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GRABBERS FEAST ON THE TURAG... Illegal shanties and a boundary wall erected in the Turag river to the south of Kamarpara bridge near the Biswa Ijtema ground in Tongi. The two photos taken in September, 2014 and this September at the same place show how the grabbing has continued there. World Rivers Day was celebrated yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

FF buried without due honour

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

An unidentified man buried in Dinajpur turned out to be a freedom fighter and the money spent for his burial turned out to be his freedom fighter allowance.

Deceased Abdul Latif, 67, of Jamgram in Phulbari upazila, lived with his son Mominul Islam in Nimnagar Balubari of Dinajpur. Mominul, a rickshaw puller by profession, said his father was seriously injured in a road accident in Phulbari Bus Terminal area on September 2 when he was returning home after drawing Tk 20,000 of his allowance.

Locals took him to Dinajpur Medical College Hospital where he died on September 5, he said.

The hospital authorities forwarded necessary documents to Dinajpur Sadar Police Station the same day to find the relatives of the deceased, said Jahangir Alam, director of the hospital. Police said after failing to have the body identified, they buried Latif at a graveyard in the town on September 7 with the help of a voluntary organisation.

Before his burial, there was no evidence to suggest that he was a freedom fighter, said Redwanur Rahim, officer-in-charge of the police station.

Meanwhile, son Mominul, who went to pull rickshaws outside Dinajpur, returned home and found his father missing.

"I learnt from Sadar police that my father was buried on September 7," Mominul said, adding that Sub-Inspector Badal Chandra Roy returned him Tk 12,000 while hospital authorities told him that they handed Tk 17,200 over to the police.

Contacted, the SI said they had spent Tk 5,200 for his burial.

"We also published an advertisement in a local newspaper on September 6, asking people to identify the deceased but there was no response," said Badal Kumar Mandal, another SI of the police station.

The director of the hospital said they discovered documents, which a freedom fighter needs to draw government allowance, under the sheet of Latif's bed on September 7. He claimed that the hospital sent the documents to the Dinajpur Muktiyoddha Sangsad.

Siddique Guaznobi, commander of Dinajpur Muktiyoddha Sangsad, however, said they did not receive any such papers.

Following a complaint filed by the son of Latif on September 19, a five-member probe committee, led by District Additional Magistrate Golam Rabbani, was formed yesterday to investigate the incident. Dinajpur Deputy Commissioner Mir Khairul Alam said.

He said the committee was asked to submit the report within three days.

Probe your own brother

Ousted Thai PM tells junta chief

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's first female prime minister yesterday told the man who ousted her government two years ago to investigate his own brother over corruption allegations, in an unusually strong broadside against the junta.

Yingluck Shinawatra was booted from office shortly before army chief Prayut Chan-O-Cha seized power in May 2014, the military's second coup in less than a decade and their twelfth successful power grab since 1932.

China likely to pledge big

FROM PAGE 1

finance ministry officials said.

The comprehensive plan may also include a commitment for increasing Chinese grant and long-term cooperation in disaster management.

All the line ministries will hold a meeting at the Economic Relations Division (ERD) to discuss the latest about the 20 projects on October 2. The projects will later be finalised at an inter-ministry meeting, said one official.

Before that, on September 28 and 29, the ERD will sit with officials of the Chinese Exim Bank over signing of loan agreements for two of these projects. The two projects involve purchasing six ships from China with a loan of \$184 million and setting up Dasherbandi Water Treatment Plant with a \$280-million loan.

The loan agreement is likely to be signed during the Chinese president's visit, said an ERD official.

Bangladesh has already selected some Chinese companies to implement seven to eight of the 20 projects, said the finance ministry official, asking not to be named.

The cabinet committee on economic affairs has given the go ahead to the line ministries for implementing the projects through those companies.

Bangladesh will try to sign the loan agreements within the next two years and start implementing the projects.

Since taking office in 2009, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited China twice, the last time in June 2014.

After that Bangladesh sent lists of dozens of projects to the Chinese government for soft loan. The Chinese side also made verbal commitment for

giving assistance of \$10 billion, \$20 billion and \$30 billion. But there was no written response.

During the Chinese president's visit, Bangladesh expects big pledges from him, the ministry official said.

According to primary indications from China about the projects it wants to fund, seven are in the power and energy sector, which would cost about \$7.7 billion.

The projects include a 1,320 megawatt coal-based power plant in Kalapara upazila at Payra Seaport. An MoU was signed in this regard during Hasina's last visit to China and the government is already acquiring land there to set up the plant.

