

2 Indians held with smuggled tortoises

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two Indians were arrested with 300 Indian star tortoises and 115 different species of turtles at Shahjalal International Airport in the capital yesterday.

The arrested, Zulfiqar Ali Hasnayeen and Abhijit Das, were trying to smuggle those tortoises and turtles, packed in two suitcases, into Bangkok.

Tipped off, Tapan Kumar Dey, forest conservator at Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Division, warned the customs and airport authorities about the smuggling attempt.

Zulfiqar Ali Hasnayeen holds Indian passport Z-2218122 and Abhijit Das, who Tapan Dey believes was new to the syndicate, holds Indian passport K-0467869.

Abul Kashem, custom officials of Shahjalal International Airport, yesterday filed a case with the airport police station in this regard.

The turtles and tortoises were taken to the forest department's Agargaon office from where those would be moved to Dula Hazra Safari Park in Cox's Bazar, he said.

The turtles seized yesterday have huge ornamental, medicinal and food value in different countries. News agency AFP reports that the seized turtles are worth around \$37,000 in the international black market.

Poaching and trading of exotic animals have increased in recent months, officials said. Since 2010, seven attempts including yesterday's to smuggle wildlife have been foiled by the customs and immigration officials of Dhaka airport and destination airports including Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur.

Of the turtles, 300 were rare Indian star tortoises, 90 three-keel turtles and 25 were Indian roofed turtles, the forest official said. Indian star turtles are very popular as exotic pets in gardens.

All these species are available in Bangladesh and India. SM Rashid, the chief executive of Centre for Advanced Research in Natural Resources & Management, said there were at least seven species of turtles seized by customs.

Beside the Indian star tortoise, there were six other species of turtles; they are black turtle, tricarinate hill turtle, spotted pond turtle, crowned turtle, Sylheti roofed turtle and brown roofed turtle, he told The Daily Star via email yesterday.

Ex-NSI director

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Enamur was one of the members of the five-member probe body formed by the then home ministry immediately after the arms seizure that took place in the early hours of April 2 in 2004.

In his statement, Enamur said their probe committee found Hafizur Rahman, Deen Mohammad and Hazi Sobhan involved in the arms smuggling, said court sources. But the three evaded arrest then, Enamur stated.

He told the court that the then deputy director of NSI Chittagong office Nuruzzaman informed him through a fax that Criminal Investigation Department (CID) intended to quiz Akbar Hossain Khan, NSI field officer, about his involvement in the smuggling.

Enamur said he placed the issue of CID interrogation in a meeting of the probe committee but former DIG (CID) Farruk Ahmed, present at the meeting, did not comment on the subject.

The issue was not included in the probe report as remaining probe members were against it, he said.

Both Hafizur and Deen are now detained in connection with the cases.

Lawyers of accused Hafizur Rahman, Deen Mohammed, Akbar Hossain Khan, Abdur Rahim and Hazi Sobhan cross-examined the prosecution witness.

Suspension

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hour sit-in from 9:30am in front of Chief Personnel Officer's (CPO) office at the central railway building, the headquarters of the east zone, in the port city.

The applicants said although they had been asked two weeks ago to collect police verification forms from the CPO's office submitting their joining report, the authorities stopped all the recruitment proceedings in the last two days.

However, talking to The Daily Star none of the applicants admitted to have bribed for the jobs although they complained about the other proceedings for recruitment.

CPO Md Gaus Al Muneer was found working in a room nearby his office.

Approached he said they had stopped distributing police verification forms as they had no clear instructions in this regard. They had only received the direction on recruitment suspension from the railway ministry but no clear instructions about the recruitments already done.

CPO Muneer said he would send the ministry a letter seeking clarification in this regard.

The Railway east zone had issued seven circulars

in October and November last year to recruit for around 3,500 posts of 38 categories. Recruitment in 24 categories has been completed; four categories were under process while appointments in 10 other categories were stalled last year due to cases filed by applicants.

