

DNC official sued for abusing minor domestic help

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

An official of the Department of Narcotics Control was sued over the physical abuse of a 12-year-old domestic help in Sunamganj early yesterday.

Manita Sinha, assistant sub-inspector of district DNC, who lives in a rented house in the town's Jamtala area, gave the girl a heavy beating for eating a pineapple without her permission on Thursday night, police said.

When locals confronted Manita after rescuing the child, she misbehaved with them. Later, they informed the police about the matter and admitted the child to the Sunamganj District Hospital for treatment.

Hours later, the girl's family filed the case against Manita under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, said Ripon Kumar Modok, additional superintendent of police in Sunamganj.

Manita's landlord Tajud Miah said, "I rented out the house to Manita around two months ago but her attitude was never decent and we have already given her notice to vacate the premises."

This correspondent could not get Manita's comments as she did not respond to phone calls after repeated attempts.

Sajedul Hassan, assistant director of the DNC, said, "We have heard of the incident ... she is on leave. As a case has been filed in this regard, actions will follow as per the law."

A total of 16 domestic workers were abused in the first six months of 2022, while the number was 38 in 2021 and 44 in 2020, according to the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS).

According to the Labor Force Survey 2015-2016, the number of domestic workers is about 17 lakhs, 80 percent of which are women and an overwhelming majority of them are under the age of 18 years.

Most of the female domestic workers are either illiterate or poorly literate and have no professional training. Many are not aware of their rights and responsibilities.

Five US police officers charged with beating Black man to death

AFP, Washington

US authorities on Thursday charged five former police officers with murder over the fatal beating of a Black man in Memphis, as the southern city braced for possible civil unrest and President Joe Biden urged demonstrators to protest peacefully.

Tyre Nichols, 29, was stopped on January 7 for what the Memphis Police Department said was reckless driving.



Fire and smoke rise above buildings in Gaza City as Israel launched air strikes on the Palestinian enclave early yesterday. The Israel air strikes on Gaza came in response to militant rocket fire from the Palestinian enclave, as tensions rise following Thursday's deadliest army raid on the occupied West Bank in years. Story on page 12.

PHOTO: AFP

Fierce fighting in east Ukraine after West's tank pledges

Says Kyiv as Zelensky pleads for more weapons, calls for tougher sanctions on Russia

REUTERS, Kyiv

Ukraine yesterday battled Russian troops trying to pierce its lines in the east and northeast before Kyiv takes delivery of tanks from its Western allies, saying the fighting showed it needed more weapons to repel the invaders.

Kyiv said fierce battles were underway, a day after at least 11 people were killed in missile and drone strikes which were widely seen in Ukraine as a response to the promises by important allies to send it tanks.

After weeks of wrangling, Germany and the US this week said they would send Ukraine dozens of modern tanks to help push back Russian forces, opening the way for others to follow suit.

Poland gave Ukraine a further boost yesterday by promising an additional 60 tanks on top of 14 German-made Leopard 2 tanks it had already pledged.

Both sides in the war are widely expected to launch spring offensives though Washington has advised Ukraine against doing so until the latest weapons are in place and training has been provided -- a process expected to take

several months.

Russia said the United States was "pumping weapons into Ukraine", which Moscow says does Washington's bidding, and chided President Joe Biden, saying he held the key to ending the conflict but had not used it.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky thanked allies for their support but renewed calls for tougher sanctions on Moscow and more weapons in the twelfth month of the war.

"This evil, this Russian aggression can and should be stopped only with adequate weapons. The terrorist state will not understand anything else," Zelenskiy said in his nightly television address on Thursday.

Hours after he spoke, Ukrainian officials reported fierce battles in the northeast and east of the country, scene of some of the heaviest combat since Russia's invasion on Feb. 24 last year.

"Fierce fighting continues along the front lines," said Oleh Synchubov, governor of the northeastern region of Kharkiv, adding that Ukrainian forces were holding out.

Millions of Ukrainians faced electricity

shortages after Thursday's missile and drone strikes, the latest to target energy facilities and deprive people of heat, light and water.

Ukraine has repeatedly accused Russia of targeting civilian infrastructure, a charge that Moscow denies.

Russia said the strikes focused on "facilities that operate Ukraine's defence industrial complex and transport system," and limited Ukraine's ability to repair military hardware and transport arms provided by its allies.

"The goals of the massive attack have been reached. All the assigned targets have been neutralised," it said.

Reuters could not verify the battlefield reports.

Front lines have been largely frozen for two months, with Russia trying to gain ground in the east after occupying swathes of territory there and protect a corridor of land it has seized in southern Ukraine.

Oleskandr Musiyenko, head of the Military and Strategic Research Centre of Ukraine, said Russia was sending in more reinforcements, mainly conscripts, to block Ukrainian advances.

2 children die after falling off roof in Kamrangirchar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two children died after falling off the rooftop of a five-storey residential building in Dhaka's Kamrangirchar.

