

## 12 robbers disguised as DGFI men held in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police arrested 12 individuals impersonating members of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence while attempting to rob a flat in Chattogram's Khulshi area Friday night.

The suspects were caught red-handed from the 8th floor of the Sanmar Royal Reach Building, where they targeted the residence of Jamuna Oil Company's former managing director Gias Uddin Ansari.

Fake DGFI ID cards, three toy guns, a crowbar, and a microbus were seized during the arrest, said Roish Uddin, deputy commissioner (crime) of Chattogram Metropolitan Police.

Quoting witnesses, Mozibur Rahman Kawsar, officer-in-charge of Khulshi Police Station, said the

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BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman drives home his mother and party Chairperson Khaleda Zia [in the backseat] on Friday night after the former prime minister was released from The London Clinic, where she underwent treatment for 17 days. Tarique's wife Zubaida Rahman was in the passenger seat. Story on page 12.

PHOTO: BNP MEDIA WING

## Bangladeshi woman killed in Bengaluru after 'sexual assault'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

A Bangladeshi woman has been allegedly "assaulted sexually" and killed in Bengaluru city of India, said police.

The woman, 28, who worked as a domestic help in Kalkere locality, was killed possibly on Thursday and her body was disposed of at Kalkere lake in Ramamurthy Nagar, Bengaluru police said.

Her body was recovered on Friday [January 24], said Ramesh Banoth, joint commissioner of police in Bengaluru East Division.

"It seems she had been sexually assaulted," he said, adding that a case under sections of murder and rape has been registered.

The Bangladeshi woman had been living in Bengaluru with her husband and three children for the past six years and had been doing housekeeping in an apartment, he said.

On Thursday, the woman left the apartment after finishing her work. However, she did not return home.

A team of forensic experts visited the scene and conducted an inspection.

Banoth said the woman's husband came to India legally. However, the victim entered the country illegally without a passport.

"Based on the complaint filed by her husband, we have registered a case of sexual assault and murder and are investigating," added the police official.

The body has been sent for postmortem.

## AL won't be allowed

FROM PAGE 1

country do not want to see the era of Sheikh Mujib or Sheikh Hasina in Bangladesh anymore.

"The new Bangladesh rejects the fascist system. We want Bangladesh to remain in the hands of true patriots. There will be no place for pro-Delhi elements in Bangladesh," added Mahfuj.

The adviser further said they would soon start talks with political parties and stakeholders and hold elections to facilitate democratic transformation, after carrying out minimum reforms based on the report of reform commissions.

"It is our commitment to ensure justice to the killings during the July uprising and to carry out reform of the institutions that were destroyed by fascist Hasina. We are also committed to holding free and fair elections for the sake of democratic transition."

Mahfuj, however, said

that if the election is held without minimum reforms to the institutions that Hasina used to perpetrate genocide and oppress people, those same institutions will remain in place.

Hajiganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer Tapas Shil, Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Hajiganj Police Station Mohiuddin Farooq, leaders of Students Against Discrimination and Jatiya Nagorik Committee were present.

Later in the day in Ramganj Government College in Lakshmipur, Mahfuj said there is no probability of military rule in Bangladesh, reports our Noakhali correspondent.

"We did not overthrow Hasina with the support of any state this time. We overthrew Hasina with the blood of the students and the people. We no longer need to obey anyone. We have brought independence in exchange for our own blood ... We will not bow to anyone again."

## Govt suspends list

FROM PAGE 1

Newaz for children's literature. GH Habib was recognised as the best transcript writer, while Muhammad Shahjahan Mia was set to receive the award in the research category. Rezaur Rahman was honoured in the science category, Mohammad Hannan for his contributions to Liberation War literature, and Syed Jamil Ahmed for his work in folklore.

A statement issued by the Bangla Academy last night stated that a revised list of award recipients will be announced within three working days.

The statement signed by Bangla Academy Director General Professor Mohammad Azam said a meeting of the Bangla Academy Literary Award Committee 2024 was held at the Bangla Academy to reconsider the previously announced list of recipients.

