



PHOTO: BANGLA CHOKH

Traders and buyers at a cattle market at Aricha of Manikganj yesterday. The temporary cattle markets across the country are becoming busier each day with the Eid drawing nearer.

UK seeks

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Additional Home Secretary Kamal Uddin Ahmed said that they heard about the UK high commission's seeking consular access but did not receive any letter in this connection.

Asked whether the ministry will take steps to arrange the consular access, he said, "According to the Vienna Convention, it is his [detained UK citizen] right. So once we receive the letter, we will arrange it."

After entering Bangladesh on February 25, Samiun held meetings at Gulshan Azad Mosque and the shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal (RA) in Sylhet to motivate people to join jihad, said detectives after his arrest.

According to police, he was able to convince some local youths and was planning to send them to Syria to join the IS war.

Traffic cop's

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policeman, whom the TI had asked to write Ruhul a ticket, apparently looked embarrassed but finally did so.

Although there was no tow truck involved in the incident, the ticket stated that the Tk 1,200 fine, which Ruhul was compelled to pay on the spot, was a towing charge.

Moreover a handwritten note on the ticket stated that the on the spot cash payment was "ordered" by AM (Alpha Myke) 17, which is the code for the area's deputy commissioner (traffic).

Ruhul suspects that the TI, through the impolite behaviour and harassment, had tried to intimidate him into offering a bribe. The TI denied harassing Ruhul.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Deputy Commissioner (Traffic South) Khan Mohammad Rezwan said he has to see whether there was indeed any parking sign and whether the area was designated for parking.

Then he would take measures as per the established rules, he said.

A shop owner at the market said the sign was set up with permission from the authority concerned.

A local, requesting anonymity, claimed that cars remain parked there till around 9:00pm all throughout the week for accessory shops to work on them.

The shop owners pay traffic officials hefty bribes to look the other way but ahead of every Eid the latter try to harass motorists to make some quick bucks, added the local.

Political

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hands of Detective Branch (DB) of police.

Moreover, 10 died from torture in police custody and one each in BGB, Rab and army custody.

In a statement yesterday, Rab, however, claimed 17 people were killed in "gunfights" between the force and "criminals" during the time.

The ASK report, based on national dailies and its own findings, also said 82 were reportedly abducted by law enforcement agency members this year. Bodies of 23 were recovered while 10 other abductees had been freed later.

Three top Rab officials had been sacked and later arrested following the abduction and killing of seven people in Narayanganj in April.

In the nine months, 732 Hindu houses, 222 temples and 193 shops were vandalised and set ablaze, the ASK report mentioned. A person died and 209 others were injured in these incidents.

Eleven people were shot dead by the Indian Border Security Force and 13 more died from BSF torture.

Forty-four people died during imprisonment and 95 were killed in mob beating. Ten women committed suicide following sexual harassment, while 527 women were abused during the time.

Siddique's reign

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but the government is yet to do so.

Latif is now minister for posts and telecommunications and ICT.

"State properties are public properties. Legal actions can be taken against those responsible for hampering public interest," the probe report said.

It also recommended that the government reclaim those properties.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has gone through the report and directed the ministry to take steps accordingly, said Textiles and Jute Secretary Phani Bhoushon Choudhury.

But reclaiming those mills and other properties will not be easy, officials said.

"We will see whether we can reclaim the properties already handed over, and stop the process of handing over of other mills. We are working on it," Phani Bhoushon told The Daily Star at his office yesterday.

Asked if any legal action would be taken against Latif, he said, "Those involved will face legal action."

The PM will visit the textiles and jute ministry on October 12 and give directives in this regard, sources said.

On Tuesday, Hasina decided to dismiss Latif from the cabinet following his remarks on hajj, Prophet Muhammad (SM) and Tablighi Jamaat in New York on Sunday. His comments triggered widespread criticisms at home and abroad.

According to the PMO report, Latif made unilateral decisions in selling or simply handing over those state properties to individuals, many of them rank and file of the ruling Awami League.

The report said the handover process for 30 mills and factories was already completed and that for 17 was underway.

Twelve of the 47 industrial units were given to people without following tender process and the Privatisation Commission law and policies.

