



A visitor browsing a stall at Bangladesh Flower Fest 2016 at Krishibid Institution Bangladesh in the city's Khamarbari yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Flower business blooming

Flowers worth over \$100 million sell every year now, say speakers at inauguration of 2-day flower fest

PORIMOL PALMA

Flower is there in all our occasions -- be it a happy one or otherwise. It makes us feel better and soothes us in distress.

Its demand in Bangladesh grew as more and more people have been elevated to urban middle class, said Goynad Sarker, adviser to Bangladesh Flower Society (BFC), in his speech at the inaugural ceremony of the Bangladesh Flower Fest 2016 yesterday.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury who was speaking as chief guest said she had seen rare use of flowers in her childhood. Even in her youth, a few people would present flowers.

Within decades, flower cultivation has grown into an industry. The increase in demand is the sign of a change in people's attitude, the minister said.

Commercial farming of flowers began in the country in 1983 on 30-decimal of land in Jessore. Now, flowers are grown on nearly 1,000 acres of land in 22 districts, mostly in Khulna and Dhaka divisions, Goynad said.

At least 1.5 lakh people are involved in the production, distribution and sales.

The sales price of flowers was \$31 million in 2009-10, which rose to around \$100 million in 2014-15 fiscal, Goynad said at the two-day festival organised by the BFC at Krishibid Institution, Bangladesh in the capital's Khamarbari. The programme was sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The most sought-after flowers being produced in the country are tuberose, various types of roses, gladiolus, marigold, gerbera and daisy, the BFC adviser said.

Though the flower market is expanding, the industry faces a number of setbacks.

Farmers are producing various kinds of quality flowers, but often traders introduce them to customers as foreign ones and demand higher prices, said Nasrin Nahar Aasha, chief executive of Jessore Flower Production and Marketing Cooperative Union.

"We are in the festival trying to inform all that we produce so many kinds of quality flowers," she told The Daily Star at the festival that began with a slogan, "Local flowers: local market."

Michael Field, chief of party of the USAID's Agricultural Value Chains Project (AVC), said farmers had little knowledge about which flowers had more demand than others and the prices asked for them.

Under the project, farmers and traders are given support in terms of knowledge about firm practices, new technologies, packaging and transporting, he said.

The sector has improved a lot but if farmers gain necessary skills and realise the market demand, they can produce quality flowers and get fairer prices, Field noted.

BFS President Abdur Rahim said they needed a wholesale flower market.

Besides, researches should be conducted on developing high quality flowers and farmers be provided with technologies and bank loans, he said.

While Matia Chowdhury endorsed Abdur's suggestions, she said she missed some indigenous variety sweet-scented roses.

"As flowers of various colours soothe our eyes, there should be scented flowers too to soothe our mind."

Nizami seeks review of death sentence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Convicted war criminal and Jamaat-Islami ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami yesterday sought review of the Supreme Court verdict that upheld his death penalty for war crimes.

He submitted the review petition through his lawyers, praying to the apex court to acquit him of all the charges on which he was found guilty, his son Nazid Momen told The Daily Star.

Nizami mentioned 46 grounds in the 70-page petition so that the Appellate Division of the SC considers his prayer, he said.

After the review petition was filed, his principal lawyer Khandker Mahbub Hossain told reporters that they are hopeful Nizami would get acquittal in the review if the documents and evidence they have submitted are properly reviewed.

He said that the Jamaat leader had no participation in any crimes and therefore, sentencing him to death would be contrary to justice. He claimed the Appellate Division has not properly evaluated the evidence and documents in his appeal.

Additional Attorney General Murad Reza told reporters that the state side will take steps for the hearing of Nizami's review petition quickly.

Nizami filed the petition 14 days after the SC released the full judgment.

According to the rule, a war crimes convict can file a review petition within 15 days after receiving the full verdict.

The SC on January 6 this year upheld the verdict of the International Crimes Tribunal-1 that sentenced Nizami to death for crimes against humanity during the country's 1971 Liberation War.

Two months later, on March 15, the apex court released the full verdict. The ICT issued death warrant for him hours after the SC released its full verdict.