It also read postponement was prompted by some allegations regarding certain individuals on the award list, in light of the current socio-political situation. A decision has been made to investigate these allegations before the list is republished.

## Admission woes deepen for students

FROM PAGE 1

WHY CLUSTERS

Under the system with separate admission tests, the students' hassle begins after their Higher Secondary Certificate exams. Many of them turn to private coaching centres to prepare for the admission tests.

Then they buy admission forms for different units of multiple universities and spend a lot of time and money on travel and accommodation.

The students often travel with parents or guardians, and sometimes have to check into hotels for overnight stays. There are cases when a candidate has to take separate tests for seats in separate faculties, even separate departments, in one university.

The UGC has long been suggesting modifying the admission process, saying it is too expensive.

In several annual reports, the commission said the public universities would have to take initiatives to introduce a unified admission system to reduce students' hassle and cut their expenses.

Considering the suffering of the students, the cluster admission system was launched for agriculture universities in 2019, and for GST and engineering in 2020.

However, large institutions like Dhaka University, Jahangirnagar University, Rajshahi University, Chittagong University, and Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology opted for independent admission

tests.

WHY LEAVE

Most of the universities which have already left the cluster system cited their academic council decision or pressure from teachers' associations as reasons.

University officials cited issues like delayed result publication, inefficient admission procedures, and disorganised department allocations that resulted in session jams.

The seven universities that have decided to leave the GST Cluster and hold admission tests independently are Jagannath University; Khulna University; Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST), Comilla University; Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University; Gopalganj; Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University; and Islamic University, Kushtia.

Jagannath University VC Prof Rezaul Karim described the cluster system as a "well-intentioned initiative that suffered from poor planning".

Khulna University VC Prof Md Rezaul Karim also expressed concern over the system's "inefficiencies and flaws", saying it took more time than independent tests, leading to session jams and academic disruptions. He warned that the admission process risks undermining their achievements in the international academic arena.

The GST committee has already announced its entrance exam schedule: C Unit (Business Education)

on April 25, B Unit (Humanities) on May 2, and A Unit (Science) on May 9.

The Engineering Cluster has completely opted out of the system, with all three universities – Rajshahi, Chittagong and Khulna universities of engineering and technology (RUET, CUET and KUET) – holding their entrance exams independently this year.

RUET began its admission process on January 4, with a preliminary test scheduled for February 8. CUET is set to hold its exam on February 1, while KUET concluded its process on January 15.

RUET VC Prof SM Abdur Razzak said, "As one of the universities opted to conduct admission test independently, we had very little options to stay in the cluster. Consequently, as the final university in the cluster, we stepped away."

"Although we couldn't hold the test under the cluster this year, we will try to do it in future for the benefit of the students," he added.

CONCERNS

The ongoing shake-up has caused significant concern among students, many of whom had supported the cluster system for its convenience. A group of students has also submitted a letter to Education Adviser Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud, requesting that the cluster system remain intact for the benefit of students.

Rahim Abdullah, a student from Bangabandhu Memorial College in Jhenaidah, said, "I've been preparing for months, and now there's uncertainty

about which exam I should sit for. The cluster system was helpful because it unified the process, reducing the stress of multiple applications and exams."

Another student, Ahsan Kabir, from Mohammadpur Model School and College in the capital, said, "The system provided us with a convenience that independent tests do not. It saved both time and money. With the departure of major universities, it will only make things more complicated for students like me."

UGC Chairman Prof SMA Faiz said, "We hope universities prioritise the interests of students in their decisions. The UGC will provide support if required."

UGC member Prof Tanzimuddin Khan admitted that an integrated solution is missing in the current cluster system, which he said has structural weaknesses and financial complexities.

"We are thinking about how to resolve these issues and how to simplify the system for students and their guardians."

"However, the UGC no longer has the mandate or administrative authority to intervene in such matters. As a result, even though we wanted to, we could not take the necessary initiatives," he said, adding that currently the education ministry is handling the issue.

Repeated attempts to reach Prof M Aminul Islam, the chief adviser's special assistant on education, for comments failed.

