

Seize Sikder

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are shareholders of the companies, which are located in four districts of Bangkok.

Freezing the assets in the seven companies is necessary "to protect the interests of the government and ensure justice", said the petition by the ACC.

A seven-member joint investigation team of the ACC is looking into allegations of corruption, arbitrariness, anonymous embezzlement of public funds, illegal lending in exchange for bribes and money laundering against the Sikder family.

During the course of the investigation, Sikder's children attempted to transfer both immovable and movable assets abroad. This posed a risk of obstructing the inquiry, according to the ACC.

Since the fall of the Awami League regime in August last year, the courts have imposed a travel ban on the Sikder family; ordered the confiscation of 100 acres of land in Dhaka's Purbachal allocated in the name of Ron Haque Sikder, the managing director of Sikder Group; ordered the freezing of 42 BO (beneficiary owner accounts) held by members of the Sikder family; and ordered the confiscation of 15 buildings and floors registered in the names of Sikder family members.

Parveen is an MP of the 11th parliament from reserved seats for women (Shariatpur).

Eight people

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After the IEDCR team examined samples collected from 12 people with anthrax symptoms, eight of them tested positive, Prof Shirin said.

Asked about the condition of the eight infected, Pirgachha Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Tanvir Hasnat Robin said, "All of them are presently well, and most of them have already made a full recovery."

However, they were still being monitored, he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Tanvir said locals, albeit initially panicked, now know that the disease is fully curable. "We're campaigning to raise awareness among people so that they do not consume meat from sick cattle or immediately seek treatment if any anthrax symptoms are visible."

Meanwhile, Abu Syed, district livestock officer of Rangpur, said five of the six samples of frozen beef tested positive for anthrax earlier this month.

He said a team from the Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute collected the samples from the upazila earlier this month and informed him about the outcome.

However, they did not find anthrax in the samples collected from some sick cattle, he added.

Abu Sayed said they have started a major vaccination programme in the upazila, and that more than half the cattle have already come under the programme.

Man dies after mob beating

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and toenails were pulled out with pliers and his feet were pricked with needles. A bleeding bruise with broken skin marked his forehead.

Photos of the body obtained by our correspondent matched this description of abuse.

Abdullah reportedly remained in custody until his condition deteriorated on Sunday afternoon. He was taken to a local hospital first, then transferred to Brahmanbaria General Hospital, where he died around 6:00pm.

An executive magistrate who conducted the inquest found multiple injuries on Abdullah's forehead, hands and other parts of his body. The murder case filed with Nabinagar Police Station yesterday named SI Mahim Uddin, Tobi Miah, Al Amin and Ainal Haque as accused, along with 20-25 unidentified others.

Brahmanbaria Superintendent of Police

Ehtheshamul Haque, who visited the site, acknowledged that Abdullah had been unlawfully detained. "He was held at the camp without authorisation and subjected to torture. This was a clear criminal offence. The accused officer will receive no protection from the police department."

As news of his death spread, angry residents besieged the Salimganj police camp yesterday morning, staging demonstrations and forcing its closure. Authorities later deployed army personnel to prevent further unrest.

Abdullah's mother, Jotsna Begum, broke down in tears as she demanded justice: "If my son had committed a crime, let the law decide. Why was he forced to die this way?"

After being produced before a court, SI Mahim Uddin was sent to jail.

Ukrainian journo wins Europe rights prize

AFP, Strasbourg

The Council of Europe yesterday awarded its 2025 rights prize to Ukrainian journalist and rights activist Maksym Butkevych, who was released last year after being captured by Russian forces.

Butkevych, co founder of the independent Hromadske radio station and ZMINA human rights centre in Kyiv, joined the Ukrainian army in March 2022, then was detained in June and convicted of war crimes by a court in Lugansk in Russian-controlled eastern Ukraine in March 2023.

He was sentenced to a 13-year prison term on charges of wounding two civilians while firing an anti-tank grenade launcher in the eastern city of Severodonetsk, but he was released during an October 2024 prisoner exchange.

In his speech, the 48-year-old recalled being held "in Russian captivity in a penal colony"

exactly one year ago, on charges he denounced as "fabricated".

"I have been inside the system that does not value human rights," Butkevych said, wearing a black shirt bearing the words "Ukrainian prisoners of war: you are not forgotten." "Human rights - one has to face their absence to understand their value. They are not to be taken for granted."

Butkevych said he accepted the award on behalf of the Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war "illegally detained by Russia", as well as journalists living under authoritarian regimes.

He is the first Ukrainian to win the award named after the late Czech dissident, playwright and post-communist president Vaclav Havel.

Two other reporters, Mzia Amaghlobeli of Georgia and Ulvi Hasanli of Azerbaijan, both in detention, were also nominated for the prize.

Islami Bank fires 200, makes 4,771 OSD

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director of the bank, told this newspaper.

Only 414 took part in the competency test on September 27.

Those who did not appear for the test have been made OSD, while around 200 officials were terminated for breaching discipline, Jasim said.

