

Hasina's APS held

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Chittagong University correspondent.

A single-barrel gun and two cartridges were found at Bilahachhara of Pekua in Cox's Bazar.

The troops rounded up one person, seized a single-barrel gun, 20 cartridges and five other lethal weapons from Sonua under Banshkhalai upazila while they arrested another with a pipe gun from Chandraghona in Rangunia.

Our correspondent in Tangail reports, joint forces led by the army held Sarishabari upazila Jubo Dal leader Faezul Kabir Talukdar at the upazila headquarters on Tuesday.

Faezul Kabir Talukdar alias Shahin Talukdar, 40, is also the chairman of Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) in Sarishabari, sources said.

Joint forces of the army and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) 11 arrested four alleged criminals and recovered a revolver, a local LG (light gun), a pistol, 50 grams of gunpowder and a few knives in

Tongi and Gazipur on Monday, according to our Gazipur correspondent.

The arrestees, Haris Mia, 25, and Soheli alias Munshi, 22, from Barabari in Gazipur, Bachchu Mia, 30, and ATM Javed Hossain, 30, from Tongi had robbery; hijacking and rape cases filed against them, Police sources said.

The joint forces in Satkhira yesterday arrested two listed criminals including a local Jubo Dal leader, said our correspondent.

The two arrested are Badruzzaman Badru, former president of Tala upazila Jubo Dal and a listed criminal in Tala, and Duke, a listed criminal in Jessore, police sources said.

Several cases had been filed against Badru and Duke with Tala, Patkelghata and Kotwali police stations.

Our Narsingdi correspondent reports: The joint forces detained BNP Raipura upazila unit secretary and UP chairman Faizur Rahman along with six others yesterday.

ORIENTAL BANK HC asks why anti-graft action against officials won't be illegal

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule asking for explanation why the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) action in suing Oriental Bank officials, including its former managing director CM Koyes Sami, should not be declared illegal.

Responding to a writ petition filed by Sami, a division bench comprising Justice MA Wahhab Mian and Justice M Emdadul Huq issued the rule.

Earlier on Sunday, the bench had issued similar rule upon the ACC following writ petitions filed by the four bankers charged with defalcation of the bank money.

"All the rules will come up for hearing today," a court source said.

On January 25, Kazi Monjur Hossain, a senior assistant vice-president of Oriental Bank, lodged a criminal case against Orion Group chief Obaidul Karim, bank's MD CM Koyes Sami and 22 other incumbent and former officials of the bank for embezzling Tk 596.44 crore in connivance with one another.

Advocate Habibul Islam Bhuiyan appeared for the accused, Koyes Sami.

1.75 lakh sacks

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forces arrived at his business establishment, sources said.

The joint forces raided Mashud & Brothers and Ahmed Trading at Khatunganj at around 11:30am. From there they detained three of Mashud & Brothers' staff – Subhash Chowdhury, Mohammad Ali and Abdur Rahman, and an Ahmed Trading official Sabir Ahmed.

During primary interrogations, the four revealed that their firms are involved in hoarding huge quantities of basic commodities in three warehouses rented from Victory Jute Mill in the AK Khan Gate area under Paharati Police Station of the city, added the sources.

The four arrestees led the joint forces to the warehouses where huge quantities of adulterated goods were found stockpiled in thousands of sacks. Hundreds of workers were busy mixing up sub-standard and unsafe goods with quality edible goods to be supplied to wholesale and retail markets all over the country.

The seized items included 50,000 sacks of wheat, 50,000 sacks of sugar, 25,700 sacks of lentil, 23,720 sacks of mustard seeds and 28,450 sacks of peas.

The present wholesale value of the goods was estimated at around Tk 35 crore, sources said.

The four arrestees were not handed over to police till submitting this report yesterday evening.

Bogra torture

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were suspended after a primary investigation conducted by Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Khan Sayeed Hasan into the police brutality following the publication of a photograph in The Daily Star the day before.

