

ACC submits charge sheets in 2 railway corruption cases

29 persons accused; name of ex-GM Mridha dropped

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cg

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday submitted charge sheets in two cases filed in connection with irregularities in railway recruitment, dropping the name of Yusuf Ali Mridha, suspended general manager (east zone) of Bangladesh Railway.

Court sources said Rashedur Reza, ACC assistant director, submitted the charge sheet accusing 29 persons, including BR Welfare Officer Golam Kibria and its Additional Chief Mechanical Engineer Hafizur Rahman, in the case filed over irregularities in appointing trade apprentices.

Chittagong Government Muslim High School's teachers -- Azizur Rahman, Mohammad Ataullah, Golam Mostafa, Mashihur Rahman -- were shown accused.

The teachers had examined the recruitment test answer sheets. The others accused were given the appointments, added court sources.

On September 13, 2012, Rashedur

Reza filed the case with Kotwali Police Station, naming Mridha as one of the accused.

Meanwhile, two people were shown accused in the charge sheet of the case filed over corruption in recruiting a physical instructor in the railways.

They accused are BR Welfare Officer Golam Kibria and Chandan Kumar Roy, who was recruited as the instructor.

Md Shahabuddin, investigation commissioner of ACC, submitted the charge sheet.

The charge sheets were sent to the general record office of the Chittagong metropolitan magistrate court and the hearing on the acceptance of the charge sheets would be held on March 24, said sources.

In June and November 11 last year, Mridha's name was dropped from four other charge sheets filed in connection with irregularities in recruitment of different BR posts, according to court sources.



A bus set afire by suspected pickets near the Mahanagar Natya Mancha in the capital's Gulistan last night.

PHOTO: STAR

N Korean diplomat withdrawn

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The North Korean government has withdrawn its diplomat Son Young Nam, who was caught with 27kg gold worth about Tk 14 crore at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on March 6, with pledges to prosecute him on his return to Pyongyang.

"We summoned North Korean Ambassador to Bangladesh Ri Song Hyon this morning [Monday] and gave a 72-hour ultimatum to withdraw Son Young Nam, and he left accordingly," Foreign Ministry Director General (East Asia and Pacific Wing) Jashim Uddin told The Daily Star.

However, apprehending harsher action and possible prosecution, the North Korean diplomat secretly left Dhaka on Sunday night, officials said.

The North Korean ambassador was asked to ensure four conditions, including withdrawal of the accused diplomat within 72 hours and prosecution of the diplomat under the country's own laws on his return to North Korea.

The two other conditions were -- keeping Bangladesh informed about the steps taken against the diplomat from time to time and tougher actions against any diplomat or official of the North Korean embassy if they get involved in such crimes in future.

Sources said the North Korean ambassador faced a volley of questions from the foreign ministry officials, including possible legal action to be taken against the diplomat and whether he returned to North Korea or escaped to other country etc.

The envoy, at one stage, admitted that Son Young Nam left Dhaka on Sunday night at the instruction of Pyongyang.

The foreign ministry official also said the government would initiate an extensive inquiry as the latest incident (of smuggling) had created suspicion among authorities about the existence of such smuggling rackets.

Foreign ministry officials said if any diplomat was found to be involved in such crime in future, the government would instantly withdraw his/her diplomatic immunity and prosecute him/her.

Assuring the Bangladesh government of proper cooperation, Ri Song Hyon said his government would take appropriate legal steps against the diplomat.

ISIS militants kidnap Bangladeshi in Libya

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they included four Filipinos, a Ghanaian, an Austrian and a Czech.

Local officials said the Islamic State's Libyan affiliate during the attack also beheaded eight guards on the spot.

Foreigners increasingly have become targets in the oil-rich country amid turf war between two rival governments and the rise of Islamist extremists.

But Friday's incident was the first instance of a Bangladeshi being held hostage by the Islamic State, also known as ISIS, though Dhaka has not joined the alliance against the terrorist group, considering the security of millions of Bangladeshis working in the Middle East.

"Sadly, one Bangladeshi national has been taken hostage and our mission in Tripoli has launched all-out efforts to find out Helal Uddin," a senior official at the foreign ministry

told The Daily Star.

The official, however, admitted that it's highly difficult for the mission in Tripoli to function or move smoothly in the turmoil of Libya.

Moreover, the government has recently appointed Major General Shahidul Islam as the ambassador to Libya and he is very new there.

According to the foreign ministry statement, Bangladesh embassy is in close contact with National Oil Company (NOC) of Libya and the Australian company VAOS. The ministry is closely monitoring the situation, it said.

Also yesterday, Helal Uddin's family expressed deep concern over the abduction and appealed to the government for steps to get him released, reported our correspondent from Jamalpur.

Son of late Amaat Sheikh of Dakkhin Gajaria village of Adarvita union, Helal last visited his home in

early 2014.

"I talked to my father over the cell phone six days ago and there was nothing wrong. After hearing the sad news through police, we are in great concern. I don't know what is waiting for him," said his son Rubel, 13.

Helal has two sons and three daughters.

Meanwhile, The New York Times reported that the abductees include two Bangladeshis. But it was not confirmed by the government.

The attacks in recent weeks have forced Libya to declare 11 fields, including al-Ghani non-operational.

Libya's military spokesman, Ahmed al-Mesmari, warned on Monday that Islamic State militants' long-term goal is to take over Libya's petroleum industry. "This is the lifeline of the Libyan people."

Four years after the ouster of Col Muammar Gaddafi, Libya is caught up in conflict between two rival fac-

tions with their armed forces fighting for the country's oil wealth.

The chaos has allowed militants from ISIS and Ansar al-Shariah to gain a foothold in that country.

However, Bangladesh has no plan yet to repatriate the migrants from Libya.