One of those is Mohoni Mills Limited in Kushtia. In 1982, the government closed it down for incurring huge losses. Two years later, the factory was sold to Nazrul Islam for Tk 11.26 crore. But he failed to pay the money and the work order was subsequently cancelled. In response, Nazrul challenged the cancellation in the High Court.

After taking office in 2009, Latif advised Nazrul to resolve the deadlock through discussion and withdraw the case, and pay Tk 49 crore to buy the unit.

As Nazrul failed to do any, the minister directed the authorities to sell the mill to a businessman named Abdul Matin without taking any step to bring

it back under government ownership.

Meanwhile, Matin too failed to pay and another contract was signed with one Arifur Rahman for selling the mill.

Later, the cabinet committee on economic affairs said the process of selling the mill was illegal and it was sold at a much lower price, according to the probe report.

When a deputy secretary drew Latif's attention to violation of policies in selling MK-1 Press House and its 2.89 acre land at Maheshwarpasha in Khulna, he wrote in the official note: "Throw away the policies in the Bay of Bengal and accept the previous selling price."

The sale of Moslin Cotton Mill in Gazipur is also illegal. A property of Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation, the unit was sold for Tk 135 crore. Besides, its price was not fixed properly, the report added.

The government set the price of Jute Bellings Center at Tk 14 crore after its closure in 2009. When tender was floated for selling it, proprietor of Uttara Jute Traders Sujit Kumar Bhattacharya offered the highest price, Tk 5.05 crore.

As he was not given the work order, Sujit applied to the minister for buying the properties for Tk 5.05 crore and he approved it, the report said, questioning if the prices were fixed through underhand dealings.

The land and properties of former Jute Board of Netrokona, Surojmal Agarwala of Bogra and Godnail Press House in Narayanganj were sold without inviting any bid.

Land and properties of another 13 units under the now defunct Bangladesh Jute Corporations were sold without re-evaluating the market prices.

Chisti Textile Mills at Daulatpur in Comilla was sold at a lower price without floating tender. Dhakeswari Cotton Mill in the capital was given away for free while Valika Woolen Mill of Nasirabad in Chittagong was sold at a lower price, the report said.

Besides, relevant policies were not followed in selling and handing over Jamalpur's R Shim Press House.

The land of Textile Facilities Center of Noakhali was sold at a much lower price than that mentioned in the tender. Cariline Silk Mills of Fauzderhat in Chittagong was handed over to workers and labourers and New Laxmi Cotton Mill at Godnail in Narayanganj was sold to a third party violating rules.

Moreover, a piece of land of Nishat Jute Mills was leased to Chittagong Samity for 99 years at Tk 1,01,101 per year for constructing a hospital. This was done although the housing ministry advised the textiles and jute ministry not to sell, lease or handover the land (18 decimals) at Motijheel.

The minister even granted a rebate of Tk 6.62 crore in interest of Eagle Star Textile of Chittagong. The company owed the money to the government.

The four were murdered following a row between the gang members over distribution of money looted from a jewellery store and Saju's extra-marital relationships with the wives of Jony and Dakat Sumon, the Rab official quoted the arrestees as saying.

On instructions of Dakat Sumon, seven people went to Saju's residence and killed the family members.

Jony admitted to law enforcers that he had killed the children.

"When he was about to kill the children, I begged him to spare them and wanted to adopt them," Afsana told The Daily Star when she, her husband and Chan Mia were paraded before the media at the Rab-10 headquarters yesterday.

They were killed the previous night by five members of a robbers' gang, law enforcers said.

Saju, who himself was a member of the gang, had rented the house to use it before or after robbery missions.

Gang members Jony and Dakat Sumon used to stay with the family, while another Sumon, known as CNG

Sumon, visited them frequently. Jony and CNG Sumon along with five others had already been arrested.

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The PM also sent Eid cards to Opposition Leader Raushan Ershad and her husband HM Ershad, chief of Jatiya Party, a PMO office source said.

They attended a programme marking the Armed Forces Day at the Dhaka Cantonment during the military-backed caretaker government's regime, and also once during the previous AL government's tenure.

They, however, did not exchange any greetings, let alone talk, during those occasions.

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NEWS

Minister faces

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Prophet Muhammad (SM) and Tablighi Jamaat.

A writ petition was also filed with the HC seeking change in the penal code with provisions of life term imprisonment and death sentence for hurting the religious sentiment of people.