The OC was closed to the DIG range office of Rajshahi while the other four were closed to Bogra Police Lines. The police authority also formed an inquiry committee and asked them to submit the report by January 30.

A two-tola gold necklace was found from Ratan Kumar, who police tortured after hanging from the ceiling at Sadar Police Station on January 25, without showing him arrested as a suspect in a 25-tola gold theft case. He later confessed his involvement with the crime.

Cops beat one to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A freedom fighter was beaten to death by police yesterday at Neha village under Sadar upazila of the district.

The victim was identified as Abdul Wahab, 55, son of another freedom fighter Amin Uddin of Chhoygharia under the same upazila.

A police team led by Sub-Inspector Jasim of Sadar Police Station arrested Wahab from Neha intersection while he, along with, four others were playing cards at about 12:30pm yesterday, witnesses said.

Wahab became unconscious and fell on the ground as SI Jasim beat him mercilessly soon after his arrest.

The on-duty doctor declared him dead after he was taken to hospital.

The victim's son Asaduzzaman alleged that the police beat his father to death adding he would file a case later on.

Wahab's body was handed over to his relatives after post-mortem.

Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Delwar Hossain Sayeed of Sadar circle said the victim died due to cardiac arrest as he tried to run away sensing police presence.

Freedom fighters protested the killing of Wahab and demanded punishment of the police official.

Fair polls not enough

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hope the (present) CG would soon announce a 'roadmap' for what it wants to do and how much time it would take."

Akbar Ali Khan, former adviser of Iajuddin Ahmed's CG, said "Since people don't want to see again a farcical election like the one scheduled (already cancelled) for January 22, necessary tasks need to be completed first. But the caretaker government should first see how much time it has and what it can do within this period."

He suggested the CG to hand over power to an elected government before June so that the new government prepares the budget for next fiscal year.

The previous elected government did not take steps necessary for fuel, power and financial sectors, he said. "If the caretaker government prepares the budget, it will have to take some steps which the previous elected government did not take. And this may create controversy about it."

The former adviser went on, "Without deciding itself how long it would stay in power, the caretaker government should work in line with the Supreme Court instructions in this regard. Let the timeframe be fixed by the legal system."

Echoing his views about power handover before budget preparation, Hafizuddin Khan, adviser of the 2001 CG, asked the present CG to speed up its activities.

But Syed Manzur Elahi, adviser of the 1996 and 2001 CGs, said he is ready to see this CG in power for even two years to complete its fundamental tasks. "Without fundamental reforms in political practices, what is the use of an election if the corrupt and black-money holders are elected again?"

He said, "Cost of business went up by 3 to 7 percent due to extortion and corruption... We had to pay the local MPs toll every month. How would people do business?"

Manzur asked the CG to arrest two most corrupt politicians without naming them, and said many businessmen and public servants show zero tolerance to corruption. "Arrest of petty criminals would not do."

Akbar Ali said after the CG reconstitutes the Election Commission (EC), the new EC should take all necessary decisions regarding voter roll updating, preparation of voter ID card and transparent ballot box.

INSTITUTIONALISING DEMOCRACY & FREE AND FAIR ELECTION

Observing that democratic values have been spoilt over the years – voice of opposition parties was not heard, constitutional bodies and public administration were not allowed to function freely... Akbar Ali said there is no difference between democracy with narrow outlook and autocracy.

"Since the present caretaker government has public support, it can enforce some rules for the practice of democracy," said Wahiduddin Mahmud, adviser of the 1996 CG.

And Rokia Afzal Rahman, adviser of the 2001 CG, described the present situation as a window of opportunity for fixing such rules.

Wahiduddin said, "The future of democracy depends not only on a free, fair and acceptable election free from black money but also on the quality of the lawmakers." He proposed implementation of a long-term strategy for establishment of 'democratic good governance', and noted that a national consensus is necessary for it.

Prof Zillur Rahman asked for caution so that the next government cannot nullify such steps after coming to power.

