

UTTARA GOLD HEIST

Investigators puzzled over unanswered questions

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Investigators are puzzled over the robbery at Mascot Plaza at Uttara on December 06 where robbers broke into four gold shops and safely got away with the heist worth Tk 20 crore.

Simultaneous collapse of several components of the security system that includes, alarms, security manning and electricity at the time of the robbery raised a number of questions.

The robbery on December 06 was the biggest heist ever in the criminal history of the country where the robbers looted around 120 kg (more than 10,000 bhoris) of gold and unspecified amount of cash.

The owners of the gold shops that have been looted suspect

involvement of a number of employees in the market.

"The CCTV is supposed to be manned and watched throughout the night but on the night the men went home at 12:30 am," said Badal Mia, owner of New Parma Jewellers' one of the gold shops that was looted.

"All the lights in the corridor of the floor were switched off although the lights are not supposed to be off even when the market is closed," he added.

He also said the alarm system of the market was installed in such a way that in case of any unusual activities or break-in the alarm would be activated and the mobile phone of the managing director (MD) and market manager would be alerted automatically. But somehow none of the alarms rang.

Quoting the Managing Director of the market NM Ziaul Haque Badal Mia said that Haque's mobile phone was out of order due to low charge in the battery. "Moreover the manager of the market was in India when the robbery took place," said Badal Mia.

Managing Director of the market NM Ziaul Haque claimed that there was no negligence from the market owners.

"We had installed 3 additional CC cameras with the previously existing four at the jewellery floor in response to the demand from the shop owners. We have also installed two-layer shutter at the entrance of the floor. We deployed 22 security personnel from a private company for 24 hours service, therefore the question of negligence from our

side is untrue," said Haque.

Regarding security alarm Haque said that the security alarms outside market was activated when the robbery took place. "The security personnel of the next building heard the alarm but somehow it did not alert my cell phone," Haque said.

The manager of the market Mominul Islam said that he was abroad when the robbery took place.

However, the MD of the market blamed the security service provider for the robbery.

Direct involvement of the security guards in the gold robbery at Mascot Plaza last week and their disappearance has put the entire security matter under question. According to investigators two of the security guards who were recorded in the CC

camera sawing the steel grills open, had used false addresses while being recruited by the Security Management Service (SMS).

Sirajul Islam, general manager, SMS the security service provider to the Mascot Plaza, admitted that the addresses of one of security guards involved with the crime was false but he said that the address of the second person was correct.

"We recruit on the basis of a certificate issued by the local chairman and also we check academic certificates. One of the security guards who wrote his name Anayet Karim and address Sultanpur, Bakergonj turned out to be false," said Sirajul Islam.

Investigating authority of the case DB (Detective Branch) has found that SMS has been operat-

ing without any authorisation from the government. DB sources said that the so-called security guards provided by SMS did not even receive proper training.

On December 6, the robbers looted gold and cash amounting to over Tk 20 crore from four jewellery shops of Mascot Plaza shopping mall at Uttara. Police have so far detained three security personnel who were on duty and interrogation continues.

The owners of the jewellery shops in the city are concerned about the security of their valuables. According to Bangladesh Jewellers Samity (BJS) leaders between 2001 and 2006 2,45,030 bhoris (2,961 kg) of gold were looted in 22 robberies while the police so far recovered only 230 bhoris.

DHAKA ZOO

New inmates arrive from Kuwait

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

Dhaka Zoo received eleven new inmates from Kuwait Zoo on Sunday under an exchange programme.

A male Beisa Oryx, two couples of Hamadryads Baboon, a couple of Dingo and two couples of Vervet Monkey arrived in Dhaka on Saturday night on a special flight of the Kuwait Airways.

A team of experts from Kuwait Zoo headed by Dr Medhat Alaily, director general and consultant of the Agricultural Affairs Ministry of

that they brought these animals under an exchange programme. "We are taking a pair of Royal Bengal Tigers, a pair of Barking Deer and a Hippo back to Kuwait Zoo," Alaily said.

Among the new members, Hamadryads Baboons and Vervet Monkeys were in the Dhaka zoo in the past. But for the first time ever the zoo would be displaying Oryx and Dingoes. Inclusion of these animals increased the number of the species to 151 at Dhaka Zoo.

Aminul Huq Khan, Animal Nutritionist of Kuwait Zoo hoped

ferocious and aggressive. The visitors should maintain a distance from these Baboons. Usually these Baboons are available in Madagascar and its neighbouring countries in Africa.

Vervet Monkeys are also available in that region but they are different in nature than the Baboons, Aminul said. He said that Vervet Monkeys, which are also called Green monkey, are friendly and they love to be fed by humans.