The recruitment in around 400 posts in the trade apprentice category had been completed recently.

ACC PROBE
Meanwhile, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has asked the Railway authorities to furnish documents of the recent recruitment in 3,500 posts in the east zone.

Railway officials of the zone said they had received a written direction from the ACC Dhaka office Monday.

The recruitment in the Railway (east zone) Department has recently been suspended over an allegation of corruption, on which the ACC is now investigating.

Senior Welfare Officer of Railway east zone Golam Kibria, also a member of the recruitment committee for the Trade Apprentice posts, said they would send the documents to Dhaka as soon as possible.

Kamal decides

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Star that it is likely that the tour will go ahead and the two matches be played in Lahore on April 29 and 30, as it is unusual for the International Cricket Council (ICC) to send security observers after tour dates have been announced.

The growing concern how-life centres around how Kamal is keeping everyone, including his colleagues in the cricket board, in the dark while he puts together the tour.

"We haven't officially discussed the Pakistan tour in the cricket board, not even once," he said. "We have learned of the tour through newspaper reports but nothing was told to us directly by the board president. We discussed the tour in today's [Tuesday's] meeting since the ICC made the announcement on Sunday."

"It is important that we mention that the board doesn't have a problem with Bangladesh playing against Pakistan, but we have a problem to play in Pakistan. One must not make that mistake. But it will not be right to tour Pakistan at this time," he added.

Whether as a result of their discussion or due to a lack of new directive from the ICC, the cricket operations committee hasn't informed the players to come to training ahead of the two matches in Pakistan, despite it being so close to the start of the tour.

Soft drinks

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2,000 people in the UK to estimate how much sugar was in a range of drinks.

While many overestimated the amount in fizzy beverages, they underestimated levels in smoothies and fruit juices.

The research also found soft drinks could be accounting for a large chunk of their recommended calorie intake.

The British Soft Drinks Association says the sugar in soft drinks is not hidden because beverages carry clear labelling of nutritional content, including calorie and sugar content.

The researchers asked participants to assess their weekly drinking habits.

Their answers suggested 450 calories a day were being consumed - a quarter of the daily limit for women and a fifth for men.

But it was the lack of awareness about the sugar content of drinks that caused concern. The participants were asked to guess the number of teaspoons of sugar in a range of popular drinks.

They underestimated it for pure apple juice and orange juice, a caffeinated energy drink and a smoothie by between two and four tea-

spoons.

And for a pomegranate-based drink, they underestimated the sugar content by nearly 18 teaspoons.

Unsurprisingly, many participants were not taking the calorie content of their soft drinks into account when thinking about their diet.

The team warned that the over-consumption of soft drinks was contributing to obesity and was a major risk factor for conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.

Lead researcher Prof Naveed Sattar said, "What you drink can be as damaging to the body as what you eat."

"There is no question that consuming too many sugar-sweetened drinks can greatly contribute to obesity."

"Some varieties of drinks such as pure fruit juices and smoothies, which are perceived as 'healthy' options, are also very high in sugar."

"For many people struggling with their weight, reducing their intake of such drinks and replacing with water or diet drinks would be a sensible first target to help them lessen their calorie intake."

Fund allocated

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"The government allocated 3 crore taka against the demand for 30 crore taka," he said adding, "With the small allocation, it is impossible to do the work in full speed and complete it by December this year."

MAN Siddique, secretary of the Road Division of the communications ministry, said he was not informed about the matter.

He, however, said the release of the fund might have been delayed because of some technical problems.

A high official of the ministry said on condition of anonymity that they could not provide fund for the project because of poor allocation from the government.

Because of the delay in fund release, the work including land acquisition and demolition of roadside structures are being hampered.

"The delay can raise the total cost of the project as prices of land and other construction materials are increasing day by day," said Zulfiqar Ahmed.