Maj Gen (retd) Moynul Hossain Chowdhury, adviser of the 2001 CG, said a vital issue like politics cannot be the subject of politicians only. The people need to be involved in it.

To strengthen democracy, Prothom Alo Joint Editor Abdul Qaiyum suggested that the CG in consultation with the Supreme Court can take initiative to introduce provisions for selecting the deputy speaker from the opposition and resignation of the speaker and deputy speaker from their parties after their selection.

The Representation of People's Order (RPO) and other election rules must be implemented fully, which will also ensure transparency in democratic practices, noted the former advisers.

Amendment to the RPO and its full application with that of other election rules will contribute a lot to institutionalising democracy, they felt.

As the advisers asked the CG to make rules for registration of political parties, Akbar Ali said, "The parties which will seek symbols for contesting elections must get registered."

If one is allowed to contest elections if he is not a member of a political party for at least for three years, many black money holders will disqualify for polls race, he added.

Use of black money and other corrupt practices during elections can be checked a lot if the Anti-Corruption Commission, National Board of Revenue, police, intelligence agencies and Bangladesh Bank that investigate suspicious transactions assist the EC, the advisers said.

Sultana Kamal, adviser of Iajuddin's CG, suggested poll campaign through the media, especially television, to prevent use of back money for this. "Without spreading ill about rivals, let the political parties come up with specific manifestos," she said.

She suggested strengthening the local governments and stressed the role of citizens forums for institutionalising democracy.

"If the MPs concentrate on their

duties in parliament and do not interfere in local development works, corruption will reduce a lot," said Monzur Elahi.

On the role of the media, Wahiduddin Mahmud said the CG can get a reflection of people's acceptance of its activities if the media is allowed to work freely.

INDEPENDENT CONSTITUTIONAL BODIES & PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

The constitutional bodies and public institutions have been destroyed by bringing in most incompetent people over the years, observed Zillur Rahman, Sultana Kamal and Monzur Elahi.

The EC, ACC, Accountant General's office and Public Service Commission need strong leadership that will function properly despite the influence of political parties, the former advisers said. They stressed a transparent system to ensure appointment of competent persons.

They proposed formation of a body that would assist the CG in selecting such persons.

"Depoliticising the administration is easy if the top officials are sincere," Akbar Ali noted.

Ansar-VDP

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Ansar on May 20, 1996 during the then caretaker government as Ansar failed to complete payment for the land on time. Later, the ministry allotted the land to Shobujmoti Trust (SMT) on July 12, 2000 for building a general hospital.

Ansar made their move to occupy the land 11 years after their allotment was cancelled, said a surprised SMT official.

SMT filed a writ petition with the High Court on February 1, 2005 after the ministry under the BNP-Jamaat alliance government cancelled the allotment to SMT on November 25, 2004. Later on April 26, 2005 the ministry issued work order to a company for development of a park on the land.

Following the writ petition filed by SMT, the High Court Division Bench issued an injunction to the ministry on February 2, 2006. The Court directed the Ansar not to make any construction on the land and not to change the nature and character of the land in any manner till disposal of the previous stayed rule issued by High Court on January 2, 2005 which is still pending and yet to be disposed of.

Mohammad Shafiqur Rahman, executive director of SMT, alleged that Ansar and VDP occupied the land ignoring the injunction issued by the High Court. "We purchased the land at a rate of Tk 40 lakh per bigha as determined by public works ministry in 2000. But Ansar and VDP occupied the land without informing the magistrate and the police, although an injunction was issued by the High Court," he told The Daily Star.

However, Colonel Abul Kalam Mohammad Zaki, director (admin) of Bangladesh Ansar and VDP, denied the allegation and said they did not violate the High Court order and occupied the land legally. The piece of land has been serving as a play ground and it is known as 'Choudhury Para Pachaar Math (playground) to the locals since eighties, a local said while The Daily Star correspondent was visiting the spot.