"No specific reason is required for termination as the company can dismiss an employee by paying three months' salary."

The final decision regarding those who have been made OSD, who currently have no assigned duties, will be taken within a few days.

"Islami Bank has still acted with humanitarian consideration as nearly 10,000 of the S Alam recruits remain," he added.

After seven years, S Alam Group's control over Islami Bank ended in August last

year with the fall of the Awami League regime.

The Bangladesh Bank dissolved its board, which was heavily dominated by individuals linked to the conglomerate.

The new board conducted an audit of its human resources and found that more than 10,000 officials of the total 21,000 were appointed after the takeover in 2017, according to the bank's HR department.

Between 2017 and 2024, a total of 7,224 people from Chattogram were recruited for various positions at the bank, with more than 4,500 from Patiya upazila alone, according to Islami Bank documents.

S Alam Group Chairman Mohammed Saiful Alam hails from Patiya upazila.

To assess the qualifications and skills of these officials, the bank arranged an evaluation test

through the IBA of Dhaka University.

However, some officials filed a writ petition with the High Court against the bank's decision. The court then asked the BB to settle the issue.

As a profit-making institution, the bank is within its rights to hold the test and retain or release employees as its financial performance is directly linked with the aptitude of its workforce, the BB said.

And yet, a section of the officials boycotted the exam, held a protest rally, and a press conference instead.

"This is a new concept, and it has triggered a reaction among the staff," said Islami Bank spokesman Aref Hossain Khan.

Fearing job loss, the officials have turned to legal action, he added.

Dhaka to seek global pledge on Rohingya

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justice. The event will feature an opening segment, a plenary meeting, and a closing segment, and the UNGA will adopt an outcome document.

"There was a notion that the Rohingyas are integrated into Bangladesh. We don't accept this notion. Repatriation is the only solution, and we seek support from the international community for this," said an official of

Bangladesh's mission to the UN.

At a panel discussion in New York last week, Bangladesh's National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman said the international community must make political investment in Myanmar to create the right conditions for repatriation.

He noted that while the world community has spent \$5 billion on Rohingya needs over the past eight

years, and Bangladesh has contributed even more, such assistance has been limited to humanitarian relief and has brought no sustainable solution.

"We have not seen enough progress in justice for the Rohingya genocide. This must be supported and sped up to prevent further atrocities," said another Bangladesh official, referring to the case at the International Court of Justice.

In a statement yesterday, Human Rights Watch UN director Louis Charbonneau said the UN Security Council should follow up on the conference by ending its silence on Myanmar and taking prompt, effective action.

"Building durable solutions for the Rohingya and addressing the root causes of the crisis depend on holding the Myanmar military accountable for its crimes," he said.

Certain int'l quarters trying to foil polls

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He said, in this regard, a lot of money is being poured in, with beneficiaries both inside and outside Bangladesh, according to a statement of the Chief Adviser's Press Wing.

"They are well prepared - that's the dangerous part. The next few months are critical," he said.

On the upcoming polls scheduled for February next year, he said: "We want the February election to be free and peaceful, something Bangladesh has never truly had."

"For years, voter rolls were filled with people who never actually voted. This time, we want to welcome them, especially women, and celebrate their participation. We will launch a major campaign to show people how to vote. Our goal is the highest voter turnout in Bangladesh's history."

Yunus also called on international human rights defenders to continue visiting Bangladesh as the country approaches a "critical time" ahead of the election.

"The most important thing is that you keep visiting. Every time you visit, forgotten issues are brought to light. Ultimately, you are the voice of the people," he said.

The group was led by Kerry Kennedy, president of Robert F Kennedy Human Rights, and the meeting lasted nearly an hour.

Yunus briefed the delegation on Bangladesh's polls preparations, ongoing reform initiatives in key sectors and steps taken to address human rights concerns.

"We started with a completely broken system," he said.

"We invited the UN Human Rights Office to investigate the killings that took place last year, and their report revealed many things. Since then, we have initiated the process of setting up a UN rights mission - an important step forward."

"We also established a commission to investigate cases of enforced disappearance. People are coming forward with horrific stories. Terrible things happened for

years. People were kept in Aynagar [secret detention centres], sometimes without knowing why they were there. The commission has not submitted its full report yet, but we are receiving regular updates."

The chief adviser said 11 commissions were formed to suggest vital reforms in key sectors. A national consensus-building commission is currently working on the recommendations of those reform commissions.

"Political parties are also part of this process," he said, adding that he expects the July Charter, which includes major constitutional reforms, would be signed by political parties by October.

Yunus also urged rights groups to speak out against money laundering.

"The legal system for recovering stolen money is so difficult. I hope rights groups will raise their voice so banks cannot harbour stolen wealth. This is genuinely people's money," he said.

National Citizen Party leader Tasnim Jara, who

was present at the meeting, said young people in Bangladesh fought for structural reforms to ensure the country never again falls back into the situation that triggered the July uprising.

The rights defenders stressed the importance of security sector reform to safeguard human rights.