The deceased were identified as Abdur Rahim, 9, son of Roman Mia, and Lamiya Akter, 6, daughter of Abdur Rashid Mia, confirmed Mostafa Anwar, officer-in-charge (OC) of Kamrangirchar Police Station.

The incident took place in the Sylheti Bazar area last evening.

"Two children, who were cousins, died after falling off the rooftop while they were playing there," he said quoting family members.

The roof did not have any sort of railings, said Abdur Rahim's older sister, Shathi Akhter.

They were rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where duty doctors declared them dead around 7:00pm, the OC said.

Convicted drug dealer arrested after 7 years in Gazipur

UNB, Dhaka

A convicted drug dealer, who had been on the run for seven years, was arrested in Gazipur's Kashimpur early yesterday.

Abdul Ahad alias Limon, 34, was sentenced to life in prison in a case under the Narcotics Control Act.

A Rab-2 team arrested him around 3:55am, said Md Fazlul Haque, senior additional director (media) of Rab-2.

On September 24, 2014, Limon was arrested with a large haul of drugs and a case was filed against him with Lalmonirhat Sadar Police Station, he added.

"He was released on bail after he spent two years behind bars. After getting out, he resumed selling contraband narcotics again and became a fugitive of the law," said the Rab official.

No Covid deaths in 24hrs, positivity rate 0.85pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

No Covid deaths were reported in the last 24 hours until 8:00am yesterday, according to a press release issued by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The total number of casualties from the virus remains at 29,441 and the death rate at 1.44 percent.

Twelve fresh cases were found from 1,408 samples tested across the country during this time. The total number of cases is now 20,37,506.

The current positivity rate is 0.85 percent and the total positivity rate is 13.37 percent.

At least 217 patients recovered during the period and with that the total number of recoveries stands at 19,92,009.

Fish under threat, humans too

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Tuna (Surma), Berramundi (Bhetki), Large Head Ribbon Fish (Churi), Painted Tailed Goby (Chemo), Long Whisker (Tengra), Long Whisker Catfish (Ayre), Spotted Scat (Chitra), Lane Snapper, Spotted Archerfish (Choroi) and Gold Spotted Grenadiers Anchovy.

Horina Chingri contained the highest amount of plastic particles in muscle, 54.30 particles per gram, and Datina carried the lowest, 5.37 particles per gram.

The carrier of the highest microplastics in gastrointestinal tract is Chemo with 205 particles per gram and the lowest was Surma with 7.33 particles per gram.

An adult consuming 300g of fish muscle per week will ingest 74,282 particles of microplastic annually. A child eating 50g a week will end up consuming a total of 12,380 particles a year, the study summed up.

As per the Food and Agriculture Organisation, per capita fish consumption in the country is 14 kg a year.

Dr Lenin Chowdhury, a public health expert, told The Daily Star that earlier they saw the presence of microplastic in small fish. "Now it is learnt that sea fish is also under this threat."

Polythene and plastic items are among the 10 products that create toxin carcinogens. That means if human beings consume it, there will be a high possibility of cancer, he said.

"Through the consumption of such fish, microplastics end up in our stomach. If it continues to pile up in the stomach, the digestive system will gradually cease to function. If it enters the blood circulation system, the liver and kidney will bear the brunt."

Microplastic also can cause infertility in women, he said.

"We have to think and take action about it right now. If we sit idle ignoring this threat, one day we will

have to stop eating fish, which is a key source of protein."

Md Mostafizur Rahman, associate professor of the Department of Environmental Science at Jahangirnagar University, who supervised the study, said it reveals how dangerously the fisheries and estuaries are being affected with microplastics.

They found estuaries of the Sundarbans, a UNESCO heritage site, containing more microplastics than ocean or sea.

"The continuation of such pollution will strip fish of nutrition, which will eventually cause malnutrition in human bodies as the deltaic region is mostly dependent on fish for protein. It is just inconceivable that microplastics are contaminating the estuaries of the Sundarbans, which is deemed as our important fish stock," he told this newspaper on January 24.

The findings of this study call for another study to specify the sources of microplastics, he said and hoped this research will act as a wake-up call for the policymakers and lead to action to contain plastic pollution on an urgent basis.

The Sundarbans is a unique ecosystem that offers a perfect spawning place and habitat for fish. It is home to over 300 species of fish.

A large number of people depend on this fish stock as about 25,000 registered fishing boats harvest fish from the Sundarbans and its adjacent bay. The annual catch from the water bodies of the forest is estimated to be 3,000 tonnes of fish and 18,150 tonnes of crustacean.

This magical forest, also a popular tourist destination, has been subjected to natural and manmade calamities for decades. Though the government declared it an Ecological Critical Area (ECA), little is being done for its conservation, environmentalists observe.

Bangladesh Environmental

Lawyers Association (Bela) in January 2020 filed a public interest litigation seeking a ban on single-use plastic across the country, prioritising coastal areas. The court directed the Department of Environment to stop single-use plastic in coastal areas by 2022.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bela, told The Daily Star yesterday that the Department of Environment could not execute the court order as of now.

