

HJACKED SHIP
3 Bangladeshis,
other crewmen
released

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The three hijacked Bangladeshis along with 14 other crewmen of a UAE-flagged oil tanker were released yesterday.

MV Jubba XX and its 17 crew members were hijacked by the Somali pirates on July 16 from Umm Al Qaiwain port.

The three Bangladeshi crewmen are Mohammad Nurul Islam and Nurul Amin, two brothers Nunachhara village of Sitakunda, and Jahurul Alam of Mirsarai of Chittagong.

Nurul Islam's wife Baby Begum told The Daily Star that her husband telephoned her around 2:00pm after the release.

All the crewmembers are in good condition, she said.

Bengal Tigers

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alongside poaching deer.

In another instance on February 17, forest officials arrested poacher Jamal Fakir along with four tiger skulls, 138 bones and hides of two adult tigers and one adult tigress in Sharankhola upazila in Bagerhat.

Earlier in 2009, Rapid Action Battalion-1 recovered skin of an adult tiger and arrested three people on Moillapota Road in Khulna.

Nearly every part of a tiger including, flesh, fat, claws, eyeballs, tail, bile, teeth, whisker, penis and brain has a prescribed benefit according to the tenets of Chinese medicine.

Of all tiger parts, bones are the most valuable. Tiger bone is ground into powder before being made into pills, plasters and decoctions containing herbs. Tiger skin is also valuable in the international market for its ornamental value.

Tiger is treated as one of the most critically endangered animals fast disappearing from the world, with only 3,200 big cats (Penthera Tigris) surviving in the wild.

Back in 1900, there were around 100,000 tigers around the globe, says International Tiger Report. Experts predict the species will be extinct in the next century if strong measures are not taken.

The Bangladesh part of the Sundarbans, a stretch of 6,017 square kilometres of forest, is officially home to 450 tigers and is considered as the highest number of big cat habitation in a single forest.

The latest survey finds the number of big cats is ranging between 400 and 450.

The last pugmark survey by the forest department and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2004 estimated the number to be around 440 including 21 cubs.

Earlier surveys conducted by Guy Mountfort in 1969 estimated 50 to 100 tigers, Hendrichs 350 in 1975, Salter jointly with the Department of Forest 450 to 600 in 1984, while Gittins and Akonda found 430-450 tigers in 1982. Another survey referred as Jalil estimated 362 tigers in a report released in 1998 while the study was conducted in 1993.

The tiger had a wide distribution in overall Bangladesh.

According to a report of International Union for Conservation (IUCN) published on Bengal Tigers of the Sundarbans, the last tiger shot outside the Sundarbans was in Sal forest in 1956, in the Bhawals in 1970s, in the mixed evergreen forest of Kassalong in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in 1976 and in the mixed evergreen forest of Puthalia hills of Sylhet in 1985.

With the help of the Global Tiger Initiatives, Bangladesh, one of the Tiger Ranged Countries (TRC), has already developed a National Tiger Recovery Programme and Tiger Action Plan and also amended the Wildlife Conservation Act that ensures compensation for victim of a Tiger attacks in the Sundarbans.

Since 2000, tigers killed 193 people, while 30 tigers were beaten to death and some others were found dead in the forest, according to official records of the forest department.

HC orders probe

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police beat and picked up Quader from Segunbagicha area in the capital around 1:30am on July 16 on suspicion of a robbery, although Quader explained to them that he was returning to his dormitory on Dhaka University Campus from one of his relative's apartment in Holy Family Hospital doctors' quarters.

Police allegedly beat Quader severely in custody as well, and Officer-in-charge Helal Uddin chopped the calf muscle of one of his legs with a cleaver. He has been languishing in jail for the past 11 days, and police so far filed three cases against him.

The HC bench yesterday morning ordered the heads of Mohammadpur and Khilgaon police stations to appear before it along with Quader at 3:30pm to explain their acts -- just hours after a report headlined "Police out to 'frame' youth" was published in The Daily Star.

The court in the morning also directed the Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner to ensure production of Quader before it and requested Chairman of the Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Department of Dhaka University Prof Mamun Rashid Chowdhury, and National Human Rights Commission Chairman Mizanur Rahman to be present before it for placing their statements.

Citing the news which detailed the agony of the amiable young man, the HC bench expressed concern over the way he has been treated so far, and also issued a rule upon the respondents to explain within two weeks why the detention and torture of Quader should not be declared illegal.

