of her UNGA address, said foreign ministry officials.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, who was not part of the PM's entourage during her just-concluded state visit to India on September 5-8 for "health reasons", and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam will accompany her during the visit.

"The prime minister is likely to visit the UK for two days before flying for New York. Detailed itinerary and agenda are being worked out," said a foreign ministry official.

"Apart from her address at the UN General Assembly, the prime minister is expected to hold a number of important bilateral meetings in New York," the official said.

After attending the seventy-seventh session of the UNGA, Hasina will also visit Washington DC before

returning home on September 30.

This year's UNGA themed "A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges" is held at a critical time in the history when the world faces several major challenges, especially the Russia-Ukraine war that comes following the pandemic amid climate change threats.

When the pandemic has rattled the economies across the world, the war has further fuelled it. Like most of the countries, Bangladesh faces high inflation, leaving the poor and middle class in trouble.

"More than 1.2 million Rohingyas have become not only economic but also security and diplomatic challenge for us. This would be a major highlight of the prime minister's address at the UN General Assembly," the foreign ministry official told this correspondent yesterday.

At the UN General Assembly, on September 20, heads of states and governments will explore solutions to the outstanding global challenges.

This year's general debate, which runs through September 26, is expected to be fully in-person.

Positivity rate

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In the past seven days till yesterday, a total of 2,046 new cases were detected, including yesterday's 222, while the number was 1,431 the previous week, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

"The trend will be clearer if the number of daily tests is increased," Mushtuq said.

According to the World Health Organization, a positivity rate below five percent for at least two weeks in a row indicates the end of a wave.

Considering this, the latest and fourth wave ended in mid-August. After a downward trend, the positivity

rate started rising on September 4.

Since the third wave, the Omicron variant of coronavirus has been dominating the transmission, according to the data.

Last week, scientists at the Genome Center in Jashore University of Science and Technology reported they found BA 2.75 sub-variant of Omicron in three patients for the first time in the country.

Yesterday, one female Covid-19 patient, aged between 91 and 100, died in the country.

Since the first death was reported on March 18, 2020, Covid-19 has claimed 29,332 lives in the country.