

Hair trick

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Chen Tang, 20, and her roommate Huang Lu, 21, had been struggling with a huge workload and needed a quick fix to fight the urge to nap.

They had tried the regular methods - caffeine, push-ups and cranking up the air-conditioning - but none of that worked.

That is when they decided to hit the history books for a solution. Chen and Huang read about two famous Chinese scholars who practiced extreme methods to keep their minds alert.

One would stab himself with needles every time he started to get drowsy, while the other would tie his hair to a beam in the ceiling so that it pulled every time he nodded off.

Chen saw merit in the second method and decided to give it a try.

"Chen is so keen to succeed that she decided to give the hair trick a try, as you can see her hair is more than long enough," said Huang, who posted the pictures online.

"As we didn't have a beam in our dorm, she used the clothes dryer and claims it worked really well."

Chen said the trick helped her clear her mind. She plans to use it more often in the future. "The preparation is boring, but the hanging hair practice makes it interesting and I really feel much more energetic by studying this way," she said.

It's solo job

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"Siraj first made the plan two years back, and accordingly, we rented the house beside the bank in early 2012," he said, adding that Siraj frequently visited the bank branch.

Siraj used to pay the rent of the tin-roofed house with two rooms, and also advised him to use a false name - Sohel.

Habib struck up a friendship with Abu Bakar, a member of lower subordinate staff (MLSS) at the bank, and got details about the bank's vault and interior from him.

Siraj bought digging tools, including shovel, chisel bar and hammer, and supplied those to Habib.

Posing as a carpenter, he used to dig once or twice a week at daytime so that the hubbub of crowd drowned the noise.

After a day's digging, he piled up the earth inside the house, and would spend the night in another rented house at Nagua in the town, where he was living with his wife Sadia Akter.

Whenever the house-owner asked him why he didn't bring his family members there, he used to give various excuses.

Wild birds on sale

Authorities remain silent

SHANTIMOY CHAKMA, Rangamati

The sale of wild birds is on the rise in Rangamati district, as the authorities concerned turn a blind eye to the illegal practice.

It is an open secret that wild birds are being caught and sold rampantly. But in the absence of proper initiatives by the forest department, unscrupulous poachers and traders have been doing brisk business.

Though Hossain Mohammad Nishad, divisional forest officer (DFO) of CHT South Forest Department in Rangamati, brushed aside the allegations, the selling of birds continues unabated at College Gate, Samatagh, Katapahar Lane, Ghat, Reserve Bazar and Tabalchhari Bazar in the town.

While visiting the markets, this correspondent found that a pair of *Kalem Pakhi* was being sold at Tk 200, middle-size *Kura Dahuk* at Tk 450, each pair of *Kalim Pakhi* (Purple Swamphen) and *Pathi Has* at Tk 500, and *Bon Morog* (wild fowl) at Tk 800-1200 per piece.

Md Ibrahim, a poacher at Pablakhali in Longudu, said that many other people like him had been hunting wild birds for long time, but he had not seen anyone got punished.

Chunnu Kosai, a bird trader, said: "I maintain contact with bird poachers; they bring them to me, and then I sell them to various people, especially in restaurants."

The birds are on high demand as the local restaurants serve their meat to customers, sources said.

Passing the blame on to the poachers, Bindu Chakma, manager of Irich Restaurant at Banarupa in the town, said: "We do not catch birds, but sell the meat. If poaching can be stopped, the selling of meat will stop automatically."

Sucharita Chakma, manager of Kebang Restaurant at Rajbari, has a different version.

She said: "We know that selling of the meat of wild birds is a crime. We just sell those as customers love eating the meat."

As per the Wildlife (Conservation) Act-2012, killing, poaching, selling and possessing of any wildlife is a punishable offence. A person violating the act can be sentenced to two years in jail or fined Tk 1 lakh or both.

The punishment will be double if anybody repeats the crime, it says.

Apart from wild birds, venison, meat of wild pigs, big lizards and pheasants are also being sold openly at various markets in the town.

When asked, Md Rezaul Sikder, conservator of forests (CF) in Rangamati, said he did not receive any such information.

He added that he would pass an order to all DFOs to conduct raids against such illegal practices.

He admitted that there might be a nexus between some forest officials and poachers.

"At least 40 percent posts remain vacant. Therefore, we cannot put our whole effort into patrolling the forests," Rezaul Sikder added.



A trader carrying wild birds for sale in College Gate area of Rangamati town. The photo was taken Saturday.

PHOTO: STAR

HK dream shattered

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'mistreatment' and 'abuse'.

According to the daily's figure of returnees, there must have been around 60 females.

Bangladeshi Consul General Mohammad Sarwar Mahmood told the daily that some 20 percent of recruits had returned home.

"Some have left voluntarily or -- on a case-by-case basis -- their contract has been terminated," the news report quoted him as saying. But he was generally "happy" about the employer's treatment of Bangladeshi maids.

The daily also mentioned that the Bangladeshi government last year sent inspectors to Hong Kong to make checks as it had concerns about the abuse of female workers.

But recent developments have again put the spotlight on working conditions for Hong Kong maids in the wake of a recent case of abuse.

However, the expatriates' welfare minister denied the allegation of any abuse of Bangladeshi maids in Hong Kong.

"I have heard that only 20 female workers returned home due to a conflict between the recruiting agencies of Bangladesh and Hong Kong on paying wages to workers," said Mosharraf.

"I have instructed my officials to know about the details of the conflict by inquiring about them from the returnees," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

The minister also summoned the

Bangladeshi agencies to find the reasons behind their 'conflicts' with the Hong Kong recruiting agencies.

