

Blood money can save 3

UAE halts death sentence of Bangladeshi convicts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United Arab Emirates government has temporarily postponed the execution of death sentence to three Bangladeshis, who have been convicted of murdering an Indian national in 2009.

They are Nayeb Ali of Pabna, Kamrul Islam of Mymensingh and Atique Ashraf Hossain of Meherpur.

The death penalties were to be executed on January 12 and 21 this year in the Sharjah province of the UAE, AKM Mizanur Rahman, first secretary (labour) of Bangladesh consulate in Dubai, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"The postponement is to negotiate with the blood heirs of the deceased in order to complete the legal formalities regarding the pardon after families of the convicts begged the UAE government's pardon in January," he added.

According to the consulate official, Taru, a Muslim of Bardhaman district of West Bengal in India, was beaten to death by the Bangladeshis in Sharjah over a dispute with him.

Taru took money from the Bangladeshis, who were

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The BIWTA yesterday sent two diggers to Kanchpur bridge on the Shitalakkhya to evict sand traders who occupied the river way beyond the walkway, marked in red, built on the bank. There was no driver for one of the diggers, inset, as of 1:00pm when this photographer left the scene. The other digger started work rather late and loaded only a few unmarked trucks to take the sand to an undisclosed location.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



Driver, helper

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Manikganj Sadar upazila, Tk 50,000, in default of which they will have to serve three more years in jail.

Dipu was also given five years' rigorous imprisonment and fined Tk 5,000 in a separate case of attempting to rape the girl. He will have to spend another year in jail if he fails to pay the fine.

Delivering the verdicts, District and Sessions Judge AKM Mostafa Dewan said the imprisonment of Dipu Miah on two separate charges will run concurrently.

The girl, a garment worker aged about 18, was violated on a moving bus by the duo on the Dhaka-Aricha highway in Manikganj on January 24 last year.

The victim filed a case with Manikganj

Sadar Police Station the same day, saying that Dipu attempted to rape her while the helper violated her in front of the driver.

Police later rescued the girl from the district bus terminal in the afternoon and sent her to the Sadar hospital for medical test.

The victim lodged a case against Dipu and Kashem with the Sadar police station in the evening.

Later the same night, police arrested Dipu from Manikganj bus terminal and Kashem from Nabinagar of Ashulia.

The victim girl, who was present at the court during the delivery of judgement, said she was satisfied with the verdict.

No lawyer of the accused was present at the court.

Eviction, so funny

FROM PAGE 1

But each time the encroachers came back soon after the eviction drive ended and continued with their illegal trade almost halving the river.

Yesterday, the three authorities embarked on yet another three-day eviction drive at the same site of the river with a single excavator to remove an estimated seven lakh cubic feet of soil.

Each time the issue is reported in mass media, the authorities wake up and hold a media show of evicting the encroachers and leaves it out until the matter again gets public attention, said a local shopkeeper, requesting anonymity.

"Eviction is a mere drama as illegal traders continue their business encroaching upon the river in connivance with all the three authorities concerned. As a result, the custodian turned corrupt cartel thrived at the cost of the river," he added.

Illegal sand traders have encroached on an approximate five-kilometre stretch of the river foreshores from Amber Paper Mills to Demra, said local residents.

Alamgir Kabir, a BIWTA deputy director, admitted to have carried out at least six three-day eviction drives at this very site over the past three years at an average expense of Tk 1 lakh a day.

But the BIWTA cannot retain the

freed site of the river as it has no police or magistrate under its command, he said.

The BIWTA, he added, has so far filed 70 cases with police against illegal sand traders and requested the district administration for mobile court action, but to no avail.

Abdul Matin, officer-in-charge of Siddhirganj Police Station, said, "It's not my duty to guard the river boundary. The BIWTA is the responsible authority to do it. We just help them when necessary."

A High Court bench in 2009 had ordered all relevant police stations and district administration to take action against any incident of river

encroachment within their jurisdiction, no matter whether any case was filed or not, said Alamgir Kabir.

OC Md Rezaul Haque of Sonargaon Police Station said the BIWTA has not filed a single case with them in connection with river encroachment.

Md Asaduzzaman, OC of Rupganj Police Station, too said no such case has been lodged with them.

Monj Kanti Baral, deputy commissioner of Narayanganj, said he was not aware of the BIWTA's request for mobile court action.