In a very rare move, the court waited more than half an hour after its normal working hours to start the hearing, because police were delaying to produce Quader from Dhaka Central Jail.

Police produced Quader in a wheelchair before the HC bench around 5:00pm.

The court announced the directives in a jam-packed courtroom around 6:45pm.

The three police officers, who have been ordered to be suspended, are officer-in-charge of Khilgaon Police Station Helal Uddin, Sub-Inspector Alam Badsha, and Assistant SI Shahidur Rahman.

The three will have to be suspended so that they cannot influence investigation, the court said. Their suspension will remain in force until further order of the HC.

The HC bench requested National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to hold a separate investigation of the incident.

It passed the directives after hearing statements from victim Abdul Quader, Prof Mizanur Rahman, Prof Mamun Rashid Chowdhury, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, Additional Attorney General MK Rahman, Advocate Abdul Matin Khasru, and OC of Khilgaon Police Station Helal Uddin.

During the hearing, Quader told the court that

13,582 bullets

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around 3:30am, he said. A dog squad helped Rab sniff out the stash.

The bullets (model -7.62) were kept in 50 packets, which were stashed in five sacks, said the Rab official. A trunk was also found which had bomb-making materials and explosives weighing 13kg, Rashidul added.

Quoting experts of Rab's bomb disposal unit, he said the explosives were made locally.

He said up to 100 small bombs could be made with the seized explosives.

He, however, said the explosives they recovered were different from those seized from militants earlier. Militants usually use stock foreign-made explosives, the Rab-1 chiefs said.

The Rab official said they could not ascertain the origin of the bullets, as they had no labels.

plainclothes police detained him from Segunbagicha area around 1:30am on July 16 while he was returning to his dormitory, Fazlul Haq Muslim Hall from his cousin's house at Holy Family Hospital doctors' quarters.

The police beat him mercilessly and took him to Khilgaon Police Station by a police van, although he said that he is a student of Dhaka University and not involved in any criminal activity.

Quader said police did not produce him before any magistrate although he requested them to do so.

OC Helal Uddin slashed the calf muscle of one of his legs with a cleaver around 10:00am on July 16 in the cell of Khilgaon Police Station, headed.

Other persons who gave depositions said they do not believe that Quader was involved in any crime, and they condemned the way he was tortured and detained by police.

Quader's mother Monwara Begum, 55, and sister Zannatul Mawa, a Chittagong University student, were present during the hearing. Quader's father Abdur Rouf is the acting upazila education officer at Devidwar, Comilla. They hail from Anandapur village of Burichong upazila of Comilla.

After the hearing, the court ordered police to take Quader directly to the hospital.

NHRC chief

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the High Court yesterday during the hearing on a suo moto rule over police torture on Abdul Quader.

Law enforcers are accusing people in arms cases by planting arms on them after arrest, he said.

"We should be ashamed of such inhuman acts. We are worried by the action of law enforcers at the cost of people's rights," he said.

At this, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam reacted at the top of his voice, saying the whole state is not liable for any incident committed by a few law enforcers.

According to him, Prof Mizanur Rahman made the statement out of emotion.

Alam, however, expressed his gratitude to the journalists for finding out the facts upon which the court passes orders against any injustice.

Prof Mamun Rashid Chowdhury, chairman of biochemistry and molecular biology department at DU, told the court that he has been Quader's teacher from his honours first year. During the period, he found Quader to be modest.

Quader was never involved in any criminal activities, he added. He alleged that police did not give Quader any food following the arrest. When Anis, one of Quader's friends, bought some food for him, a police constable at Khilgaon Police Station asked him not to give him any food.

Prof Mamun added that the constable advised Anis not to visit Quader any further, saying that he might face problem if Helal Uddin, officer-in-charge of the station, comes to know that they are friends.

Trojan asteroid seen in Earth's orbit

BBC ONLINE

Astronomers have detected an asteroid not far from Earth, moving in the same orbit around the Sun.

The 200-300m-wide rock sits in front of our planet at a gravitational "sweet spot", and poses no danger.

Its position in the sky makes it a so-called Trojan asteroid - a type previously detected only at Jupiter, Neptune and Mars. 2010 TK7, as it is known, was found by Nasa's Wise telescope. The discovery is reported in this week's Nature journal.

