

STRANDED ELEPHANT

Rescue efforts yet to see any success

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

The visiting three-member Indian rescue team left Jamalpur for Dhaka yesterday finding it difficult to tranquilise the stranded wild elephant moving through flooded croplands in Madarganj upazila of the district.

A 17-member forest department team was still following the elephant, looking for scopes for tranquilising the animal at a suitable place, said Ashim Kumar Mallick, wildlife inspector of the forest department.

Today, the Indian team will hold a meeting with high officials of the Bangladesh forest department in this regard.

They are likely to fly to Assam tomorrow, said Ashim.

The Indian rescue team had landed in Dhaka on August 3 and went to Jamalpur the next day.

During the next two days, a joint team of wildlife and veterinary offi-

cial from both Bangladesh and India tried to rescue the elephant but could not as it was not coming out to a dry place noticing a huge crowd of curious onlookers.

Earlier, it was planned that once the elephant would reach a dry place, it would be tranquilised and taken to the Safari Park in Gazipur.

The wild elephant got separated from her herd in Assam and entered Kurigram's Chilmari upazila, floating with the currents of the Brahmaputra river, on June 27.

Since the elephant entered Bangladesh, it has travelled over 300 kilometres of riverine routes in the last 41 days.

During the days, it was seen frantically moving from one place to another.

Currently, the elephant is in a low-lying flooded area in Amtoli area of Uttar Charbhatiani village in Madarganj upazila of Jamalpur.



The wild elephant from India wades through a flooded cropland in Char Uttarbhatiani village in Jamalpur's Madarganj upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: ABM AMINUL ISLAM

ACC arrests 7 in graft cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday arrested seven people, including two former officials of a private bank, from different parts of the country in separate graft cases.

ACC's Assistant Director Moazzem Hossain held Inamul Haque, former assistant vice-president of Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd, and its former investment in-charge Shamsuddin, and proprietor of Three Star and Co MA Mannan for taking Tk 12.13 crore in loan against fake documents.

According to the case statement, one Ali Hossain is the owner of 1.5 katha plot at Mirpur Section-11.

The accused, Mannan, in collaboration with Al-Fattah Habibullah, managing director of development company Urban Skyline Ltd, forged the signature of the land owner and mortgaged the land to the Islami Bank's Bangshal branch with the help of Inamul and Shamsuddin, the statement said.

"They withdrew Tk 12,13,37,591 from the bank and didn't repay the loan," the statement added.

Tahsinul Haque, deputy director of the anti-graft body, filed a case against five people in this connection with

Bangshal Police Station on June 6 this year.

Moazzem, who is investigating the case, arrested them from the capital's Segunbagicha area.

In another incident, the anti-corruption watchdog nabbed Abdul Kaum, centre in-charge of Grameen Bank's Chukitti branch in Chapainawabganj, for gobbling up Tk 6.92 lakh.

ACC's Assistant Director Rizia Khatun arrested him from Police Line Gate in Rajshahi. A case was filed against him on July 15, 2014.

ACC's Assistant Director Hafizul Islam held Shampa Rani Shaha, secretary of New Prime Multipurpose Cooperative Society Ltd, from Faridpur in a graft case filed against her on January 7, 2015, for misappropriating Tk 1.14 crore.

In another development, the ACC caught two former union parishad members Azizur Rahman and Abul Kalam Azad of Shyamnagar in Satkhira for embezzling Tk 85,500 from a rural infrastructure development project of 2002-03 fiscal without doing any work.

Assistant Director of ACC Shamim Iqbal arrested them from Shyamnagar. A case was filed against them on April 28 this year.

3 sisters die in hornet attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Three young sisters -- two of them toddlers -- were killed while their mother and a neighbour critically injured as a swarm of hornets attacked them near their house on Saturday in Birganj upazila of the district.

Nine-month-old Meem, Farzana Begum, 3, and Hadisa Begum, 8, were daughters of Tanjila Begum and Islam Mia of Arji Laskara village in the same upazila.

The three siblings, their mother and the neighbour, Rahima Khatun, 50, were stung by the hornets after a hornet's nest fell off a bamboo cluster near their house due to a strong wind on Saturday afternoon, said Ramzan

Ali, a resident of the village.

Locals came to their rescue and rushed all the victims to Thakurgaon Modern Hospital where Farzana and Hadisa -- a 1st grader at Arji Laskara Government Primary School -- succumbed to their injuries the same night.

The youngest of the victims, Meem, and the children's mother, Tanjila Begum, 36, were transferred to Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH) as their condition was deteriorating, said Dr. Shukumar Roy of Thakurgaon Modern Hospital.

Meem died yesterday at RMCH while her mother is still there in a critical condition, Zahangir Hossain, officer-in-charge of Birganj Police Station, said.

People say no to terror

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Karim briefed reporters.

Hasina described Vietnam as a "great country" and said Bangladesh and Vietnam have a "common history" as they both fought for independence.

In this connection, she said, "Unfortunately we lost our Father of the Nation [Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman] within three and a half years of independence."

