

## KEY INSTALLATIONS PHQ warns of possible extremist attacks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police Headquarters has alerted law enforcement agencies across the country to a potential threat of attacks on key installations by supporters of a banned extremist organisation.

The warning, contained in an "urgent and confidential" letter issued on April 23, called for heightened surveillance and stronger security measures nationwide.

The directive was issued by a DIG (confidential) at Police Headquarters in Dhaka. Three senior Bangladesh Police officials confirmed the letter to The Daily Star.

According to the document, intelligence suggests regular communication between Istiak Ahmed Sami alias Abu Bakkar, also known as Abu Mohammad – a recently arrested member

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A tiger cools off in a water trough at Chattogram Zoo to escape the scorching heat. Other animals in the zoo are also struggling amid the intense temperature. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## 'No scope for partisan politics' at universities Says Khosru

CU CORRESPONDENT

Finance and Planning Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury called for a strict stance against the entry of outsiders into the Chittagong University campus, saying that universities must remain dedicated solely to academic pursuits.

"Universities are for students. It must be ensured that no outsiders, regardless of their political affiliation or religion, can enter the campus," he said while speaking as the chief guest at the inaugural ceremony of the Saraswati Gyan Mandir on the campus around 10:00am.

Highlighting the importance of diversity in higher education, he said, "Diversity is crucial for a university. Without diversity, progress is not possible."

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# HUMAN TRAFFICKING When cases end in compromise, not conviction

Acquittals rise as victims withdraw, trials drag and evidence remains weak

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and TOUSIF KAIUM

After filing a case in 2020 accusing 14 people of trafficking his son to Libya and extorting money through torture, Mannan Munshi saw it move to trial and pass through years of hearings – only to collapse before charges were framed.

Mannan, from Shariatpur, filed the case with Paltan Police Station on June 14, 2020. He alleged that Monir Howlader, a fellow resident living in Libya, had agreed over the phone to take his son Md Rakib to the North African country.

According to the complaint, Monir initially said no money would be needed. Later, he asked Mannan to give Tk 5,000 and Rakib's passport to his cousin Mohosin for formalities. Mannan said he handed over both on April 4. Rakib's journey was later processed through a travel agency in June 2019 without further payment at that stage.

Soon after Rakib reached Libya, he was captured, Mannan alleged.

"They confined my son in a torture cell and started torturing him for money," he said in the FIR, adding that traffickers would play his son's screams over the phone while demanding ransom.

Mannan said he sold houses and borrowed money to pay Tk 7.05 lakh in two instalments. The torture, however, continued.

He sought punishment for Monir, Mohosin, and others involved.

Police submitted the charge sheet on June 6, 2021, and the Anti-Human Trafficking Prevention Tribunal received the case on September 5. The court later fixed 21 dates for hearings and charge framing.

On February 11, 2024, the tribunal

discharged the accused.

In its order, the tribunal noted allegations that Mohosin Howlader, Monir Hossain, Khokon Howlader, Saiful, Kabir, Shariful Islam Sharif, Jahangir Hossain Matubbar and others trafficked the victim to Libya with



### YEAR-WISE ACQUITTAL TREND

- 2020: 13 of 14 disposed cases ended in acquittal
- 2021: Both disposed cases
- 2022: All 34 disposed cases
- 2023: 415 of 436 cases
- 2024: 342 of 363 cases
- 2025: 236 of 245 cases

false job promises and later extorted money through torture.

However, Mannan and the victim's mother Sohagi Begum later submitted affidavits of compromise and testified in court in support of them.

They said Rakib had gone to Libya through the accused but filed the case after losing contact with him. He later returned home after failing to secure a job and subsequently went to Malaysia.

They told the court they no longer had any complaint and had no objection to discharging the accused.

The tribunal said there were no grounds to frame charges under the Human Trafficking Prevention and Suppression Act, 2012, and released the accused.

The case reflects a broader pattern in Bangladesh, where trafficking cases often end in acquittal as victims or families, worn down by lengthy trials and financial strain, opt for compromise.

Shariful Hasan, associate director of BRAC's migration and youth programme, said, "The desperation to leave Bangladesh through irregular routes remains high, while the state response has fallen short."

He said many migrants are still willing to risk death at sea or detention abroad rather than return home, fuelling trafficking networks.

Official data show how rarely such cases end in conviction.

In 2020, courts disposed of 14 cases, 13 of which ended in acquittal, allowing 43 accused to walk free. In 2021, both disposed cases resulted in acquittal. In 2022, all 34 disposed-of cases ended in acquittal, according to home ministry data.

