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PRESUMED DEAD IN THAI JUNGLE 2 photos and hope rekindled

Families of missing Bangladeshis now turn to govt to get back loved ones

ZYMA ISLAM

Hearing the news of the mass graves discovered in Thailand in 2015, family members of three men who had left Bangladesh two years ago thought they were among those buried.

But two photos from a prison in Bangkok, hand-delivered to families by another trafficking victim three years ago, rekindled hope.

Before that, for six long years, the three families had no evidence that their loved ones were alive.

They came to Dhaka from remote areas in Maheshkhali upazila of Cox's Bazar to submit a letter to the foreign ministry yesterday, hoping that it would reach the foreign minister and lead to their dear ones' return.

The families in 2013 sold properties to send the three men to Malaysia so that they could earn well and improve the lives

of the families they left behind.

But within months those dreams turned into nightmares.

Siddik was one of those family members.

He last heard his brother Azizul's voice nine years ago, and it was under terrible circumstances.

That conversation was some months after Azizul boarded a fishing vessel to go to Malaysia.

He was calling from a jungle in Thailand and said he was being held captive by human traffickers and needed Siddik to send Tk 2 lakh immediately.

"Please send at least a few thousand taka to the agent or they won't stop beating me," Siddik quoted his brother as saying when talking to this correspondent yesterday.

But Siddik, a fry catcher and salt farmer from Bagharpara in Maheshkhali, was unable to send anything.

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Azizul



Silt from the Kajibacha river, via this pipe, is being deposited on farmland in Khulna's Batiaghata upazila. Many private companies are buying cropland and illegally filling it up in this manner, rendering thousands of acres of land unfit for cultivation when the country's food security is under threat. The photo was taken on Tuesday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

EC free to hold fair polls PM tells VoA, says Rohingyas must return home

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said the Election Commission is "completely free and independent" and there's a system that allows the EC to hold free and fair elections in Bangladesh.

She said this in an interview with the Bangla service of Voice of America (VoA) that aired on Tuesday.

The PM, now on a visit to the US, responded to a number of questions on democracy, human rights, Rohingya crisis, Digital Security Act and other issues.

She said Bangladesh has made huge strides during her party's three consecutive terms in power. The poverty rate has been cut and people are getting food, education and healthcare. "We're fulfilling all their basic needs."

Responding to a question, the premier described how some political parties like the BNP and Jatiya Party were born under the leadership of military dictators and how they seized power illegally.

She said the parties that were born under military strongmen's leadership are not used to developing

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EDEN BCL CLASH President, GS sued by expelled VP 6 others accused in same case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

As tensions have been running high between two factions of Eden Mohila College Chhatra League, eight leaders and activists of the unit, including its president and general secretary, were sued yesterday for "attempting to kill its vice-president".

Jannatul Ferdowsi, a vice-president of Eden BCL, filed the case with a Dhaka court yesterday, after the recent clashes between the unit's leaders and activists.

The accused are unit President Tamanna Jasmine Riva, General Secretary Razia Sultana; and unit leaders Nuzhat Faria alias Rokhsana, Ayesha Islam alias Mim, Nur Jahan, Ritu Akhter, Anika Tabassum Swarna and Kamrun Nahar Jyoti.

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DHAKA-SYLHET 4-LANE HIGHWAY Physical work set to begin after 7 years

Land acquisition still remains a concern

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Physical work to expand the Dhaka-Sylhet Highway is going to start finally, around seven years after a feasibility study was done to take up a project to improve connectivity between the capital and the southeast region, and beyond.

Two Chinese-Bangladesh firms have been selected for one of the six packages under the Tk 16,918.59 crore project for turning the 210km highway into a four-lane one with service lanes on both sides, say officials.

Contracts between the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) – the implementing agency of the project – and the contractors are likely to be signed next month, and work will start in December, they told The Daily Star.

However, delay in land acquisition and complexities regarding the tender of one of the packages may hinder the project's implementation.

In February last year, the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) approved the project, setting December 2026 as the deadline for completion.

The authorities decided to implement the project under six packages and hire 13 contractors for quick implementation.

The Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase (CCGP) on September 14 approved proposals for appointing two contractors for the first package.

A joint-venture firm of Longjian Road and Bridge Company Ltd of China and Max Infrastructure Ltd of Bangladesh will work on an 18km portion from the Kanchpur intersection to Chanpara Bus Stand.

The firm will get Tk 925.36 crore to complete the physical work within four years, officials said.

Another joint venture of Zhengzhou City Highway Engineering Corporation Ltd of China and Max Infrastructure Ltd will carry out work on a 17km portion from Chanpara to Narsingdi BSCIC area at a cost of Tk 1,394.66 crore.

The company has to finish physical work in four years.

Contacted, Project Director AK Mohammad Fazlul Karim said, "We hope to sign agreements with both the contractors by next month."

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ANSAR AL ISLAM RESURGENCE

'NRBs funding reorganisation'

Claims CTTC

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Ansar al Islam, which claims to be the Bangladesh chapter of Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, received about Tk 1.5 crore in the last three and a half years from people in the UK and Australia to run its operational activities.

Previously known as Ansarullah Bangla Team, Ansar Al Islam became almost inactive after the 2016 murder of LGBTQ rights activist Xulhaz Mannan and his friend Khandoker Mahbub Rabbay Tonoy.

Reports of the outfit regrouping came to the fore after seven youths went missing from Cumilla on August 23.

Looking for the missing youths, law enforcers came to know that at least 30 more youths and people working in different professions left home for a so-called jihad.

The Daily Star has learnt from officials of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of police that Ansar al Islam is trying to reorganise.

To sponsor the resurgence, sympathisers of the outfit, many of whom are non-resident Bangladeshis, are sending in money through illegal channels.

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After travelling against traffic, a microbus, with a government sticker on its windshield, is about to take a U-turn to get on the road towards the Malibagh-Mouchak flyover in the capital. The photo was taken in Malibagh DIT road yesterday morning.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ



DON'T MISS TODAY'S SPECIAL ISSUE

World Heart Day 2022 : Use heart for every heart

World Heart Day (September 29) is an opportunity for everyone to stop and consider how best to use heart for humanity, for nature, and for you. Beating cardiovascular disease is something that matters to every beating heart.

SBAC Bank Ltd Celebrates 76th Birthday of Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina



South Bangla Agriculture & Commerce (SBAC) Bank Ltd has celebrated the 76th birthday of the daughter of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, planner of poverty and hunger free Bangladesh, architect of prosperous Bangladesh, honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. During the event Mr. Abdul Kadir Molla, Chairman of Thermex group & Majid Molla Foundation and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Bank; Mr. A Z M Shafiuddin (Shamim), Chairman of SQ group & SQ Foundation and director of the Bank; Mr. Mohammad Nazmul Huq, Chairman of Vicar group and director of the Bank were present. Mr. Habir Rahman, Managing Director & CEO (CC); Mr. Md. Nurul Azim, DMD; Mr. A K M Rashedul Haq Chowdhury, DMD and other senior executives of the Bank were also present during the auspicious program.

www.sbacbank.com