Khilaog Police Station officer-in-charge Ruhul Amin said Ansar and SMT did not inform the police about the land and he did not receive any complaint till 7:30 pm yesterday evening. Locals alleged that the Ansars brutally clubbed onlookers while a few TV channels were taking public opinion at around 8:15pm on the occupying of the land by Ansars.

BIWTA

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DHAKA CITY CORPORATION (DCC)

Five people were injured during a Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) drive yesterday to knock down establishments near Bashundhara Shopping Mall at Panthapath in the city.

The DCC officials, in presence of Rab and police personnel, destroyed several roadside shops and restaurants located at the left side of the mall.

According to the local people, five people were injured as they were working inside a roadside restaurant during the drive.

Two of the injured – Bilal Hossain and Mohammed Yusuf – were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

WASADRIVE

A mobile court of the Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) yesterday realised Tk 10,00,000 from a factory of former MP Kaikobad at Tejaogon industrial area.

Later, the court raided Bengal Trading International to realise Tk 4,92,000 but found it locked. However, they found an illegal deep tubewell connection and cut it off.

The court, led by magistrate Kazi Wachhiuddin, also disconnected the illegal connection of water pipelines of Jenny Kabab in Gulshan and detained one staff.

They also disconnected some other water pipeline connections of Badda and Uttara areas.

Acting CEC quits

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Commission, but we became the victims of the situation," he added.

Justice Mahfuz and Mansur returned to the EC from Bangabhaban but declined to make any comment about the resignation.

"Bangabhaban will tell everything by issuing a press release," Justice Mahfuz told reporters on the EC premises.

Mansur said they went to Bangabhaban at the president's invitation for a cup of tea.

Asked why he was leaving the office as early as 3:00pm, he told reporters, "Guess applying your common sense why I am leaving before the end of office hour."

Three other election commissioners – Zakaria, Modabir and Saiful – did not return to EC from Bangabhaban.

President Iajuddin Ahmed had appointed all the election commissioners: Justice MA Aziz as CEC on May 23, 2005, Zakaria and Mahfuz on January 16, 2006, and Mansur on August 31 last year – all on advice of the then BNP-led government. He then suddenly appointed Modabir and Saiful on November 27 last year, keeping in dark and annoying the then council of advisers.

With six election commissioners, the Aziz-led EC became the largest one ever in the history of Bangladesh, but it completely failed to build people's confidence in it for holding a free and fair election.

It failed to conduct the ninth parliamentary elections scheduled for January 22 and formally cancelled the election in line with a decision of the present caretaker government.

The council of advisers to the immediate past caretaker government headed by President Iajuddin Ahmed faced tremendous difficulties in reconstituting the EC as neither Aziz nor SM Zakaria agreed to resign.

The BNP-led four-party alliance was also rigid against the resignation of the two commissioners appointed by the BNP government.

Law Adviser Mainul Hossain yesterday said the resignation of the five

commissioners will end all problems the EC recast has been facing.

Meanwhile, BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday urged the government to appoint people with no records of playing controversial role in the past or at present as the CEC and commissioners.

In a statement, Bhuiyan hoped that the government will prove the eligibility of the EC through reconstituting it with such persons who are absolutely non-partisan and have been competent in their careers.

"The government should be sincere so that nobody can raise questions about the acceptability of the members of reconstituted Election Commission," he said.

Rajshahi mayor

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Minu used Editor Motiur Rahman, Publisher Mahfuz Anam and Reporter Kamrul Hasan for running a report on Tuesday terming him as a 'godfather' of Islamic militants.

The CMM Afzal Hossain ordered the officer-in-charge of Boalia police station to investigate into the case and submit a report by March 2.

The court also fixed March 4 as the next date for hearing of the case.

According to the Prothom Alo report, the mayor helped Siddikul Islam alias Bangla Bhai in his militant activities in Rajshahi in 2004 and also offered him money.

Corrections

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company, which was attested by the Canadian High Commission in Dhaka recently.