It is a fascinating observation because the relative stability and proximity of Trojans would make possible targets for astronaut missions when we eventually go beyond the space station.

School feeding

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"They were directed to engage themselves in every development and service-oriented activity and play more effective role to ensure people get their services timely," noted Aziz adding, "The main message of the meeting for them was to provide services without any hassle."

Programmes like help desk, public hearing day and e-service are being introduced in every district to serve the people, pointed out the secretary.

The government arranged the conference at the beginning of the new fiscal year to inform the DCs about its new development projects and other steps.

The conference discussed 321 issues including the dilapidated roads and highways, magistracy power of DCs, load-shedding management during Ramadan, removing tailbacks in the capital, monitoring social safety net programmes, appointment of dealers, enactment of land usage act and proper implementation of women development policy.

Aziz said the meeting reviewed the limitations of the Mobile Court Act, 2009, which may be amended in future.

According to him, the mobile courts play a significant role in maintaining law and order and checking food adulteration and stalking women. But it can only give punishment if the offence is committed in presence of an executive magistrate or the offender makes a confession.

The district administrators were advised to implement women development policy and take strong stance against women and children repression. They were also told to provide legal support to the victims.

'Mugger'

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Kachikata, the muggers held the driver and passengers hostage at gunpoint. As they tried to rob the passengers and take away the vehicle, the passengers shouted for help.

Hearing this, locals rushed to the spot and got hold of two of the criminals while the others managed to flee, said Officer-in-Charge of Chatmohar Police Station Habibul Islam.

On information, police went to the spot and rescued the two muggers from mob beating, he added.

The two-- Sajib Rahman, 32, of village Munipur in Gazipur, and Nayan Das, 30, of village Nandanpur in Pabna-- were admitted to Chatmohar Upazila Health Complex.

Sajib, who was the leader of the gang, died early yesterday, said the OC.

Police recovered a sharp weapon from the spot. Driver of the vehicle, Shahdat Hossain, filed a case with the police station.

Reckless driving

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blockade after two hours when officials of the local administration went to the spot and requested them to free the highway.

Among the dead, 14 could be identified. They are Zahedul Islam, 30, Abdul Khalek, 60, and Wahedul, 35, of Shibganj upazila in Bogra; Dulali Khatun, 24, her daughter Najiya Khatun, 5, and Nizamuddin, 50, of Mirpur; Kaiyum, 56, of Chawkbazar in Dhaka; Rezaul, 38, of Akkelpur upazila; Khatun, 35, of Khetlal upazila; Abul Kashem, 50, Hanif, 35, and Mansur, 30, of Panchbibi in Joypurhat; Shahidul Islam, 40, and Bengu, 55.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock at the deaths in the tragic road accident, reports UNB. She conveyed her profound sympathy to the bereaved families and prayed for eternal peace of the departed souls.

The prime minister also ordered the administration to ensure the injured get the best treatment.

OC was lying

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The High Court (HC) bench of Justice Manik and Justice Gobinda Chandra Tagore came down heavily on the Khilgaon OC as it found inconsistencies in his statement about the arrest of DU student Abdul Quader and filing of cases against him.

While OC Helal was giving his statement, Quader was sitting behind him on a wheelchair with his left leg bandaged heavily from the thigh down.

OC Helal made several deep wounds on the leg with a cleaver (chapatti) on July 16 while Quader was in police custody, the victim told the court before the OC was called in the dock for his statement.

Quader also showed the court the injury marks on his body, especially on the back and arms, made by police around 1:30am on the day of his arrest.

While he said he had been arrested from Segunbagicha, OC Helal kept claiming that they picked him up from near Khilgaon Police Outpost on July 16 around 3:30am.

In his defence, the OC said at 3:09:14am Quader made a call over his cellphone using the Khilgaon mobile phone tower.

At this statement, the judges became very suspicious and said that according to Quader's statement, if he was picked up around 1:30am and then taken to Khilgaon Police Station, there is a chance that police made the call to prove that Quader was in Khilgaon area around 3:00am and that he was arrested around 3:30am from that area.

The judges also pointed out that police recorded the cases against Quader eight hours after the arrest. They were also not satisfied with the explanation the OC came up with for the delay in case filing.

According to the judges, the time might have been spent fabricating evidence to justify Quader's arrest.

The 26-year-old master's student of biochemistry and molecular biology wept his eyes dry as he narrated how several plainclothes police brutally beat him up.