RHD, however, has almost completed the first phase of land acquisition.

"About three percent of the total work has been completed," Zulfiqar said.

He said they are now doing piling work on both sides of Razakhali Bridge, and demolishing road side structures in Kalamia Bazar area.

Sources at Chittagong Development Authority (CDA), however, said demolition of roadside structures from Bahadderhat intersection to Kalamia Bazar area was scheduled to be completed at the beginning of the work in 2010.

The slow progress of the work might also create traffic jam of south Chittagong bound vehicles in Bahadderhat Flyover area, they said.

CDA is constructing the flyover which is scheduled to be opened by December this year.

Habibur Rahman, project director of the Bahadderhat Flyover, also expressed concern over possible traffic congestion on the flyover.

According to sources at RHD, the length of the road will be 5 kilometres (km), and it will have four lanes for heavy vehicles, and two lanes on both sides for slow vehicles.

HC summons

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over the incident, the HC said. Deputy Attorney General ABM Altaf Hossain, who received the report from the IO on March 20, yesterday submitted it to the court as per its earlier order following a writ petition in this regard.

Sagar, news editor at private TV station Maasranga, and his wife Rumi, a senior reporter at another TV channel, ATN Bangla, were killed in the small hours on February 11 at their rented apartment in the capital's West Rajabazar.

In the report, the IO said they are trying to arrest the accused in the case, recover the looted goods and unfurl the mystery behind the incident.

Investigation is going on giving priority on two things -- whether a professional gang came to commit robbery and murdered Sagar and Rumi, and whether their personal or family-related or professional adversaries committed the murders, the report said.

It mentioned that interrogation of security guards at the apartment, its caretaker, other tenants, owner, strangers and possible guests, other people around the location, colleagues of the couple at their offices, their friends and likely adversaries are going on.

Information on professional criminals is being collected and efforts are also on to collect statements and evidence to find their possible involvement in the incident.

And the higher authorities are sincerely supervising the investigation, the report said.

After going through the report, the HC bench of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik and Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim issued the summons.



The Cargo vessel MV City-1 seized by the coast guard personnel yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

Driver kills housewife

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a director of Ethics Advanced Technologies Ltd at Karwan Bazar.

Police recovered the body covered in multiple stab wounds from the bathroom around 1:45pm.

The injured domestic help, Bina, 12, was admitted to United Hospital with deep gashes on her head and neck.

Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge (OC) of Gulshan Police Station, suspects that Mintu, the driver, killed Saima and made away with cash and gold ornaments in their car.

The car was found lying abandoned on Road 116 around 2:00pm by the police.

Police also recovered a pair of blood stained denim trousers and a jacket from the spot.

Saima and her husband, MA Mubin Khan, deputy managing director of International Medical College at Tongi in Gazipur lived with their three chil-

dren on the fourth floor of an apartment building on Road-101 in Gulshan-2.

On returning home around 1:30pm, Mubin informed the police after he found their apartment door ajar and clothes strewn on the floor of their bedroom.

Then he discovered his wife's lifeless body lying in the bathtub and the injured domestic help. However, their three-year-old son Nafin Khan, who was in the house, was not harmed.

Quoting Bina, the OC said, "Mintu was stabbing her mistress when she arrived at the spot and witnessed the act."

"He then pounced upon me and stabbed me till I fell unconscious," Bina told the OC.

Saima went out around 8:30am to drop her two daughters, Maisha and Nafisa, students of Class IX and VII at Scholastica's Uttara Branch. The car was driven by Mintu.

"Saima and her son

returned around 10:00am and Mintu also followed them into the apartment," Abdur Rahim, a driver who works for residents of the second floor of the apartment told The Daily Star.

"He rushed down around 10:30am and drove away in a hurry," Rahim added.

When Mubin called on his wife's cell phone around 12:30 pm, Nafin answered saying that the driver had killed his mother.