"Political goodwill is necessary to protect our rivers, our water and our people from the menace of plastic. And there is no alternative to ending the use of plastic to save our environment," she added.

Nepal's combative deputy PM sacked over citizenship

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's top court yesterday barred combative deputy prime minister Rabi Lamichhane from office for failing to regain citizenship in the Himalayan republic after giving up his US passport.

Lamichhane, 48, is well-known for his career as a television host, making his name as an anti-corruption crusader through aggressive interviews with public officials.

He was one of the biggest winners in elections last November, securing his new party a place in the ruling coalition and himself the post of deputy prime minister.

But Supreme Court spokesman Bimal Poudel told AFP that Lamichhane was ineligible to keep his post after not "following the due process" when he relinquished his US citizenship in 2018.

"The constitutional bench of the Supreme Court has ruled that his candidacy and election to the post of a member of the House of Representatives are void," Poudel said.

Two 'missing' men

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clip that shows Jama'atul Ansar men in brown and grey camouflage outfit are receiving training on the use of firearms.

Shibbir, 25, known among the militants as Hamid Karche, was seen wielding a firearm. Rab officials said he was the military commander of the outfit.

Shibbir is from Uttar Faridpur village in Sylhet's Dakshin Surma upazila, said a Rab officer.

He has a madrasa degree equivalent to the masters, and he worked at a madrasa for two years before he disappeared.

His father Abdus Salam, who saw the video clip, said he was shocked.

"I recognised my son and immediately informed the police. I don't know what to do. In the last two years, I did everything to find my son. He was the sharpest among my five sons. He was polite and honest," Salam told The Daily Star.

Khandaker Al Moin, director (legal and media) of Rab, said officers have information that Razzak also joined the militant group in the hills.

His brother Salman Khan said Razzak never contacted the family after leaving home. Salman filed a general diary with Kotwali Police Station in Sylhet on March 25, 2021, about the

disappearance.

Razzak also studied at a madrasa in Sylhet.

About a couple of months ago, Rab published a list of 55 young men, who left home for the hills and took training on using firearms and explosives. Most of them are on the run.

SCORES LEFT HOME

Law enforcers in August last year learnt about a large number of young men leaving home to become militants following reports that seven men left home in Cumilla at the same time. This led Rab to investigate the matter.

One of them is Partha Das alias Al Amin of Maguraghona in Khulna's Dumuria. His name was on the first list of the 38 missing men, which Rab published several months ago.

Our correspondent in Khulna learnt that Partha converted to Islam seven years ago, and changed his name to Al Amin.

His father Manik Das said his son dropped out of school when he was in class-VIII and became a carpenter.

Manik said his son got a job in the capital's Mirpur-14 in 2016.

"He contacted us for seven to eight months and used to send us Tk 4,000 a month. Then I learnt that he converted to Islam. Since then, we have not been in touch."

Verification of Rohingyas begins today

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recommendations for the next course of action, said Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, refugee relief and repatriation commissioner (RRRC).

The committee members are representatives from RRRC office, Armed Police Battalion, Cox's Bazar District Police, Bandarban DC office, and other law enforcement agencies.

Sources said some of the newly-arrived Rohingyas were registered with different refugee camps.

According to the meeting minutes and local sources, the Rohingyas who entered Myanmar through a fence amid the violence were forced to come to Bangladesh by Myanmar authorities. Some of them took shelter with the

host community while others were at newly built makeshift shelters in the area.

The taskforce in its meeting had elaborate discussions on the situation and decided that the new committee will urgently identify the Myanmar nationals recently displaced from the Konarpara camp on the no-man's-land.

The committee's recommendations will be on relocating them and providing them with humanitarian assistance, said the meeting minutes, adding that the registered Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMNs) will be relocated to camps while the unregistered ones to transit camps in Cox's Bazar.

Syria to blame for 2018 chlorine attack: watchdog

AFP, The Hague

The global chemical weapons watchdog yesterday blamed Syria for a 2018 chlorine attack that killed 43 people, in a long-awaited report on a case that sparked tensions between Damascus and the West.

Investigators said there were "reasonable grounds to believe" that at least one Syrian air force helicopter had dropped two cylinders of the toxic gas on the rebel-held town of Douma during Syria's civil war.

Damascus and its ally Moscow claimed the attack was staged by rescue workers at the behest of the United States, which launched air strikes on Syria days afterwards along with Britain and France.

The Douma case also caused controversy after leaks from two former employees cast doubt on earlier findings by the Hague-based Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

But the OPCW said its investigators had "considered a range of possible scenarios" and concluded that "the Syrian Arab Air Forces are the perpetrators of this attack."

Individuals with criminal records will be brought under the legal system of Bangladesh.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen on Thursday said that Bangladesh would not accept a single more Rohingya.

Sources said those taken to transit camps may eventually be relocated to the regular refugee camps.

At least 4,232 Rohingyas were living at the Konarpara camp on no-man's-land since 2017.

Bangladesh has been hosting over 1 million Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar and most of them arrived there after a military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine State that began in August 2017.