The following day, the jail authorities read out the judgment before the convict.

In October 2014, the ICT-1 handed down capital punishment to Nizami, the leader of infamous Al-Badr Bahini, for his wartime offences.

Trishal UNO killed in road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Rashedul Islam, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) of Trishal in Mymensingh, was killed in a road accident in Boilor area on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway yesterday.

Rashedul, 38, of Sreepur upazila in Gazipur, was riding pillion on the motorbike of his office assistant Nasar Uddin, 35. He was on his way to Hodder Vita for arbitration over a land dispute, said Moniruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Trishal Police Station.

When they reached Boilor area around 5:45pm, a bus rear-ended the bike and the UNO was tossed off the bike, leaving him with severe head injuries.

He was rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared him dead, the OC said, adding that Nasar was admitted to a local hospital and moved to the MMCH as his condition deteriorated.

England put faith in Root

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game that we were here."

Despite having to adapt to so many different surfaces, New Zealand's formidable spin attack has so far thrived in Indian conditions.

The Kiwis have won the toss, batted first and used their spin bowlers to great effect to defend totals in all four of their group matches.

But Root has also shown his class on different pitches in the tournament, enhancing his reputation as one of the game's classiest acts.

"Root is a class player and he is one of the best around in all three formats of the game at the moment," all-rounder Ben Stokes said of his 25-year-old teammate.

Only India's Virat Kohli of all the players to reach the semifinals has scored more runs than Root's 168, which included a match-winning 83 against South Africa.

His knock against the Proteas fired England to a successful record chase of 230 and got their bid for a second World T20 title back on track after an opening-match defeat to the West Indies.

The 2010 champions then squeaked past minnows Afghanistan and defending champions Sri Lanka to finish second in Group One on six points behind the West Indies.

England were reduced to 85 for 7 against Afghanistan before eventually winning by 15 runs and then Angelo Mathews' valiant 73 almost saw England come unstuck in a nervous 10-run triumph over Sri Lanka.

Morgan said he expected another

"tough game of cricket" but that the earlier matches had shown his team would not buckle under pressure.

"I think it shows the amount of character that we have within the group," he said. Morgan said that while he felt excited, he did not feel as if he was on the verge of a world cup final.

"We are not getting too far ahead of ourselves as we have got a really tough game against a strong New Zealand side," he said.

"They've probably played the best cricket so far in the group stages and we're going to have to come up with a very strong game of cricket tomorrow to beat New Zealand."

New Zealand, who were unfancied coming into the tournament following the retirement of former captain Brendon McCullum, have yet to put a foot wrong on their travels since stunning favourites India in their first game.

Captain Kane Williamson has deployed his spinners to supreme effect as the Kiwis became the only side to progress unbeaten from the Super 10 stage, despite a schedule that took them to Nagpur, Dharamsala, Mohali and Kolkata.

"We have done a lot of travel but the boys have been great and have embraced the schedule and the pitches," said Williamson, 25.

Spinners Mitchell Santner and Ish Sodhi have shared 17 wickets as their two most experienced pacemen -- Tim Southee and Trent Boult -- warmed the substitutes' bench.

Woman sentenced to death for killing 'lover'

AFP, Dhaka

A young woman who cut her lover's heart out and slashed his throat has been sentenced to death by a Khulna court, a prosecutor said yesterday.

Fatema Akhter Sonali, 21, acted out of revenge after the man refused to marry her and secretly kept recordings of the couple having sex, prosecutor Quazi Shabbir Ahmed said.

She had also found video footage of him having sex with other women on his laptop, Ahmed added.

"It's rare for a woman to be sentenced to death. But her case was exceptional," he told AFP.

"She admitted to the court she killed her lover, Emdadul Haq Shipon, for refusing to marry her and for keeping a recording video of their sexual intercourse in his laptop."

The judge delivered Sonali's sentence on Monday in a packed court in Khulna.

In her confession, Sonali said she spiked a soft drink with 20 sleeping pills and gave it to Shipon, a 28-year-old part-time lift attendant at a hospital.

When he fell unconscious, she bound his hands and feet before killing him by slitting his throat.

Sonali then cut open his chest and removed his heart.