Beisa Oryx is herbivorous and available in Arabian Peninsulas. The zoo authority brought one male Oryx. They are now plan-



Dingo
Kuwait brought these animals and handed them over to Kazi Fazlul Haque, curator of Dhaka Zoo in a simple ceremony yesterday. Dr Medhat Alaily told Star City

Beisa Oryx Antelope
that the animals would breed in large numbers with proper nutrition and care. About the habitat of the new members of the Dhaka Zoo, Aminul said that Hamadryads Baboons are

Hamadryads Baboon
ning to add a female member. The Dingoes are Australian in origin. Dingoes can be called Australian dogs, Aminul said. Kazi Fazlul Haque, the curator of Dhaka Zoo said that the zoo

Vervet Monkey
authority would keep the new animals in quarantine for the next 15 days to give them some time to adapt to the new environment. Within this period the authority will monitor their behaviour and physi-

cal status closely and after that period they will be put on display for the visitors. Kazi Fazlul Haque hoped that the new animals would attract more visitors especially the children. During

the hand over ceremony Fahim, a class three student of Monipur High School was present and said that the Green Monkeys attracted him most. "They were really funny and I will come here again to see them," he said.

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"We politicians should be more accountable. But do the teachers, engineers, bureaucrats or others have any [responsibility]?"

--Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan
BNP Secretary General
Said while addressing Ngorik Forum organised by Centre for Policy Dialogue at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star.

"It is unfortunate that all posts are now controversial, even if we resign from the posts of advisers anyone would hardly agree to become an adviser"

--Akbar Ali Khan
Finance Adviser
Told reporters at his office, on Tuesday. Source: The Daily Star.

"From Zobra to Oslo -- it is a long journey of 30 years"

--Dr Muhammad Yunus
First Bangladeshi Nobel Laureate
Told a press conference on the eve of the Nobel Prize ceremony in Oslo, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star.

"A time will come when students will be asked in which government's tenure did you pass the SSC exam"

--Khaled Khan
Renowned actor
Said at a certificate giving ceremony at Shishu Academy, on Friday. Source: Prothom Alo.

"We are not saying that these are fake voters, these are excess and duplicate names, and it's because of migration"

--Owen Lippert
Residential Director of Washington-based National Democratic Institute
Told reporters, on Sunday. Source: The Daily Star.

"This is like realising ransom after abduction"

--SM Jaharul Islam
Outgoing home secretary, now environment and forest secretary
Told reporters that such practice to bring changes at the top level of the administration under a package deal will remain as a bad example in bureaucracy, on Thursday. Source: The Daily Star.

"There is a number of reasons for that as Bangladesh is no longer George Harrison's Bangladesh of 1971"

--John Gastright
US Deputy Assistant Secretary
Said in an interview with UNB when asked why the election of Bangladesh is so important for USA, on Tuesday. Source: The Daily Star.

Compiled by: Durdana Ghias

KNOCKED OUT AND ROBBED

Kotwali police help a man, identified as Shahjahan, seek medical attention at Bahadur Shah Park area. He was found lying unconscious in a bus coming from Tongi. Shahjahan was somehow administered a dose of a strong sedative and robbed of all his valuables. His trouser pocket is seen slashed open.

DHAKA BOOK FAIR

Ambience marred by conflict

Discord between publishers and organisers keep book lovers at bay

WAHIDA MITU

The ambience of National Book Fair is marred by a conflict between publishers and organisers.

With the theme to build a harmonious society, this year 13th Dhaka Book Fair started from December 1. But a discord between the National Book Centre (NBC) authorities and the publishers is brewing trouble.

The fair organised by NBC has been taking place in January every year since 1995 to mark January 1 as National Book Day and January 1-7 as National Book week.

"But this year, considering

the upcoming election at the end of January, we decided to organise the fair in advance in December," said Shafiqul Islam, Director, NBC.

On the other hand, publishers considering the present political situation demanded postponement of the fair and suggested to arrange the fair in March or in April. But the publishers' pleas were brushed aside by the NBC.

"As the present director is going on leave preparatory to retirement (LPR) at the end of this month he hurriedly arranged the fair this month without paying heed to our request. For this reason we have boycotted the fair" said Saeed Bari, proprietor of Shuchipatra.

Oitijho, Agami, Shomoy, Shikha and Muktohdara are also not participating this year, he added.

The participatory publishers are not happy as few book lovers are seen on the fair premises and sale is not up to the mark.

AKM Kamruzzaman of University Press Limited (UPL) said that, the selling in the fair is not satisfactory. He pointed out that the present political situation, and the inadequate publicity for the fair is not encouraging book lovers to visit the event. He also said, as most schools are yet to finish their final examinations, the school going children cannot visit the fair.

"The number of visitors is

satisfactory but the sale is worse than the previous Dhaka Book Fair," said Sabuj of Ananya Prakashani.

However, Biplob Farooq from Mijan publishers expressed a different view. He said sale is better than the previous fair, held in January this year.

"The fair usually takes place in January. So there should have been adequate publicity," said a publisher.

The NBC Director said they have given advertisement in different media within their limitation.

"Due to political instability we get no sponsorship to run the fair. As a result NBC had to bear all the expenses," he said.

Publishers said research-oriented books, children's books, science fictions, adapted books and books from eminent writers were well received by the readers.

Some publishers brought out new books. University Press Limited (UPL) published 14 books. Ananya Prakashani and Mizan Publications published 10 each.

The beginning of the fair did not attract many visitors, but a rush was seen in the last few days.

The fair remains open for visitors from 2:30pm to 8:30pm on weekdays and 11:00am to 8:30pm on holidays. Entry fee is Tk two. The fair ends on December 16.