The number rose sharply in 2023, when 415 of 436 disposed cases ended in acquittal, clearing 1,617 accused people. In 2024, 342 of 363 disposed cases ended in acquittal, releasing 1,250 accused.

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## Compensate the survivors, ensure justice

Demand labour leaders marking  
13th anniv of Rana Plaza tragedy

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Every year on April 24, 60-year-old Josna Begum arrives at the site of the Rana Plaza collapse, clutching a small placard bearing her son's photo – her grief still as raw as it was 13 years ago.

The body of her 20-year-old son, Suruj Mia, was never found beneath the rubble in 2013.

"My husband died when the children were young. I raised my two sons with great difficulty. My elder son is disabled and cannot work. Suruj was the sole earner. He disappeared under the rubble of Rana Plaza. Till today, I have not found his body. I have not received justice. I have not received compensation. As a mother, I want justice for the killing of my son," she said, standing at the site yesterday, still searching for closure.

Marking the anniversary, relatives of the victims, injured workers, and leaders and activists of labour



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## ACC seized, froze assets worth Tk 30,351cr in 2025

DIPAN NANDY

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) seized and froze movable and immovable assets worth a total of Tk 30,351 crore in 2025, after securing 370 court orders to this end, according to ACC's Asset Management Unit.

The figure marks a seven-year high, said the sources, adding that assets worth an average of Tk 2,529 crore were seized and frozen per month in 2025.

In 2024 also, the commission had filed a significant number of applications in court for asset seizure and freezing.

In 2025, the ACC obtained 221 court orders to seize immovable assets including 6,979.43 acres of land, 91 houses, 59 buildings, 192 flats, 60 plots, 450 vehicles, 14 commercial spaces, 10 shops, two markets, two ships, and a shotgun – worth Tk 6,137 crore 22 lakh 39 thousand and 657 – within the country, and assets including two flats, eight vehicles, and two houses worth Tk 96 crore 53 lakh 80 thousand and 25 abroad.

Additionally, through 256 court orders, the ACC froze movable assets worth Tk 23,172 crore 78 lakh 87 thousand and 496 within the country and Tk 944 crore 58 lakh 30 thousand and 916 abroad.

The frozen assets include 6,847 bank accounts, 107 savings certificates, over 60 crore shares in 421 companies, 40 FDRs, five lockers, 321 pay orders, investments in various companies, foreign currencies, and gold.

In 2024, the court ordered seizure of assets worth Tk 375 crore 53 lakh 41 thousand 583 and the freezing of assets worth Tk 300 crore 14 lakh 40 thousand 253 within the country. Outside the country, 244 flats, 20 plots, and 79 apartments

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## Schoolboy vendor finds hope beyond hardship

SDILIP ROY

As evening falls over Rangpur city, eight-year-old Al Amin steps out onto the streets with packets of popcorn in his hands.

During the day, Al Amin attends school like any average eight-year-old. However, once night falls, he has to sell popcorn to earn enough money so that his family can survive.

Al Amin lives with his maternal grandparents – Nasir Uddin and Rabeya Khatun – in a makeshift hut on the land of an abandoned railway in the Muslimpara area near Rangpur Railway Station.

His father, Shahidul Islam, died three years back. After that his mother remarried, which is when he started to live with his grandparents.

Initially, Al Amin's grandparents looked after their expenses, but once grandfather fell ill a year back, the young boy willingly took on the burden of the household.

After struggling to make ends meet

for over a year, Al Amin's life changed last week.

On April 10, The Daily Star published a report about Al Amin's hardships titled, "Schoolboy by day, family's sole breadwinner by night".

Lt Col (ret'd) Zahirul Islam, principal of Monno International School and College in Manikganj, read this report and was deeply moved by Al Amin's story.

"I was deeply saddened after reading Al Amin's story. Why should an eight-year-old have to bear the responsibility of an entire family? He should be going to school and enjoying his childhood. Receiving proper education is his right. It is the responsibility of society to stand beside such families so that children like Al Amin can continue their education without obstacles. That is why I stepped forward," said Zahirul Islam.

The principal has offered to take personal responsibility for Al Amin's education.

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PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Banana trunk rafts race down the Mayur River in Khulna during a competition marking Khulna Day yesterday. Organised by the Greater Khulna Unnayan Sangram Coordination Committee to raise awareness against encroachment and pollution, the event also revived fading rural traditions.