"Neither they [BIWTA] conserve the river accordingly, nor do they inform us on time of any encroachment of the river," he noted.

Start 'genuine' dialogue

Canada urges political parties

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Canada has urged the political parties in Bangladesh to start a genuine and constructive dialogue to reach a consensus on how to make the next elections credible.

"We continue to urge all parties to start negotiations and reach an agreement soon on a process, for the next set of elections and beyond, that Bangladeshis will consider credible," Canadian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Heather Cruden said in a statement yesterday.

Canada hoped that Bangladesh would move beyond the current political climate so that all parties could focus on fighting corruption and its continued socio-economic progress, she said.

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Friends, again

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eye to riots that killed up to 2,000 people in Gujarat in 2002. Most of the victims were Muslims.

The United States in 2005 refused a visa for Modi under a domestic law that bars entry to any foreign official seen as responsible for "severe violations of religious freedom".

Modi has denied any wrongdoing over the 2002 violence and investigations have cleared him of personal blame, although one of his former ministers was jailed for life for instigating the killing of 97 Muslims.

Modi's meeting with Modi brings the US in line with European countries and Australia, which have already restored ties with him, as opinion polls show Modi is on course to win power at general elections in May.

A BJP spokeswoman in New Delhi described the meeting as a "routine diplomatic exchange" before adding: "The US is realising that Mr

Modi will be the future prime minister of the country."

If elected premier, Modi would be highly unlikely to experience hassles with travel to the US, which generally allows visits by leaders of friendly countries.

A US congressional aide said this week that a meeting with Powell would signal Washington's willingness to issue a visa to Modi if he were to apply.

Modi has sought to portray himself as a business-savvy leader who can champion India's economy and tackle corruption after a decade of rule by the left-leaning Congress party.

The US car maker Ford is due to open a production plant this year in Gujarat, where Modi is praised for running an efficient, pro-business government. General Motors already has a facility there.

The strategic analyst Brahma Chellaney said the United States was

"trying to show that it is willing to kiss and make up" given the likelihood of Modi tipping Congress from power in May.

"Mr Modi is ahead of his political rivals in all the opinion polls, so the US is simply seeking to protect its economic and strategic interests," Chellaney, from the Delhi-based Centre for Policy Research, told AFP.

Powell will also meet the Congress opposition leader in the state parliament, non-governmental groups and US and Indian businesses while in Gujarat. The US embassy statement emphasised that both sides were seeking "a strategic partnership that is broad and deep".

The Congress leader Shankarsinh Vaghela said Powell wanted to know about human rights, judicial and other issues in Gujarat during their meeting.

The US and India have built a growing relationship since estrangement in the cold war, with most US

lawmakers supportive of ties with Delhi.

But Modi has faced opposition from left-leaning members of the US Congress active on human rights as well as academics.

An invitation for Modi to speak last year via Skype at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania was withdrawn after student organisers and professors protested against his participation.

The US-India relationship went through one of its worst crises in years at the end of last year when American authorities arrested a New-York-based Indian diplomat on charges of underpaying her servant. Indian lawmakers and commentators accused US authorities of humiliating the diplomat through a strip-search. The row abated a month ago when the diplomat, Devyani Khobragade, was allowed to return to India just as she was indicted.

BCL asks Selim to return hall

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jagannath University students staged demonstrations for the second consecutive day yesterday, demanding the return of their dormitory allegedly occupied by lawmaker Haji Mohammad Selim.

Several hundred students led by the Bangladesh Chhatra League took to the street around 12:00 noon, and blocked roads at Ray Saheb Bazar by burning tyres.

The demonstration continued for over an hour, creating huge traffic congestion in the area, witnesses said.

Independent lawmaker Selim had long occupied the university's Tibet Hall, protesters said.

Sirajul Islam Siraj, general secretary of the BCL JnU unit, said the students had been demonstrating to get back the hall.

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Beijing, help build

FROM PAGE 1

A finance ministry official told this correspondent yesterday that the 14 projects were handicapped by Finance Minister AMA Muhiuddin upon compiling a long list of various projects from different ministries.

Beijing would inform Dhaka for which projects it would finally provide loans.

Of them, the \$3.93 billion Ganges barrage scheme is all set for implementation if funding is ensured. Its feasibility study has been done in 2009.