Hasina said her party, Bangladesh Awami League, came back to power after 21 years and started working for the development of the country, particularly to free the people from the curse of poverty.

She put emphasis on taking measures to further boost trade and business between the two countries. "We have a big market and we will have to explore it," she said.

The PM also placed emphasis on strengthening connectivity in the greater interest of the two countries.

She then laid importance on exchange of visits between the political leaders to further consolidate the

ties between the two nations.

The premier recalled her visit to Vietnam in 2012 and said she was highly impressed to see the development of the Southeast Asian country.

Terming Bangladesh a "successful" and an "important" country in South Asia, the outgoing Vietnamese ambassador highly praised the continued economic progress of Bangladesh under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Nguyen Quang Thue expressed his gratitude for extending cooperation during his tenure in Bangladesh, saying that Vietnam has a traditional friendship with Bangladesh.

"We give highest priority to our relationship with Bangladesh," he said and hoped that the existing bilateral ties and cooperation between the two countries would be further strengthened in the days to come.

PM's International Affairs Advisor Dr Gower Rizvi and Principal Secretary Md Abul Kalam Azad were present.

Only 37pc of graft accused convicted

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9,810 a year, which is 0.006 percent of the country's population.

The number is very low, given that 68 percent people of the country are victims of corruption, it noted.

TIB researchers Shammi Laila Islam and Shahzada M Akram presented the study at a press conference at the TIB office in the capital yesterday.

The study titled "Review of Bangladesh's Anti-Corruption Commission" is the first of its kind conducted in Bangladesh after the Berlin-based Transparency International designed a new tool in 2013-2015 to assess strengths and weaknesses of the anti-corruption institutions in the Asia-Pacific region.

The research conducted from November 2015 to April this year is based on data from 2013 to 2015. It set 50 indicators under seven areas of ACC activities and put the indicators in high, medium and low categories.

According to the study, ACC's overall performance fell in the medium category with a score of 61.22 percent. A score of 67-100 percent is considered a high score, 34-66 percent a medium score and 0-33 percent a low score.

The ACC got the highest score (78.57 percent) in terms of legal independence and dignity, the second highest score (72.22 percent) in corruption prevention, education and outreach activities, and the lowest score (28.57 percent) in public perception.

"There are a good number of positive indicators based on which we can

look forward," said Sultana Kamal.

LEGAL INDEPENDENCE

Though the ACC has a good legal framework, its independence and neutrality are questionable, says the study.

Application of the ACC's legal power depends on the commissioners' independent mentality. But their recruitment process is not fully transparent as the names of those selected are not made public before recruitment.

Also, the ACC is not free from political bias, it says.

The ACC's financial dependency on the government limits its autonomy and objectivity, the report says, adding that information providers think the government uses the ACC as a tool against the opposition.

FINANCE AND MANPOWER

From 2013 to 2015, the ACC's budget was 0.025 percent of the annual national budget. And the prime challenge for the commission is insufficient manpower for carrying out investigation and graft cases.

Besides, anti-corruption activities are hampered as the ACC doesn't have offices and adequate manpower in all districts.

INVESTIGATION

Compared to the population and the extent of corruption in Bangladesh, people's access to the ACC for filing complaints is low.

"In most cases, the ACC probe is not completed in due time though the ACC thinks its personnel are skilled and professional," the study says.

A matter of concern is that the com-

mission managed to seize and recover a very small portion of the country's laundered money.

The amount of recovered money was Tk 72.812 crore in 2013-15 whereas \$430 million was laundered from Bangladesh every year from 2004 to 2013.

GRAFT PREVENTION, OUTREACH

In 2013-2015, the ACC had no allocation for research or any coordinated plan to prevent corruption. It, however, carried out some activities through corruption prevention committees and Satata Sanghas (honesty clubs).

The commission has not yet taken any initiative to create public awareness through the social media, the report says.

COLLABORATION WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS

The ACC participates in the activities of international anti-corruption networks, but has no effective cooperation with the anti-corruption institutions of other countries, the study says.

The ACC's level of collaboration with the National Board of Revenue and the offices of the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Attorney General is not adequate or effective, it says.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND SUPERVISION

The absence of external supervision over the ACC is a matter of concern, says the TIB report.

Though there is an ACC branch to supervise and evaluate ACC's probe reports, it does not include any people's representative.

PUBLIC PERCEPTION

A TIB survey (Global Corruption Barometer 2015, not published yet) conducted last year found that 82.9 percent respondents didn't know about the ACC or its activities, while only 9.1 percent said the ACC was doing good work to prevent corruption, the report notes.

Many think the ACC is not effective in fighting corruption, while people don't have any idea about important laws and processes of fighting corruption.

There are allegations that the ACC's treatment of those under investigation depends on their social and economic status, the study says.

The TIB suggested increasing the budget for the ACC, improving skills and capacity of the ACC personnel, ensuring transparency in selecting commissioners and forming an independent committee to evaluate the ACC's activities and advise it.

The report also recommended using modern technologies in case management, ensuring protection of the informants and consulting legal experts.