Shamsun Nahar, the BMET DG, said some of the females had returned citing their own 'difficulties' while others returned as their employers had sacked them.

Hong Kong took interest in Bangladeshi workers as Filipino and Indonesian domestic helpers, who account for 98 percent of Hong Kong's maids, started to leave their jobs over the random allegations of abuse.

A two-year contract exists between the Hong Kong agencies and the BMET as per the signed MoUs. However, there was no clause on direct contracts between the workers and their employers in the MoUs.

Under the deal, any sacked female worker has two choices -- either return home or go for a fresh recruitment through the Hong Kong agencies.

After the signing of the deal, the Bangladeshi government declared that a worker would get \$520 per month and the minimum migration costs per worker would stand at Tk 1.30 lakh.

Cheung Kit-man, chairman of the Employment Agencies Association of Hong Kong, now wants to hire female workers from Myanmar, according to the Hong Kong-based daily.

"Employers prefer Myanmar maids because 80 percent of the population is Buddhist and they can speak a little bit of English, compared with Bangladesh, where

Mufti Jasim

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students, as the "planner".

Rana is on the run while Jasimuddin and six others -- Md Faisal Bin Nayem alias Dweep, Maksudul Hasan alias Anik, Md Ehsan Reza alias Rumman, Nayem Sikdar alias Iraj, Nafis Intiaz and Sadman Yasir Mahmud -- are in custody.

They gave confessional statements before magistrates on different dates.

In their confession, the NSU students said they vowed to kill anyone who would insult Islam and Prophet Mohammad.

According to their statements, Dweep was first to strike Rajib and others then assisted him.

Arrested on August 11 last year, Jasimuddin Rahmani confessed before a magistrate that students inspired by his sermons might have killed Rajib.

He realised that preaching such things aloud in public was not a right thing to do because there is law and court in the country. And anyone who would do anything wrong being provoked by his speeches should be tried under the law of the land, he said.

DB Inspector Nibaron Chandra Barman, also the investigating officer of the case,

submitted the charge sheet before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka. The officer appealed to the court to issue an arrest warrant against Rana.

The charge sheet will be placed before a magistrate today for its acceptance.

Ahmed Rajib Haider, an activist of Shahbagh movement demanding death penalty for war criminals, was hacked to death in the capital's Pallabi on February 15 last year.

After the murder, radical Islamists spread propaganda that Shahbagh movement organisers, including Rajib, were "atheists". Hefajat-e Islam, a Chittagong-based Islamist group, began to press for hanging of "atheist bloggers".

"Rajib was a progressive person and wrote fervently against communalism and religious extremism in his blog," said his father Dr Nazimuddin last night.

Talking to The Daily Star, he also said the allegation that Rajib insulted Islam and the Prophet Mohammad is baseless.

He expressed satisfaction over the progress of the case but said it raises concern that the "planner" behind crime is still not caught.

No bail for Mahbub

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Magistrate Md Rezaul Karim rejected both the bail petition and the remand prayer.

Mahbub, BNP chairperson's adviser, was shown arrested in the case on January 22. The case was filed against 28 BNP leaders including the party's acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir on March 2 last year.

The charges include attempted murder of police by throwing cocktails at them, vandalising vehicles and preventing law enforcers from discharging duties in the capital's Shantinagar and Malibagh areas during a demonstration.

Earlier on January 7, detectives picked up the BNP leader when he came out of the Jatiya Press Club after attending a programme where he criticised the January 5 election boycotted by the BNP-led opposi-

tion alliance.

Mahbub was shown arrested in another case filed over "an attempt to kill" the deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Ramna division. He had been ordered to be on a two-day remand, but the High Court declared the order illegal and stayed it. He was granted bail in that case.

Meanwhile, Judge Md Zahirul Haque of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka granted Shimul Biswas bail after his lawyer submitted a petition challenging a lower court's bail rejection order.

Following the bail order, there was no legal bar to his release as he has secured bail from the HC in another four cases, Sanaullah Mia, defence lawyer, told The Daily Star.

Five cases were filed against Shimul over



Rab officials hold a press conference yesterday to announce the arrest of the mastermind of Kishoreganj Sonali Bank heist.

The recovered money is put on display.

No meddling in upazila polls

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Hasina also said the grassroots leaders would select single candidates for the posts of upazila chairmen and vice-chairmen through consensus, the meeting sources said.

Earlier on Sunday, the AL president directed her party's grassroots leaders to finalise a single chairman and vice-chairman candidate in each upazila for the polls. In a letter, she also said stern organisational actions would be against the party men who would contest

the elections violating the party decision.

The meeting unanimously elected AL presidium member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury as deputy leader of the House.

Hasina warned her party MPs not to indulge in corruption and irregularities. She asked them to maintain close ties with their constituents and the grassroots leaders.

She cautioned that the "minus-two scheme" -- the alleged move in

2007 to allow AL chief Hasina and BNP

Chairperson Khaleda Zia out of politics -- was still afoot.

At the meeting, AKM Jahangir, lawmaker from Patuakhali, said the party was organisationally weak and its leaders and workers were not on the streets in difficult times.

Most of the MPs, however, protested his remarks. At that point, the AL chief said, "It was the Awami League activists who were on the streets. The BNP men were not seen anywhere."

When Hasina asked the MPs

elected unopposed to donate Tk 10 lakh each to the party fund, some lawmakers urged her to reduce the amount, the sources said.

From 128 AL candidates elected unopposed, the party would get Tk 12.80 crore.

The AL has already collected about Tk 7.4 crore from the sale of 2,959 nomination papers at Tk 25,000 each. Besides, it has earned nearly Tk 2 crore by selling 822 nomination forms for the reserved seats for women.