"When I told them that I was a student of Dhaka University, they started beating me up even fiercely calling me a robber," Quader told the court.

On the night of his arrest, Quader was returning to his dormitory Fazlul Haque Hall from his cousin's house at Holy Family Doctors' Quarters in Eskaton. He was coming on foot as no transportation was available at that time.

Just when Quader was about to pass the Anti-Corruption Commission premises in Segunbagicha, he noticed a man running towards him from behind. Guessing that the man could be chasing someone else he stood his ground to stay away from any commotion.

"Later I noticed a gun tucked in the man's trousers. He came to me and hit me with his gun and soon his other colleagues joined in the mayhem," said Quader, adding that they were policemen.

Thereafter the policemen

took him to an unknown youth who was also being beaten up by several other policemen. They asked the youth if he knew Quader and the youth said that he did so.

"But I told the policemen that if the youth could tell my name they can shoot me on the very spot," Quader told the court, adding, "He did not know my name."

Later, the police personnel took Quader to Khilgaon Police Station on a car. Quader showed the court how his nails turned black from the brutal torture by police.

"I was barely conscious after the beating," he said, "at the police station, the duty officer asked me about my accomplices. I told him that there was none and that I was not out on the street to rob anyone".

When the court asked OC Helal to give his statement on the incident and go through the content of the cases, he gave accounts that were totally different from that of Quader's.

Helal claimed that police did not beat Quader up. It was a mob in Khilgaon who beat him when six persons, including Quader, were trying to flee from a private car being intercepted by four plainclothes patrol police.

Four of them escaped while police managed to get their hands on two -- Quader and one Mamun -- after the mob beating, the OC said.

The judges then asked the OC how many people gathered on the spot at 3:30 in the morning to beat up six robbers.

The OC said he did not know but the duty officer might.

The judges then asked him whether he asked the on-duty policemen about the number of people in the mob. Helal Uddin said he did not.

The judges then enquired whether Khilgaon police arrested anyone from the mob. The OC again answered in negative.

"Don't you think those who beat up the two youth committed a crime?" Justice Manik asked the OC. Helal Uddin responded in affirmation.

Asked why no one from the mob was arrested, OC Helal said police could not arrest anyone as the people fled the scene.

When the judge asked about the registration number, colour, the make and the name of the owner of the car that the six youths allegedly tried to escape from, the OC could only give the registration number and the colour of the vehicle. However, he had no clue about the car's model and its owner.

The OC claimed that the car was stolen from Mohammadpur on July 14 and a case was filed in the same day in this regard and that the car was being used by the six youths for robbery.

Justice Tagore then became suspicious that Khilgaon police had used the evidence of the carjacking case filed with Mohammadpur police in the alleged robbery case in Khilgaon.

Justice Manik then warned the OC not to lie

about the incident. OC Helal claimed that he was telling the truth.

"Which houses and addresses did they try to rob that night?" asked Justice Manik.

OC Helal said they did not rob any specific house.

"Then how did you identify them as robbers," asked the court.

The OC said Mamun, the other youth who was allegedly arrested with Quader, told police that they tried to rob a rickshaw puller but did not find much money.

At that time, the packed courtroom erupted with laughter with lawyers, DU students, journalists and Quader's family members joining in.

Asked about the eight-hour delay in filing the case, OC Helal said police were trying to find the other four members of the alleged gang of robbers.

"Do you think it is alright to chase around with two injured suspects without giving them any medical attention?" the court asked.

The OC replied that police gave them first aid.

"But you are no doctors," the court asked, "Isn't it your duty to send injured suspects to doctors?"

Ruling party lawmaker Abdul Matin Khasru, who stood for Quader, at one point, raised the question that the stab wounds in Quader's leg were from a cleaver while mobs never carry such sharp weapons with them.

Justice Manik agreed with Khasru.

The judges also expressed disappointment, as the OC did not bring all the relevant case documents with him including the first information record (FIR) of the case filed for carrying sharp weapons.

"Why did the police torture him [Quader] so badly? We need to stop such brutality," said Khasru.

The HC came forward to deal with the torture on Quader following yesterday's report on The Daily Star titled "Police out to 'frame' youth". The report was read out loud several times during the court proceedings.

At one point, the court asked OC Helal about his statement in the report.