To secure public confidence, the ACC has to publicise its achievements, make public the income and assets of the ACC commissioners and high-ups, take action against the corrupt people no matter how powerful they are and complete the investigations timely, adds the report.

TIB Deputy Executive Director Sumaiya Khair and Professor of Public Administration at Dhaka University Dr Salahuddin M Aminuzzaman also spoke at the press conference.

Salim Osman also 'victim

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to the Attorney General's Office, stating that they hadn't found any truth in the incident involving Shyamal. As some part of the report was handwritten, the AG office asked police to submit a "computer compose report."

Moklesur Rahman, sub-inspector of Bandar Police Station in Narayanganj, who recorded statements of Shyamal and 10 others, said in the report that no legal step was taken since no allegation was brought against anyone in connection with the incident.

Shyamal told police that somebody on May 13 announced through a mike at the nearby mosque, that he had made an objectionable comment about Islam, at the time

when the school's managing committee was holding a meeting. Within sometime, angry locals thronged the school.

"Some unknown angry people assaulted me. People of the managing committee tried to pacify them," police quoted him as saying in the report.

Failing to quell the situation, members of the committee informed police and local representatives.

On information, the local union parishad chairman, upazila parishad chairman, upazila nirbahi officer and secondary education officials went to the school.

When local lawmaker Salim Osman reached the school, angry people were chanting slogans "de-

manding my trial and that I walk around wearing a garland of shoes."

He was asked to squat holding his ears "to calm them [protestors]," the headmaster told police.

Shyamal also said Salim Osman, MP, and he were victims of the situation that aroused because of a false rumour.

"I am not blaming anybody for the incident and I have no allegation against anybody. I will not file any complaint or case with the police or a court in connection with the incident."

Receiving the police report from Deputy Attorney General Motaher Hossain Sazu, the HC bench of Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Ashish Ranjan Das fixed August 10 for passing orders on the issue.

A quarter, believed to be followers

of the local lawmaker, spread propaganda that locals "punished" Shyamal for making offensive comments about religion while meting out corporal punishment to a student on May 8.

On May 29, the education ministry submitted a probe report to the HC through the AG office, saying the Piyar Sattar Latif High School committee forced Shyamal to resign based on an unproven allegation that he had hurt religious sentiment of the Muslims.

The allegation brought against Shyamal was not true, the probe body said, adding that relevant rules were not followed in suspending him. It also recommended that he should be reinstated.

Later, Shyamal was reinstated as headmaster of the school.

Signs are BNP going farther right

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gave him the list to make it public through a press conference on Saturday.

Several leaders of BNP and former Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, the party's student front, yesterday told The Daily Star that the most painful and disappointing matter is that several unfamiliar leaders and businesspersons have been included in the new committee who were not involved in any stage of the party.

Pointing to the mega size committee, a BNP standing committee member said the ruling Chinese Communist Party, which has nearly one crore members, has a politburo of only 25 members and its standing committee is comprised of seven members.

"We have got a huge committee after dropping many tested and dedicated leaders who remained active on roads braving police harassment when many others went into hiding in late 2013," the BNP

policymaker said asking not to be identified.

Citing an example, he mentioned the name of Shamimur Rahman Shamim, who was an assistant office secretary in the previous committee. In the new committee he has been made the number three assistant publicity secretary, which means demotion in post.

"Out of grievance, Shamim on Saturday night announced to resign from his post," he told The Daily Star.

Resignation of BNP's influential leader Mosaddek Ali Falu, considered very loyal to Khaleda, from his new vice-chairman post, came as a major blow for the party, many leaders believe.

Sources say the new committee, which has apparently undermined some veteran BNP leaders, has dissatisfied Falu.

Asked about BNP's leaning to be more rightist leaving the progressive path, another BNP standing com-

mittee member said, "If we compare BNP's past with the present, we see the party has left the path of Bangalee nationality, the spirit of the Liberation War and the national ideology."

"And the new committee is nothing but the continuation of that process," he added.

A senior BNP leader said long-serving leaders Sadeque Hossain Khoka, a veteran freedom fighter, Abdullah Al Noman, Maj (ret'd) Hafizuddin Ahmed, also a veteran freedom fighter, were not given deserving posts in the new committee.

The vice-chairman post of the three senior leaders remained unchanged in the new committee.

Noman, whose vice-chairman post remained unchanged, said many of his followers became frustrated as they expected to see him in the standing committee.

A former JCD leader said eight leaders, including newly added Salahuddin Ahmed, who has been facing trial in a Shillong court on

charge of trespassing and whom Noman introduced in politics, remain in the standing committee.

"There are 502 men in the new committee. I am sure 400 of them will not come to take to the street if madam calls for an anti-government programme. But we will attend it no matter if we are kept in the committee or not as we love BNP," said a former chief of JCD who was made a member in the executive committee.

Meanwhile, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, in the wake of some criticism and anger over the fresh committee, met four senior leaders of her party, including Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, Standing Committee members Nazrul Islam Khan, Moudud Ahmed and Khandaker Mosharrif Hossain, at her Gulshan office last night.

Party insiders said Khaleda urged the leaders to know the reasons behind the anger of some of the party men.