"It is because the situation is not so bad," an official of expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry told The Daily Star yesterday.

Around two months back, some 40 foreign nationals, including three Bangladeshis, were abducted. The Bangladeshis were released after they were identified as Muslims, the official said.

During the Libyan crisis in 2011, over 36,000 Bangladeshi workers were brought back from the North African country.

According to the ministry, there are nearly 25,000 Bangladeshis working in Libya.

LETTER TO PM

SAHR worried over killing of Avijit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

South Asians for Human Rights, a regional human rights organisation, has condemned the killing of writer Avijit Roy in a letter to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Expressing its concern in the letter, the organisation called upon the government to bring the perpetrators to justice after a thorough investigation into the killing.

The attack perpetrated on Avijit and his wife is a disturbing indication of growing religious extremism in Bangladesh and in the region, according to the letter.

The SAHR in the letter expressed its deep concern about a Facebook post of the prime minister's ICT Affairs Adviser Sajeeb Wazed Joy in which he demanded arrest and trial of Dr Kamal Hossain, an eminent jurist, and Mahfuz Anam, the editor of the Daily Star, for "treason".

The letter called upon the Bangladesh government to prevent officials and those associated with the pro-ruling party from making such "threatening statements" and also to ensure that persons critical of the government policies, including members of opposition parties, are not "threatened or harassed".

The SAHR also condemned the brutal arson attacks on innocent citizens that have killed over 100 people since January 2015.

"The unstable political environment ... has created conditions in which human rights and the rule of law cannot be upheld in a meaningful way in Bangladesh," the letter reads.

Tigers terrific

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master-class batting for 89 and the way Mashrafe Bin Mortaza led the pace attack like a true general were the highlights of a match that was capped off brilliantly by an unsung Rubel.

The right-arm pacer served a double blow to a well-placed England in the middle by dismissing Ian Bell and Eoin Morgan in the 27th over of the match.

There had been much talk about England's weakness against slow bowlers, but Bangladesh's pace attack has shown the world that they have got the ability to win the match against England for the second successive World Cup after their victory at Chittagong in 2011.

In the first part it was however the batting mastery from Riyad who anchored the Bangladesh innings brilliantly in company with Soumya Sarker and then Mushfiqur after James Anderson had reduced them to 8-2.

Young left-hander Soumya once again showed his class as his 96-run partnership with Riyad repaired the early damages. More importantly, the stylish left-hander played with such authority during his 40-ball 52 that it took away the early England initiatives.

England however bounced back in the match by taking two quick wickets of Soumya and Shakib Al Hasan, but Mushfiqur continued his good form in the tournament to share a 141-run partnership, which was the best for Bangladesh for any wicket in World Cups, with Riyad to give a substantial total to defend. Mushfiqur's innings was a mixture of patience and aggression but he was unlucky that he missed the hundred for 11 runs.

Riyad was simply outstanding on way to his maiden ODI hundred. His 138-ball 103 was a sheer example of a true batsmanship.



People dig the Norsunda riverbed at Neelganj in Kishoreganj to collect Kalomati (black soil). The layer of earth at the bottom of the dried-up river can be used as fuel. It sells at Tk 120 a sack. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

Saudi Arabia now world's top arms importer

AFP, London

Saudi Arabia overtook India in 2014 as the world's biggest importer of defence equipment, fuelled by tensions in the Middle East, according to a study published Sunday by respected analysts IHS Jane's.

Global defence trade currently stands at \$64.4 billion, said the report from the London-based defence specialists.

The figure has been driven by "unparalleled demand from the emerging economies for military aircraft and an escalation of regional tensions in the Middle East and Asia Pacific," IHS expert Ben

Moore said.

The report, which examines the defence market across 65 countries, found that Saudi Arabia spent more than \$6.4 billion on defence kit in 2014, overtaking India on \$5.57 billion.

Saudi Arabian imports increased by 54 percent over the past year and the study predicts that one out of every seven dollars spent on defence exports in 2015 will be spent by the Middle East kingdom.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) together imported \$8.6 billion of defence equipment in 2014, more than the imports of Western Europe combined.

The United States maintained its position as the top exporter, shipping \$23.7 billion of equipment, ahead of Russia on \$10 billion.

"The biggest beneficiary of the strong Middle Eastern market remains the US, with \$8.4 billion worth of Middle Eastern exports in 2014, compared to \$6 billion in 2013," said the report.

Despite Russia's strong performance, boosted by \$2.3 billion of sales to China, the study predicted tougher times ahead.

"A drop-off in exports is forecast for 2015 as major programmes draw to a close, a trend that could be accelerated by sanctions," it said.

Mamata talks Teesta

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figured in the Modi-Mamata meeting.

Ahead of her first meeting with Modi yesterday since assuming office about four years ago, Mamata on March 4 said she had told Modi that there was a need to improve India-Bangladesh ties.

She also told reporters in Kolkata that she had written separate letters to Modi and External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj about the outcome of her recent visit to Bangladesh.

"After my recent visit to Bangladesh, I have apprised the PM and External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj of the details about the Teesta water issue and Indo-Bangla relations," Mamata had said.

"In my letter to the two leaders, I have also said that we need improved relations between the two countries,"

she said.

Mamata has already assured the Bangladeshi leadership that her party would back a constitution amendment bill Indian parliament has to pass to implement the land boundary agreement (LBA).

It is expected that the bill will be tabled in the ongoing budget session of parliament.

Modi is understood to be keen to go with the deliverables on Teesta and LBA when he visits Bangladesh possibly later this month to reinforce his South Asia outreach policy.

Modi is also reportedly trying to persuade Pawan Chamling, chief minister of Sikkim state where Teesta originates, to release more water to West Bengal and consequently Bangladesh so that a deal between the two countries can be facilitated.