## Bangladeshi farmer hurt as BSF shoots him in C'nawabganj

UNB, Chapainawabganj

A 30 year-old Bangladeshi man sustained bullet injuries in firing by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) at the Telkupi border in Chapainawabganj's Shibganj upazila on Friday.

The injured, Habil, 30, of Mollatola village in Shahbazzpur union, is currently undergoing treatment at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

BGB 59 Battalion Commander Lt Col Golam Kibria said BSF personnel opened fire around 3:30am when a group of six to seven suspected smugglers tried to cross the border, leaving Habil injured.

Habil's associates managed to rescue him and bring him back to Bangladesh.

He was taken to the 250 Bed District Hospital, Chapainawabganj for primary treatment and later moved to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital for advanced treatment.

Dr Kausar Hasan, doctor of the emergency department at Chapainawabganj hospital, said Habil was admitted to the hospital around 7:00am today where he was treated for a gunshot wound in the chest.

## Govt committed to holding free, fair polls

Says Adviser Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The interim government is committed to holding free, fair and inclusive elections as per the expectations of the people, Planning and Education Adviser Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud said yesterday

Addressing an event marking the 76th Republic Day of India at a hotel in the capital, he also said Bangladesh is committed to strengthening relations with neighbouring countries, including India.

The adviser mentioned that Bangladesh wants to advance relations with India and others on the basis of fairness and equality, taking into account mutual priorities and sensitivities.

Prof Wahiduddin recalled the important contribution of the people and government of India during the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. The two countries also collaborated in the years after 1971 for shared prosperity and sustainable development, he said.

"We strongly believe our partnership will be stronger in the days to come," the adviser added.

Speaking at the same event, Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Pranay Verma said New Delhi wants to see a democratic, stable, peaceful, progressive and inclusive Bangladesh.

Since India-Bangladesh ties are "interdependent", Verma said, New Delhi attaches importance to maintaining "stable, constructive, future-oriented and mutually beneficial relations".

## Service delivery

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disputes are left unresolved, locals said.

Entrepreneurs and traders needing trade licences have reported that delays disrupt their operations.

In Chattogram City Corporation (CCC), 13 executives were ordered to handle the jobs of 41 councillors.

Special Magistrate Manisha Mahajan has been entrusted with the responsibility of two wards while regional executive officers Rezaul Karim, Shahrin Ferdousi and Raktim Chowdhury have the charge of five wards each.

The executives are expected to fill in for councillors on top of their regular duties, which severely hampers service delivery.

Many of these officials cannot visit their wards even once a week due to their heavy workload. As a result, the service seekers face delays.

Nazrul Islam, a local of ward-15, said, "I urge the city corporation to delegate one executive for each ward. Otherwise, people will continue to suffer."

CCC Chief Executive Officer Sheikh Mohammad Tauhidul Islam said there were not enough officers posted to the CCC on deputation to do the councillors' tasks.

"We are going through a transition, and I think everything will become normal," he said.

An officer at Mymensingh City Corporation said, "The executives take more time for certain tasks because they, unlike the local representatives, don't know the locals."

Shamsun Nahar,

resident of the city's Kristapur said she needed a succession certificate to settle land ownership issues, but she could not secure it despite two weeks of frantic efforts.

In Gazipur City Corporation, Khairul Islam, former councillor of ward-29, said, "The common people are not getting even the basic services like the issuance of holding tax certificate, trade licence and birth certificate."

For an inheritance certificate or marriage certificate, they have to make multiple visits.

City Corporation Executive Engineer Mohammad Ibrahim Khalil said, "Even when the documents are ready, we cannot hand them over quickly, since it takes time to get the mayor's approval."

After taking charge as the administrator, Dhaka Divisional Commissioner Sabirul Islam said, "The current government wants to form a corruption-free, discrimination-free state. We will work towards that goal."

Gazipur Citizens Forum President Jalal Uddin said, "We elected the mayor with high hopes. But the city residents are still suffering."

Adviser Mahfuj Alam at a press briefing recently acknowledged that people were not getting regular services at city corporations and union parishes because the administrators could not deliver the services.

That's why the chief adviser proposed holding local government elections.

Our correspondents in Chattogram, Gazipur, Dinajpur and Mymensingh contributed to the report.