

Plane crashes into Russia motorway

Four crew killed

AP, Moscow

Four crew were killed Saturday when a Russian airliner crashed into a motorway and broke up into three pieces after overshooting the runway at an international Moscow airport.

The Red Wings airlines Russian-made Tu-204 jet -- empty of passengers and carrying just its eight crew on a return trip from the Czech Republic -- caught fire after crashing through the perimeter fence of Vnukovo airport in the west of the city.

The plane's impact with the highway embankment sent the severed nose sliding over the icy road while the rest of the jet rested just past the airport's fence -- its tail linked to the rest of the body by only a tangle of wreckage.

A health ministry official said the four survivors were being treated for head injuries at various Moscow hospitals. The Interfax news agency said both pilots were among the dead.

Russian investigators blamed a defective brake system for the crash yesterday.

Rescue workers recovered the flight recorders from the four-year-old Tu-204 of tycoon Alexander Lebedev's Red Wings airlines late Saturday as Russia began mourning its latest post-Soviet crash fatalities.

Mosharraf points finger at his boss

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Mosharraf has been accused of "deliberately dissolving" and forming four times the evaluation committee for selecting a supervision consultant in the bridge project. But his boss Abul Hossain was mysteriously exempted from ACC's accusation.

During an interrogation by the ACC, Mosharraf, without naming Abul Hossain, said he consulted his boss every time before dissolving and reconstituting the tender evaluation committee in the project, said an ACC source yesterday.

Mosharraf said he did everything in a proper way and maintained all official procedures.

He told the ACC team that he did nothing on his own regarding the recon-

stitution and dissolution of the evaluation committee in the project.

Meanwhile, a three-member ACC team went to Bangladesh Bridge Authority office in the capital yesterday, and seized computer hard drives and all documents relating to the bridge project.

Following a year-long enquiry into the corruption allegations in the project, the ACC on December 17 sued seven people for conspiring to commit bribery.

The ACC source said the ACC team obtained some important information from Mosharraf and another accused Kazi Mohammad Ferdous, superintending engineer of Bangladesh Bridge Authority.

Mosharraf and Ferdous

were placed on seven days' remand after they were arrested on December 27 in connection with the Padma bridge corruption case.

The two officials have been kept in police custody -- Mosharraf at Dhanmondi Police Station and Ferdous at Shahbagh Police Station.

Wishing anonymity, an ACC official said, "We are now interrogating them separately. We also seized documents relating to the project from Bangladesh Bridge Authority office."

They will later face an ACC team and have to verify the information they gave to the commission, said the official.

The ACC found that Mosharraf did not act, despite learning that Nahid Alam, a consultant

of Bangladesh Bridge Authority, was named a consultant of Canadian company SNC Lavalin in its bid proposal.

Nahid worked as a BBA consultant while the process of evaluating the consulting firm for the project was going on.

The official, however, did not say whether any step will be taken against Nahid.

The WB cancelled its \$1.2 billion funding on June 29 this year, saying it had proof of a "corruption conspiracy" involving Bangladeshi officials, executives of a Canadian firm and some individuals.

The global lender on September 21 decided to revive the loan after the Bangladesh government agreed to the WB's terms and conditions.

Three cheers

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The overall literacy rate also went up to 47.68 percent from 38.06 percent.

People's access to electricity rose by 16.83 percentage points to 56.6 percent of the population.

The government has moved ahead in the power sector to achieve the millennium development goals, said Nojibur Rahman, secretary (statistics and information division) of the planning ministry.

Speaking at the launch of Socio-economic and Demographic Report of Population and Housing Census 2011, he said Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) had completed the fifth final census within the shortest time in the history.

"The report will be useful not only for planners, policymakers, researchers,

population scientists and administrators but also for development partners and the BBS itself to devise future plans," said Rahman.

BBS Director General Golam Mostafa Kamal said, "We have included some new indicators in the new census such as internet access and international migration rate."

Internet access rate is 1.1 percent of the population while the international migration rate is 3.46 percent, according to the census.

The fifth census was conducted over a period of five days from March 15 to March 19 last year.

The number of skilled workers in agriculture, forestry and fishery declined 19.4 percentage points to 30.1 percent, compared to the previous census.

Crude birth rate, general fertility rate and the total fertility rate fell and stood at 17.88 percent, 2.33 percent and 2.1 percent.

The rates were 20.8 percent, 3.32 percent and 2.51 percent in the previous census.

The government is working to develop social and health indicators in line with its "Vision 2021," said State Minister for Health and Family Welfare Mozibur Rahman Fakir at the launch of the report at BBS office.

Crude death rate, infant mortality rate, child death rate and maternal mortality rate declined and stood at 4.8 percent, 37.3 percent, 2.71 percent and 2.18 percent.

The rates in the previous census were 6.1 percent, 54 percent, 4.4 percent and 3.4 percent.

The government had established 13,000 community clinics in the rural areas, the minister said, adding they had a target to set up another 5,000 clinics.

The government applied "intelligent character recognition" and iCADE (integrated computer assisted data entry) technologies in processing the census and survey data, said Rahman.

The minister also thanked the United Nations Population Fund, European Union, US Census Bureau and US Agency for International Development for their financial and technical support to the census project.

Five to die

FROM PAGE 1

punishment from the day of his arrest or surrender, the court said while delivering the verdict. The convicts can appeal to the higher court within 30 days from the day they receive the judgement copy, challenging the trial court's verdict.