By building a barrage in the Ganges system in Rajbari, the country can stop salinity creeping in the southwestern region as well as reap a net benefit of Tk 7,340 crore every year.

After the barrage is built, about 52 lakh hectares of land could be brought under cultivation under different agricultural projects. A total of 113 megawatts of hydroelectricity can be generated at the main barrage and an off-track structure in the river Gorai.

Another costly project is construction of \$1.5 billion Dhaka-Comilla Chord Rail Line that will ease population pressure in the capital to a great extent. Unlike conventional rail tracks, chord rail line is a straight line -- void

of any curves -- allowing fast movement of the trains.

Another project envisaged under the loan is a 4.8 km long dual-gauge double-track rail bridge -- parallel to the Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge -- at a cost of \$1 billion. The Asian Development Bank is financing its feasibility study, now in progress.

Eleven more projects involving \$2 billion include improvement of power transmission system, setting up two water and sewerage treatment plants and National Data Centre.

Though the new Chinese loan will be soft in nature, it will have a condition under which only Chinese companies would implement the projects.

THE CHINESE CONNECTION

Explaining why China has suddenly taken so much interest in Bangladesh, the lead economist at World Bank's Dhaka office, Zahid Hussain, said, "China has very large trade surplus which it has been investing in building US treasury bills for a long time. The US, a safe haven for foreign funds, is now cutting its public sector borrowing requirement."

"Surplus countries such as China therefore are looking for alternative places for investing their funds in opportunities that are profitable while

the associated risks are manageable.

"Bangladesh certainly deserves consideration for longer term placement of funds at the government-to-government level in projects that can make a large difference in our economic progress," he said.

"What will be important from the Bangladeshi point of view in making such deals is to comprehensively assess the costs of such funds, including both the explicit costs such as interest and commitment fees and the implicit costs such as conditions on procurement of goods, works and services."

According to a finance ministry official, as Bangladesh aims at becoming a middle income country by 2021, it highly needs investment in infrastructure sector to increase growth.

"This is why the government high-ups went to China several times asking for more investment. China is now reciprocating," he added.

Besides, India's offer of \$1 billion loan to Dhaka in 2010 also prompted China to think how it could play a greater role in Bangladesh, which is a big market now.

The more investment Beijing pumps in Bangladesh, the more its business interest here would be served.

HC weighs in

FROM PAGE 1

Commissioner (general) Shahinawaz Dilruba Khan said.

"They found no other way to protest. They want removal of the supervisor-in-charge," Shahinawaz told The Daily Star.

The injured were rushed to Tongi Government Hospital where their wounds were stitched up. They are now at the centre.

Deputy Attorney General Bishwojit Roy drew the HC's attention to a newspaper report on the horrific incident.

The court then formed the committee and asked it to confirm in a week as to who were responsible for the torture at the correction centre.

The committee is comprised of three members -- the director general of the social welfare department, deputy inspector general of prisons, DC and SP of Gazipur and superintendent of the correction centre have been made respondents to the rule.

Besides, the district administration has formed a committee of five members headed by ADC Shahinawaz to investigate the matter and submit a report within the next seven working days.

She visited the centre yesterday afternoon.

Quoting the inmates, she said the centre authorities had assaulted the boys and also mentally tortured them for not complying with the rules.

The HC bench of Justice Quazi Rezaul Hoque and Justice ABM Altaf Hossain also issued a suo moto rule asking the committee to find out how a boy could commit substance abuse in police custody.

It also directed the authorities to explain in two weeks why their negligence in stopping the torture on those teenagers should not be declared illegal, and why they should not be directed to take steps to address the matter.

The court fixed March 3 for hearing the rule and passing order.

The secretaries of social welfare, and women and children affairs ministries, DG of the social welfare department, deputy inspector general of prisons, DC and SP of Gazipur and superintendent of the correction centre have been made respondents to the rule.

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During the visit, the inmates told her that following the incident they got access to the higher authorities to tell them about the torture by supervisor-in-charge Anwarul Kabir and so he would soon get transferred.

An investigation should be done to know whether the centre authorities were nonchalant regarding the wellbeing of the inmates, said former inspector general of police M Enamul Hoque over the phone.

"We have for years been trying to improve the situation at the centre. Sexual abuse is rampant there making it necessary to probe why the juveniles are not being given proper counseling. It