"She told the court that she was curious to see how big his heart was. She said a man must have a big heart to carry out such audacious crimes," said Ahmed, using a Bengali idiom.

Sonali committed the murder in March 2014 and can challenge the sentence in a higher court.

If her execution goes ahead she will be the first woman to be hanged in the country, according to Tipu Sultan, a deputy inspector general of prisons.

CHEQUE BOUNCE CASE

Rafiu Rabbi sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

A Narayanganj court yesterday sent Rafiu Rabbi, father of slain teen Taqj, to jail in connection with a cheque bounce case filed by a businessman.

Judge Miaji Shahidul Alam Chowdhury passed the order after Rabbi, an organiser of Narayanganj Gonojagoran Mancha, surrendered before the court, Additional Public Prosecutor Abdur Rahim told reporters yesterday.

Businessman Jalal Uddin Ahmed, maternal uncle-in-law of ruling Awami League lawmaker Shamim Osman, filed the case claiming that two cheques worth Tk 70 lakh given by Rabbi bounced in 2012.

Rabbi's lawyer Mahbubur Rahman Masum claimed the case was filed against his client in collaboration with a lawyer to whom the cheques were sent.

He alleged that Shamim Osman had threatened Rabbi several times with imprisonment in public. He added that they would appeal against the order to the higher court.

Abdur Rahim said Rabbi was penalised before for cheque forgery, but he had appealed to the High Court against the conviction. As the HC upheld the lower court verdict, he had to surrender before the court yesterday.

On March 8, 2013, the body of 17-year-old Tanvir Mohammad Taqj was found on the bank of the Shitalakkhya river two days after he had gone missing.

Biman board

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The Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism in a circular announced the formation of the board and its members.

"The board has been reconstituted comprising 13 members including the chairman for 2016 to ensure overall development and speed up its activities," said a press release of the ministry.

The directors of the board are: senior secretary of the Finance Division of finance ministry, secretaries of the Prime Minister's Office and the civil aviation ministry, former secretary Nazrul Islam Khan (NI Khan), assistant chief of air staff (Operation and Training), engineer in chief of Bangladesh Army, chairman of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh, former additional secretary Taposh Kumar Roy, barrister Tanjib-ul Alam, and BGMEA President Siddiqur Rahman, FCA and Managing Director of Emerging Resource Ltd Noor-e-Khoda Abdul Mobin, and MD of Biman.

Yesterday morning, Civil Aviation Minister Rashed Khan Menon and the secretary of the ministry met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and got her approval with a small change in the list of directors that was handed over to her, said highly placed sources in the ministry.

The ministry had proposed the name of former FBCI President Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed, but the prime minister picked NI Khan as Akram had told her that he was sick and not willing to be on the Biman board, Menon told The Daily Star.

The minister also said the number of the board directors rose to 12 from 10 as two people from trade bodies were included as directors.

Sources in the ministry said the ministry proposed the names for chairman and directors in December,

excluding Jamal Uddin and some board members, when the premier asked the minister whether Jamal Uddin could be considered for one more year.

However, since some top PMO officials and all cabinet members wished him gone, he was finally shown the door, said a highly placed source.

Jamal Uddin developed a rift with former and present ministers of the civil aviation ministry as he seldom inform them of any decisions, not even out of courtesy, said a ministry official wishing anonymity. The parliamentary watchdog on civil aviation ministry on different occasions expressed annoyance at Jamal Uddin as he hardly appeared before the watchdog despite being asked to do so.

The prime minister had appointed Jamal as the Biman chairman for one year in 2009, two years after Biman was made a public limited company in 2007.

After completion of his one year, there was speculation that Jamal Uddin might not be appointed chairman again.

Sources in Biman and civil aviation ministry said Biman's Annual General Meeting was to be held by December 31 last year, but the Biman could not hold it. This irked government high-ups.

The situation took a turn for the worse for Jamal Uddin as some key decisions were pending with the board, like appointment of manpower in ground handling and purchasing of equipment. The board could not approve the decisions since its tenure had expired at the end of last year.

Jamal's chances of becoming the board chairman again significantly dropped after March 8, when the UK banned direct cargo flight to London from Hazrat Shahjalil International Airport on security grounds.