Khalaf, 45, an official at the consular section of the Saudi Embassy in Dhaka, was shot dead on March 6 near his Gulshan house in the capital's diplomatic enclave.

More than four months after the murder, Detective Branch of police got a breakthrough in the case when they got the revolver that had been used in the shooting.

The revolver was seized in June from the arrestees -- Al Amin, Mamun, Khokon and Lalu -- in a robbery case.

Upon finding out their link with the killing, DB police on July 24 showed them arrested in the murder case.

In their confessional statements before a magistrate, Al Amin and Lalu said they had killed the Saudi

Embassy official, having been failed to realise the dollars the victim had had with him. They also named Selim as the fifth person involved in the killing.

The DB police on September 20 pressed charges against the four and Selim in the murder case.

After a month, the case was transferred to the Speedy Trial Tribunal-4 from the Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court for quick disposal as per a decision of the home ministry.

On completion of the hearing of arguments from both the prosecution and the defence, Judge Mohammad Motahar Hossain of the tribunal on December 20 fixed the date for announcing the verdict.

The verdict was given in presence of the accused except for Selim.

Saudi Ambassador to Bangladesh Abdullah Naser Al-Busayyir and one of Khalaf's brothers Khalaf Al-Khaled were present at the court yesterday.

They told journalists that they were satisfied with the verdict.

Indian gang-rape

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to console her parents as they arrived home on a chartered plane with their daughter's body at around 4:00am.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon sent his condolences to the victim's parents and family yesterday. "Violence against women must never be accepted, never excused, never tolerated," Ban's spokesperson said.

After initial treatment in a Delhi hospital following the attack, she was flown to Singapore on Wednesday night where doctors were unable to prevent a multiple organ failure. She was pronounced dead in the early hours of Saturday.

Her killing has prompted government promises of better protection for women, and deep soul-searching in a nation where horrifying gang-rapes are commonplace and sexual harassment is routinely dismissed as "Eve-teasing".

Several thousand people massed again yesterday in the centre of the Indian capital -- some to express sympathy for the

victim who had been out to watch a film with her boyfriend, others to voice anger at the government.

About a dozen protesters tried to break the barricades that riot police erected around the area, while a handful also threw stones and were immediately detained.

Waves of protests erupted across India after the attack on December 16 when the woman was repeatedly raped and sexually assaulted with an iron bar, leaving her with terrible intestinal injuries.

Thousands took part in late-night candlelit vigils on Saturday after 80-year-old Singh, criticised for reacting slowly to the crime, led appeals for calm to prevent a repeat of the sometimes violent protests.

As police said the six accused of murdering the unnamed woman could face the death penalty, there was widespread determination that the killing should serve as a tipping point for how the nation deals with violence against women.

"We are aware that this is not the first case, nor will it be the last case of gang-rape in India, but it is clear that we will not tolerate sex crimes any more," said Bela Rana, a lawyer who joined a rally in central Delhi.

But yesterday's Hindustan Times said more than 20 women had been raped in New Delhi since December 16 and the Press Trust of India news agency reported another alleged murder and gang-rape yesterday in the state of West Bengal.

Protesters and the Indian media have demanded that the government unveil measures to make the country safer for women, while introspecting on how to uproot deep prejudice and misogyny in Indian society.

Initial government proposals include a public register for sex offenders and forcing convicted rapists to undergo chemical castration -- the use of drugs to suppress sexual urges.

The government has already promised to bring in tougher sentences for the most extreme sex crimes and speed up a notoriously slow justice system that often fails to deliver timely verdicts.

Human Rights Watch yesterday called on the government to ban the use of the so-called "finger test" in which a doctor tests the laxity of a rape victim's vagina, apparently to determine if she is "habituated to sexual intercourse".

Such tests result in "unscientific and degrading findings" that often discredit complaints from women, the New York-based rights group said.

Meghna Bridges 4-day

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communications ministry officials said.

The government has arranged an alternative route for around 30,000 vehicles plying the highway each day.

The detour for the Dhaka-Chittagong traffic is Dhaka-Bhairab-Brahmanbaria-Moinamati-Chittagong, which means people will have to travel an extra 90km.

Vehicles coming from Dhaka would be stopped at Kanchpur bridge and diverted to Narsingdi while those from Chittagong would be stopped at Moinamati and diverted toward Brahmanbaria to facilitate the repair.

Both the bridges are under threat due to damage to the hinge bearings, expansion joints and riverbed scouring.

At a preparatory meeting held at the communications ministry yesterday, Communications Minister Obaidul Quader asked the officials concerned to keep the alternative route clear for the passing vehicles.

"We will see whether the

expansion joints and hinge bearings to be fixed tentatively work well," the official said preferring not to be named.

The communications ministry official said Bangladesh Army, assigned to do the repair job, would initially fix five expansions and hinge bearings of Meghna Bridge and three expansion joints and hinge bearings of Meghna-Gumti Bridge.

Our Brahmanbaria correspondent reports, a meeting was held at the deputy commissioner's office yesterday to come up with suggestions on how to control vehicular movement during the repair work.

The meeting decided that three special teams would be on-duty at three major points of Sylhet, Brahmanbaria and Comilla districts for effectively managing the traffic.

Twelve other teams will also work round-the-clock on the 82-km Brahmanbaria-Comilla Highway to control vehicular movement.

limits to regular traffic several times in the last four months due to temporary repair work of expansion joints and hinge bearings, but it hardly yielded any positive result.

The communications ministry recently approved a revised project proposal that proposed increasing the cost of repair work from Tk 150 crore to Tk 447 crore.

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