While visiting the spot, this correspondent found bloodstained footprints all over the house. The living room sofas and kitchen counters also bore signs of the gruesome killing that took place in the morning.

Inspector Jahangir Alam of Criminal Investigation Department said that they had collected evidence from the crime scene.

"We are trying to trace the driver," the OC said, adding, "We also need to consider other motives behind the killing."

Suranjit is back

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Contacted by The Daily Star, Communications Minister Obaidul Quader explained the government's change of heart in such a short time.

"He [Suranjit] was neither accused nor found guilty in the cash recovery incident. He was relieved of his charge by the prime minister to ensure a fair and transparent investigation. There is nothing wrong in it," he told The Daily Star last night.

Mahbubul Alam Hanif, joint general secretary of the ruling Awami league, echoed his views.

"The graft allegation against him [Suranjit] does not go with his 55-year political career. Considering this, making him a minister without portfolio is befitting," said Hanif.

And amid all these twists over Suranjit's fate, the railway ministry was without a minister yesterday.

The ministry was formed in December last year through splitting the communications ministry into two.

Barely five months into taking over as railway minister, Suranjit at a crowded press briefing on Monday announced he was stepping down in light of his discussion with the prime minister the night before.

"At the meeting with the prime minister on Sunday night, I told her that I wanted to relieve myself of the charge of the railway ministry, and she happily accepted it," a pale-looking Suranjit had told the press briefing at the Rail Bhaban.

He also took "full responsibility" for the railwaygate scandal surrounding the recovery of Tk 70 lakh from the microbus of his now-fired assistant personal secretary on the night of April 9.

The money is said to have been part of the bribe taken from railway job seekers, and the microbus carrying Omar Faruq Talukder, the sacked APS, and two other top railway officials was headed for Suranjit's Jigatola residence.

The two railway officials are now-suspended general manager (East) Yusuf Ali Mridha and suspended

Dhaka division security commandant Enamul Huq.

Driver Ali Azam Khan drove the vehicle into the BGB Pilkhana headquarters in the capital, having been refused Tk 5 lakh as a share of the amount, sources told The Daily Star.

The four men were kept in BGB's custody that night.

The BGB claimed to have freed them all the next day, but Enamul told this paper after his release that the border force had not freed Azam.

Azam has remained untraced since. Contacted by The Daily Star, his family could not say anything about his whereabouts since the scandal surfaced.

Meanwhile, more than a week into the sensational railwaygate scam that led to Suranjit's resignation, the police have neither filed any case in this connection nor launched any drive to trace Azam.

Inspector General of Police Hassan Mahmood Khandker said his force did not move as no complaint had been lodged in this regard.

"We'll take steps if the family members of the missing person or the probe bodies formed in this connection request us to find him," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Today, the Anti-Corruption Commission is set to interrogate Mridha and Enamul about their involvement in the scandal.

The anti-graft body summoned them to appear before a three-member committee formed yesterday to probe their role and also that of Faruq in the incident.

Meanwhile Enamul yesterday submitted his written statement on his involvement in the scam before the railway DG-led probe body.

Enamul, who had earlier told The Daily Star on record that they had been going to Suranjit's house, yesterday made a U-turn.

"The general manager asked me to accompany him for security reasons, but I didn't know where we were headed," he told reporters at the Rail Bhaban after his appear-

ance before the committee.

On why the GM needed security that night, he said he had not asked the GM about that. "He is a senior officer and can ask for security."

Asked about the scandal, he said, "I had no idea about the money being carried by the vehicle. I did not see any bag inside the car."

He said the BGB personnel kept the four of them in a room and freed them around 9:00am on April 10. "An acquaintance of Faruq drove the microbus out of the BGB headquarters, leaving the driver in the custody of BGB personnel."

VISIT TO PILKHANA
The two-member probe body headed by Railway DG Abu Taher will soon visit the BGB headquarters and talk to the BGB personnel who were on duty on the night of April 9.