Meanwhile, different organisations and individuals yesterday demanded the government arrest the controversial Awami League leader and hand down exemplary punishment to him for his irresponsible remarks.

Some Islamic parties declared that they will hold protest rallies in front of the Baitul Mukarram national mosque tomorrow.

Islami Andolon Bangladesh and Hefajat-e-Islami, among other parties, brought out huge processions in the capital, Feni, Barguna and Munshiganj demanding exemplary punishment of Latif. They threatened to lay siege to Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport if their demand is not met.

Speaking at a rally in the city, Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad demanded the government hang Latif for his anti-Islam comments.

Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir were locked in clashes with cops during protests in Rajshahi and Natore yesterday demanding arrest of Latif. Several people including a cop were injured, report our Rajshahi correspondent and a private TV channel.

An alliance of Islamic parties, Sammilito Islami Dalsamuho at a briefing at the Jatiya Press Club issued a 15-day ultimatum to the government for arresting Latif. Otherwise, the combine will enforce a countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal on October 26, said alliance leaders.

Addressing a discussion in the capital, senior AL leader Suranjit Sengupta warned all quarters of not taking any undue political advantage out of the issue.

Speaking at a programme at a New York hotel on Sunday, Latif said he was more against hajj and Tablighi Jamaat than the Jamaat-e-Islami itself.

"Hajj is a waste of manpower. Those who perform hajj don't have any productivity. They weaken the economy; spend a lot of money abroad," he mentioned.

UNO hurt

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vandalising furniture at his office over recruiting night guards at 39 primary schools in the upazila, the UNO office sources said.

The UNO had forwarded necessary papers to the relevant government office on Wednesday for the disbursement of the 39 night guards' salaries.

The night guards' appointments were finalised in December last year.

The attackers were against the decisions as they had already taken Tk 300,000 to Tk 600,000 from many as bribe promising them to give the jobs, added the sources.

To protest the UNO's decision, some 60 AL and BCL men led by Ziaur Rahman Manik, joint secretary of Nawabganj AL unit, brought out a procession from the upazila town area in the morning.

At one point, they carried out the attack on the UNO office.

Breaking the collapsible gate, they also ransacked three rooms of the

3-day break

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homes today and tomorrow.

"There is already a festive mood now. Schools are closed. Many are busy shopping for Eid while some other colleagues went on Puja leave," said an official at the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry yesterday.

He said he would go to his village home in a northern district for Eid celebration and will stay there for two more days on October 8 and 9.

"October 10 and 11 are weekly holidays. So, I will be joining office on October 12," he said.

Many private and government employees will do the same. With a large number of people going outside Dhaka city, it will have a few days of relief from traffic jam and noise.

Removal decision

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Tablighi Jamaat.

He made the comments at a press conference at the AL president's political office at Dhanmondi in the city.

Addressing the press conference, Hanif said, "The minister was supposed to receive an award on Tuesday in Mexico for the government's outstanding performance in ICT sector. But State Minister for ICT Junaid Ahmed Palak received the award. It proves the decision of his removal has been made effective."

When contacted, Hanif told The Daily Star that he wanted to mean the premier has taken a decision of Latif's removal from the cabinet.

Describing Latif's comments as unfortunate, Hanif said the AL never supports such comments.

AL leaders Jahangir Kabir Nanak, Ahmed Hossain, AFM Bahauddin Nasim and Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury were also present at the press conference.

20-PARTY ALLIANCE

The BNP-led 20-party alliance yesterday threatened to wage a tough movement if the government does not arrest Siddique immediately and hand down exemplary punishment.

The government has been "trying to create a smokescreen to the reported removal of the minister from the cabinet in a bid to save itself from public wrath," BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told reporters at the party's Nayapaltan headquarters.

He was briefing newsmen on the meeting of chiefs of the 20-party alliance components. The meeting was held on Tuesday night at the Gulshan office of BNP chief Khaleda Zia.

Fakhrul said although the 20-party combine did not announce any programme protesting Latif's anti-Islam comments due to the ongoing Durga Puja and upcoming Eid-ul-Azha, it will extend full support to all the protest programmes announced by any organisation.

COURTS SUMMON LATIF

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Mizanur Rahman took into cognisance the complaints from a lawyer and summoned Siddique to the court on October 28.