"To get as many reforms as possible, pressure should be applied on political parties so they maintain the process once parliament is convened," said John Sifton, Asia advocacy director of Human Rights Watch.

Others present included Catherine Cooper, staff attorney, Robert F Kennedy Human Rights; Mandeep Tiwana, secretary general, CIVICUS; Matthew Smith, CEO & founder, Fortify Rights; Sabhanaz Rashid Diya, executive director, Tech Global Institute; Carolyn Nash, Asia advocacy director, Amnesty International; Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman, visiting international scholar, Ohio University; and Jesselina Rana, UN adviser, CIVICUS.

Govts always blame it on conspiracies

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Buddhist monasteries were torched over a fabricated Facebook post, and the post-election violence of 2001 that targeted minorities.

"After the 2001 elections, criminal cases were filed in abundance over the attacks, arson and rape targeting minorities. Only a fraction received justice. This cycle has continued since the 1980s and 1990s. Instead of learning from history, we have gone backwards."

According to him, mobs are not driven by faith-based outrage but mobilised by powerful organisers who exploit religious sentiments for elite benefit.

"Those who attack in the name of Bangalee or Muslim interests do not serve the real majority - the working poor, farmers and labourers. They serve a small group of elites."

He also demanded transparency in land ownership in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. "If the government truly wants peace in the hills, let them publish a list of the names the land has been leased to. Then you will see whose interests are being protected by keeping the region unstable."

Also speaking at the event, Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua, a member of the Ganatantra Odhikar Committee, said 13 years after the attacks at Buddhist monasteries in Ramu, Cox's Bazar, justice has still not been delivered in most of the cases filed.

He said 19 cases were

filed, but investigations in most of them remain incomplete.

Recalling the incidents of September 29 and 30 in 2012, he noted that at least 13 temples were attacked in Ramu, four in Ukhiya and two in Patiya. More than 50 homes were torched. Locals had submitted video evidence at the time.

"In some of those videos, army personnel or BGB members can clearly be seen standing near the temples. The attackers walked past them and set fire, without a single tear gas canister being fired."

He described how a manipulated Facebook post was used as the trigger in Ramu. "A tailor named Uttam Barua did not even own a smartphone. Yet a fake Facebook post was printed and spread in the market. Then announcements were made through loudspeakers to gather people. The same pattern was later used in Cumilla, Rangpur, Sathkira and even in cases where people were lynched on suspicion of insulting religion."

Jyotirmoy also shared another example from Rangpur. "A Muslim man could not repay a loan to a Hindu family. Out of revenge, he spread a rumour online that they had insulted religion. An entire village was burnt."

"In almost every attack I have investigated, leaders or activists of mainstream parties were involved, whether Awami League, BNP, Jamaat or Jatiya Party."

He warned that the damage caused by communal attacks is not only material but also psychological. "Legal punishment cannot heal the mental wounds. When someone is attacked for their identity, they lose trust in society. That pain is never discussed in Bangladesh."

Jyotirmoy called on the state to acknowledge its responsibility. "If the state wants to rebuild harmony, it must first admit its failures and treat these wounds."

Dhaka University professor Samina Luthfa said that in recent years, hate speech under the guise of freedom of expression has become more brazen, creating a dangerous climate of cultural and identity-based conflict.

Communist Party of Bangladesh President Abdullah Al Kafi Ratan said that despite 54 years of independence, no government has ever ruled democratically, and a "second mass uprising" is necessary to fulfil the promises made in 2024.

Singer and writer Arup Raheem said the communal attacks from Ramu to Khagrachhari reflect a dangerous fusion of state and right-wing ideologies, creating what he termed a new form of fascism in Bangladesh.

The event was moderated by DU Chhatra Union President Meghmalla Basu. Economist Sujit Chowdhury also spoke at the event, among others.

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NCP leader quits

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it seriously objectionable and discomfort among his own party leaders.

NCP's Rangamati unit, in an official statement, termed Hanna's remarks "unpolitical and against good manners."

Yesterday, Hannan doubled down on his claims. "I say again: people are using a rape case to make trouble in the hills. Rape is a horrible crime and the criminals must be punished..." he said in a Facebook post.

However, hours after Alik's resignation, Hannan apologised on Facebook for his earlier remarks and deleted the post.

"Yesterday, at a rally in Chandani union of Hatia, I inadvertently and impulsively used the phrase 'fake rape,' which was never my intention... I am embarrassed and sorry...", he wrote.

Talking to The Daily Star, Alik said he found

it seriously objectionable and discomfort among his own party leaders.

According to NCP leaders, some leaders' posts on social media do not reflect the party's official stance.

Party sources said a party meeting will be held soon to address and resolve this issue.

Neighbouring

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"I did not want to name the country, but our journalist brother mentioned that country's name."

"Some terrorists are firing shots from the hills, and these arms are coming from outside."

The overall situation in Khagrachhari is now "under control", the adviser said, calling on everyone to cooperate and not to block roads or cause disruptions during Durga Puja.

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