In fact, the draft contract was attested by the Bangladesh High Commission in Canada, not by the Canadian High Commission in Dhaka.

In a clarification, the Canadian embassy asserted that it does not promote any individual organisation.

We apologise for the mistake.

ERROR IN CLAUSE

We made another inadvertent mistake in a report headlined "Polls must be interim govt's main priority" on January 30. Former law minister Abdul Matin Khoshru made a reference of the clause 118 in the constitution, but it was published as clause 158. We regret the error.

Govt to seek

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"The matter would be reviewed further at the advisory council's meeting," he said, adding, "That is why the government will seek two weeks time from the court."

The matter is scheduled for hearing today in the SC.

On January 16, President Iajuddin Ahmed approved the four rules of the judicial services – Judicial Service Commission Rule 2002, Bangladesh Judicial Service Pay Commission Rule 2002, Bangladesh Judicial Service (Service Constitution, Composition, Recruitment, Suspension, Dismissal and Removal) Rules 2002, and Bangladesh Judicial Service (Posting, Promotion, Leave, Control, Discipline and other Service Condition) Rules 2001.

The rules relevant to separating the judiciary from the executive have been published through gazette notifications. The much-expected separation of the judiciary now requires only an amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) as per the 12-point directive of the Supreme Court (SC) given in 1999.

On January 21, the SC said it had detected some errors in the rules and those need to be corrected.

The court also asked the attorney general to minutely re-examine the rules, get rid of the flaws and issue a gazette notification on the amended CrPC.

Businessman

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about 2:30pm on Tuesday, Rab officials said.

"While searching, the team found one shotgun, two double-barrel guns, one argun and three walkie-talkies. They also seized 5,242 cartridges and 5,373 rounds of ammunition from the house," said the case statement.

The Rab said the firearms and ammunition were "illegal".

Anwar told the Rab that he had negligence in renewing the licences of the firearms and ammunition and that he has had no valid documents of those since the licences expired three years ago, Rab sources said.

Anwar claimed that he collected the firearms and ammunition as a "hobby" and "not for committing any crime". He said he used the firearms and ammunition to hunt birds.

Anwar was handed over to Ramna police and a case under the Arms Act was filed against him.

Ramna police produced Anwar before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court yesterday afternoon with a prayer for a five-day remand.

In the forwarding report, the investigation officer said Anwar needs to be quizzed to find out the whereabouts of his accomplices and seize more firearms and ammunition.

The defence lawyers had submitted a petition seeking bail along with cancellation of the remand prayer, saying their client is innocent and he possessed the firearms and ammunition as a hobby.

They, however, could not produce any valid documents of the firearms and ammunition.

After the hearing, the court rejected the bail petition and sent Anwar on a two-day remand.

Charge goes up

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operate without such a crane at a port.

After installing the cranes last year, the number of ships calling at Chittagong Port increased significantly, sources said, adding that the port authorities increased the charge following a compensation claim Sai Powertec Limited that was awarded the job of container handling as the handling of containers through port operators was very slow.

The company issued a letter claiming Tk 10 lakh compensation per day following a work stoppage programme enforced by the port operators.

The private operation of the crane was stopped for around one month due to opposition by a section of dock workers backed by Chittagong city Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury.

They besieged the Chittagong Container terminal, obstructed the operation of cranes by the private company and demanded cancellation of the agreement signed with it.

The port operators forcibly stopped the activities of the private company more than once during the political agitation programme of the Awami league-led 14-party alliance in November-December last year.

The operation was stopped from November 12 last year and the private company resumed the operation on December 15, following a High Court order that asked the port authority to restore the operation by the private company for three months.

The High court also issued a rule nisi asking the CPA to explain why the suspension of the cranes would not be declared illegal and unlawful.

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million as education sector support credit and another \$40 million as railway sector policy support from the World Bank.

Another official said the government had informal talks with the World Bank for release of the funds as a number of major conditions for the aid have already been fulfilled or under process.