The OC claimed that a part of report where he said, "... They made the arrest after another detainee had named Quader as one of their accomplices," was not his statement.

Justice Manik then asked two correspondents of The Daily Star who were present in the court to appear before the judges. The court enquired the reporters about the OC's claim.

One of the correspondents told the court that the OC was not misquoted and the statement published in the newspaper was whatever OC Helal told over the phone.

At that time Additional Attorney General MK Rahman asked OC Helal whether he spoke to The Daily Star correspondent on Wednesday. OC Helal responded in the affirmative.

No trace

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across any incident that looked odd to them.

This correspondent learnt all this while visiting the areas and talking to about 15 people of different ages and professions.

Talking to The Daily Star on Wednesday, Helal Uddin, officer-in-charge of Khilgaon Police Station claimed a gang of youths including Abdul Quader (a student of Dhaka University) were caught by a mob as they attempted to commit a robbery somewhere near Khilgaon old police camp early on July 16.

As the mob started beating them up, Quader and one of his accomplices fled in a microbus, he said. The OC then said a police team chased the microbus to Segunbagicha and arrested the two.

In a sharp departure from his own version, he then said law enforcers chased a microbus with some people on board as it was suspiciously moving in Khilgaon area. Finally, the group was caught at Segunbagicha.

But giving a statement at the High Court yesterday, the OC claimed they picked up Quader near Khilgaon Police Outpost on July 16 around 3:30am.

On the other hand, Quader told the court he was arrested from Segunbagicha.

On Wednesday, asked how Quader suffered severe injuries, Helal Uddin then said, "A mob caught Quader and others near the old police camp and beat them up."

Giving a pause, Helal Uddin said another mob also beat Quader and another member of the group at Segunbagicha.

Earlier, family and friends of Quader, a postgraduate student of DU, said police arrested him near the Anti-Corruption Commission headquarters around 1:00am on July 16 on his way to the hall.

The youth was returning on foot from his relative's house at Holy Family staff quarter, they said.

Known as a gentle person to his classmates and teachers, Quader has been detained for the last 12 days in three cases for robbery, possessing sharp weapons and hijacking a microbus.

This correspondent yesterday talked with security guards of Concord Apartment, Segunbagicha Apartment Complex, Priyopranon Apartment and Property Paragon--all near Segunbagicha intersection.

Seven night guards, who were on duty in those buildings that night, told The Daily Star they had not heard or noticed anything like shouting, chasing or mob beating.

Zillur Hossain and Kaosar Ahmed, two guards of Concord Apartment, said they are quite sure that no incident like shouting or chasing or mob beating took place at Segunbagicha intersection early on July 16.

"Some police officers on Wednesday came here and asked us whether we had heard or noticed something odd especially between 1:00am to 3:00am," said Zillur. "We gave them exactly the same answer."

However, Hiron Mia, a security guard of the ACC, who was on duty during the early hours of July 16, said he heard "mild shouting" of four to five people at the intersection around 1:00 to 1:30am. But he could not give any detail.

But Monir Hossain, who was on the shift with Hiron, told this correspondent he did not hear or notice anything out of the ordinary during his working hours.

This correspondent yesterday also talked with Mohammad Ali, assistant commander of Ansar Camp inside Shilpakala Academy to the opposite of the ACC office.

The Ansar members who were on duty that night found nothing suspicious, he said.

A number of Khilgaon residents, who live surrounding the old police camp, said they do not know anything about the "July 16 robbery or mugging".

"Police are making up a story as they are somehow engaged in the incident," Nazrul, a middle-aged man, said.

Many other people have the same view.

Indian home minister

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Home Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram's 24-hour visit to Dhaka.

The Indian home minister is due to arrive here today at 9:00pm. He will hold a meeting at the home ministry with his Bangladesh counterpart Sahara Khatun tomorrow at 10:30am. The talks will be followed by the signing of the deal.

Chidambaram is also scheduled to call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Foreign Minister Dipu Moni.

Meanwhile, two joint secretaries of Indian home ministry -- Kamal Kanti Mittal and Shambhu Singh -- arrived in Dhaka yesterday to finalise the proposed deal and other issues to be discussed between the home ministers.

"We are going to sign the agreement with a hope to stop killing of innocent

Bangladeshis at the borders. It will enable a mechanism which will help the border guards of both the countries exercise maximum restraint," a senior home ministry official told The Daily Star yesterday.