"We've already communicated with the home ministry in this regard," said Abu Taher, hoping to complete the investigation within 15 days.

BNP CDEMENS
The opposition BNP has strongly condemned the appointment of Suranjit as a minister without portfolio, saying this will impede an impartial investigation into the railwaygate scandal.

Reappointing a minister who has resigned proves that the government and the entire state machinery have become corrupt, said party acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir at BNP chief Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office last night.

He further said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is the key person behind deleting the name of Allah from the charter and her government has to face dire consequences.

"The strike was in the Kharama area between the towns of Ghazzan and Huta, the officials said.

The deadly raid comes just days after three local al-Qaeda leaders were killed in an air strike on their car in the neighbouring province of Bayda, about 210 kilometres southeast of the capital Sanaa.

The defence ministry said Saturday's raid was conducted by Yemeni warplanes, but a security official told AFP that a US drone was responsible for the attack.

Cargo vessel involved in Meghna launch tragedy seized

STAR REPORT

After 34 days of the tragic launch capsiz in Meghna river, coast guard personnel yesterday seized the cargo vessel 'MV City-1' responsible for the accident that claimed at least 147 lives.

Law enforcers seized the cargo vessel on Meghna river near Rajrajeshwar area in Chandpur sadar upazila at 10:40am and arrested 12 crew members aboard the vessel, said Jahurul Haque, commander of Chandpur coast guard station.

Coast guards waylaid the vessel as it was heading towards the capital from Chittagong, Jahurul told The Daily Star.

Probe bodies formed earlier to investigate the accident held the vessel responsible for the launch capsiz.

On April 16, BIWTA issued a public notice through different national dailies seeking information of the vessel. The notice announced Tk 1 lakh reward to the informer.

Top level officials of BIWTA and Department of Shipping visited the spot hours after seizure of the cargo boat.

Talking to reporters, BIWTA Chairman Shamsuddoha Khandaker said, "As per the law, maximum punishment will be set against the cargo vessel. We will take strong initiative so that the perpetrators cannot escape punishment because of loopholes in the law."

The MV Shariatpur-1 sank at Gazaria area in Munshiganj on March 13 after collision with the cargo vessel. Two separate cases were filed in this connection - one with Gazaria Police Station in Munshiganj and the other with marine court.

Department of Shipping Executive Magistrate Mashiur Rahman told The Daily Star that initially the arrestees would be detained in Narayanganj sadar Police Station. Further decision concerning them will be taken later.

The arrestees are Shahidul Islam (master), 54, Amir Hossain (driver), 42, and other crew members Rafiqul Islam, 35, Zafar, 27, Shahid, 25, Babul Hossain, 28, Niyamat, 19, Sanowar Hossain, 32, Yousof, 19, Nuruzzaman, 28, Mobarak Ali, 22 and Monir Hossain, 32.

The cargo boat, under police custody, was handed over to the BIWTA authorities of Narayanganj unit, said Mahbubul Alam, secretary of BIWTA.

Fazlur Rahman, chairman of City Group, one of the largest commodity traders in the country, owns the cargo vessel, said BIWTA officials.

US drone kills 5 Qaeda in Yemen

AFP, Aden

A suspected US drone strike in Yemen's south-eastern Shabwa province has killed five al-Qaeda-affiliated militants, a local government official said yesterday.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the official said a "US drone" targeted the five men late on Monday in Shabwa, a mostly lawless region of Yemen where the extremist group has expanded its presence.

The strike was in the Kharama area between the towns of Ghazzan and Huta, the officials said.

The deadly raid comes just days after three local al-Qaeda leaders were killed in an air strike on their car in the neighbouring province of Bayda, about 210 kilometres southeast of the capital Sanaa.

The defence ministry said Saturday's raid was conducted by Yemeni warplanes, but a security official told AFP that a US drone was responsible for the attack.