Funds for the development support credit and railway reform policy might be released next month while there is a chance of getting the education sector support credit by the end of the current fiscal, the sources said.

"Privatisation of Rupali Bank is in the final stage and steps will be taken soon for corporatisation of four nationalised commercials banks," a finance ministry official said terming the moves as major conditions for the World Bank fund. He said the donors are also happy with the move to separate the judiciary from the executive branch of the government and about the move to revitalise the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC).

About the sale of Rupali Bank, finance ministry sources said the government agreed to sell the bank's 67 percent share to the Saudi prince for \$330 million. Later, the buyer offered the government to buy another 26 percent share for \$128 million. "The government is considering the proposal positively," an official said.

He said a deal might be signed next month with the Saudi prince on selling Rupali Bank, if the government agrees with his proposal.

The Bangladesh Bank's recently released economic policy statement also asked the government to take immediate steps to sell Rupali Bank.

The central bank sources said the government was compelled to

borrow a large amount of money from the banking sector in recent times due to declining foreign aid and low revenue earning.

The government's total borrowing from the banking sector was Tk 6,300 crore from July 1, 2006 to January 9, 2007, sources said adding that the bank borrowing limit was fixed at Tk 5,434 crore for the entire fiscal in the budget.

About the ADP implementation, sources said only 20 percent of the ADP has been implemented in the first five months of the fiscal. A source however pointed out that government borrowing from banks increased despite low implementation of ADP.

He said the GDP growth will also be affected with the slow pace of ADP implementation and for this the interim government has emphasised on increased ADP implementation during the remaining period of the fiscal, requiring more money.

The chief adviser talked on the matter while addressing the secretaries on Tuesday where he said the government will not tolerate any dilly-dallying in ADP implementation.

The finance ministry sources said the government is now contemplating to cut some less important projects of the current fiscal and to provide money for more important projects.

"The government will review the ADP next week to identify the most important projects," a source said.

Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam held separate meetings with the planning ministry and the External Relations Division (ERD) officials on Wednesday and discussed the progress of ADP implementation of the current fiscal.

Revised ADP

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for the upcoming RADP emphasise the need for prioritising projects for inclusion in the RADP and asked for suspension of projects deemed "not important".

If the locally funded projects cannot be cut from the RADP, they would be marked as "de-prioritised" for slow implementation, while the donor-funded projects have been prioritised.

Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Haque met with high-level planning ministry officials to discuss the criteria for project approval in the RADP and which projects would be sent to the Executive Committee on National Economic Council (Ecne) for approval.

The Ecne, which has not met since the BNP-led government handed over power to the caretaker government, may hold a meeting next week.

Sources also said the planning ministry will review the ongoing projects under the current ADP in a meeting next week.

The decision to approve or disapprove projects will be taken by the end of February to determine the size of the RADP.

Economic Relations Division (ERD) Secretary Md Aminul Islam Bhuiyan led a government delegation at a meeting yesterday while local USAID country chief Gene George led the local consultative group (LCG) of donors. The meeting was held at the National Economic Council auditorium.

The ERD secretary informed the LCG about the new caretaker government's commitment to reforming and expediting the government development programmes. He also urged the LCG to quickly release funds in the pipeline to accelerate implementation of the donor-funded ADP programmes.

Sources said currently nearly \$900 million of the earmarked donor funds is still in the pipeline. A poor disbursement of \$294 million took

place in the six months of the current fiscal year while \$1.5 billion was disbursed in the last fiscal year.

The LCG asked the government to apprise them of the progress on the 11 key action points agreed by the government and its development partners to apply before the next Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation Forum (PIFM).

The LCG also proposed holding the fourth meeting of the PIFM Joint Committee for Monitoring the Implementation Progress of the poverty reduction strategy in the third week of February.

Indian firm

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obtained by the BHEL in Bangladesh. The first was a 100MW plant at Baghabari in Sirajganj. The project was installed in 2002.

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