EgyptAir drama ends

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the plane had landed.

"The hijacker has just been arrested," Cypriot government spokesman Nicos Christodoulides said on Twitter.

Egypt's civil aviation ministry said in a statement that Cypriot authorities have determined that the belt worn by the hijacker did not contain explosives.

An AFP correspondent saw a man emerging from the aircraft, walking across the tarmac and then raising his hands to two awaiting counter-terrorism officers. They laid him on the ground and searched him for around two minutes before taking him away.

Passengers and crew had earlier been seen leaving the aircraft, including one who climbed out of the cockpit window.

"The passengers are safe and the crew is safe," Egypt's civil aviation minister Sherif Fathy said on state television minutes after Cyprus said the hijacker had been taken into custody.

Egypt's Prime Minister Sharif Ismail said in televised remarks that the alleged hijacker was an Egyptian and had demanded to speak to a European Union representative.

Officials earlier said there was no link to "terrorism" in the incident and that the hijacker had demanded to see a Cypriot woman who was his estranged lover, with whom he had children.

"PSYCHOLOGICALLY UNSTABLE" "This is not about terrorism. This is about the individual action of a person who is psychologically unstable," said the Cypriot foreign ministry's permanent secretary, Alexandros Zenon.

An Egyptian foreign ministry official said: "He's not a terrorist, he's an idiot," after it was reported that the hijacker appears to have seized the plane as part of a bizarre dispute with his ex-wife.

The EgyptAir plane landed at the airport in the southern coastal city of Lamaca at 8:50 am, after the hijacker had contacted the control tower 20 minutes earlier to demand the diversion.

Egyptian civil aviation said he had threatened to detonate an explosives belt

on the Airbus A-320, which had been headed from the Mediterranean coastal city of Alexandria to Cairo.

Most of the passengers were allowed to disembark after the plane landed, but a handful of crew and passengers had remained on board until shortly before the hijacker's arrest.

Fathy had told a press conference that the captain, a co-pilot, an air hostess and a security guard, along with three passengers, had remained on board after other passengers and crew were released.

Fathy said there had been 55 passengers on board the plane and that the hijacker had demanded it land in either Turkey or Cyprus.

The plane had been carrying 21 foreigners including eight Americans, four Dutch citizens, four Britons and a French citizen, an Egyptian civil aviation ministry statement said.

Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades had earlier told reporters the incident appeared to be motivated by personal reasons.

"The hijacking is not terrorism-related," he told a joint news conference with the visiting president of the European Parliament, Martin Schultz.

Asked about reports that the hijacker had demanded to see a Cypriot woman, Anastasiades laughed and said: "Always there is a woman."

FLIGHTS DIVERTED The plane had been parked on the tarmac away from the new terminal building but just 200 metres (yards) from a beach where dozens of foreign tourists were out.

The airport, the main entry point for tourists to the resort island, was closed and incoming flights diverted to Paphos on the country's western edge.

Concerns were raised about security at Egyptian airports after a Russian airliner was downed on October 31 over Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, killing all 224 people on board. The Islamic State group claimed to have smuggled a bomb on board the plane.

Who to blame

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body was conducted on March 21, a day after the 19-year-old college student's body was found in Comilla Cantonment.

With the autopsy report yet to be released, detectives obtained the exhumation order from a Comilla court on Monday.

"I respect the court order," said Yaar Hossain, "But I have a question to the authorities -- why should there be a second autopsy?"

"I want to know whose negligence is causing this to my murdered daughter."

Yaar also questioned what made the investigators realise seven days after the first autopsy that they needed a fresh one.

The court order reached the police yesterday and the body is likely to be exhumed today.

The move has raised questions among those who have been staging demonstrations demanding justice for Tonu since the news broke on the social networking platforms before the mainstream media picked it up.

"We have been running in vain between government offices for the first post-mortem report," said Khairul Anam Raihan, one of the organisers of Ganajagaran Mancha in Comilla.

"We warn the authorities concerned against any attempt to cover up the truth. The chances for finding evidence in the second forensic examination are definitely slimmer than the first time."