Another project involves a 350MW coal-fired thermal power plant at Gazaria in Dhaka's Munshiganj, where China will provide \$433 million. China may also give a soft loan to build an industrial park for setting up garment factories in Gazaria, where Chinese businesses will invest.

In the rail sector, China has shown interest in funding four projects costing around \$6.21 billion, including the 172km Padma Rail link project. The three other projects involve upgrading the rail lines from Joydevpur to Mymensingh, Joydevpur to Ishwardi and Akhaura to Sylhet.

In four projects under the Roads and Bridges Division, Beijing may offer \$6.65 billion. The projects include Dhaka-Ashulia Elevated Expressway, Dhaka-Sylhet four-lane highway and Sitakunda-Cox's Bazar Marine Drive Expressway.

To attract Chinese investment, the Bangladesh government has already

PROJECTS ON CHINESE WISH LIST

- Power Grid Network Strengthening Project \$1.32 billion
- Establishing digital connectivity \$1 billion
- Double railway line (Joydevpur-Ishwardi) \$897 million
- Double railway line (Joydevpur-Mymensingh) \$258 million
- Karnaphuli tunnel \$703 million
- Installation of Single Point Mooring with Double Pipeline \$550 million
- Rajshahi WASA Surface Water Treatment Plant \$500 million
- Five full-fledged TV stations \$128 million
- BMRE in Public Sector Jute Mills \$280 million
- Special Economic Zone in Anwara

allocated two economic zones in Gazaria and Anwara in Chittagong.

China may offer soft loans to develop these zones as well, said

another finance ministry official.

Over the years, China has invested trillions of dollars against treasury bonds in the US and countries in Europe. As interest rates on those bonds continue to fall, China is now eager to invest in developing countries which will bring it profits through interest and also help it expand its businesses.

And Bangladesh wants to take this opportunity, but on easier borrowing terms, officials said.

At present, China charges two percent interest on soft loans with a repayment period of 15 years plus five years of grace period. The loan also carries 0.2 percent commitment fees and 0.2 percent management fees.

In case of such loans, the Chinese government selects the contractor, and stipulates that all materials for the projects be purchased from China.

Bangladesh will try to get the loan at 1 percent interest and introduce limited tender system, which is done in case of bidder selection under Indian soft loan.

Under the limited tender system, bidders from the loan-providing country participate in the tendering process, instead of being handpicked by the government.

About the limited tendering process, China has already given its primary consent, sources said.

Since independence, China has provided Bangladesh \$1,519 million in soft loans and grants. Of the sum, \$916 million came in the last seven years from FY10 to FY16 alone.

It was \$303 million in the preceding seven years from FY02 to FY09.

3 policemen closed for snatching money

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Three members of Sylhet Metropolitan Police (SMP), including a sub-inspector, have been closed as they mugged three youths early yesterday in Naiorpul area in the city.

All the three police personnel -- Mostafiz, a sub-inspector, and constables Rajon and Pavel -- are from Sobhanighat Police Fari under Kotwali Police Station.

The incident took place between 12:30am and 1:00am early Sunday morning when three youths were on way to a restaurant to have dinner after finishing their meeting with Yahya Chowdhury, MP of Sylhet-2, in his residence at Jherjheri Para in Naiorpul area.

According to the victims, a police patrol of three, led by Sub-inspector Mostafiz, stopped the three men on a road near the MP's house at Jherjheri Para and robbed them of Tk 15,000 in cash and three mobile handsets. The members of the patrol team also threatened to book the three as "militants", unless they complied with their demand and kept mum about the incident.

The victims, soon after the mugging, went back to Yahya Chowdhury's house and informed him of the incident.

As the MP made calls to high ups in the SMP, demanding an explanation of

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Amazing growth in maize output

FROM PAGE 1

1997-98 to 2.75 million tonnes in the last fiscal year, making it the fastest expanding cereal in the country.

Policy planners, breeders and market sources attributed the amazing rise in maize production to a number factors; demand from feed industry, farmers' comparative advantage in terms of profits, less irrigation requirements, availability of both home-grown and imported hybrid seeds with high yield potentials, and overall policy and research support.

Though the maize revolution came hand in hand with the rise of poultry and fish feed industry, government is now trying to promote maize not just as a feed crop, but also as food crop.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury told The Daily Star, "Maize is rich in Vitamin-A. We've promoted production of mixed flours of maize and wheat. Our people will accept roti [homemade flattened bread] made from maize flour, if it

can be made sticky like wheat flour."

"I'll be requesting CIMMYT [International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center] to go for genetic interventions so that glutinous maize varieties can be made available," Matia said yesterday before leaving for Mexico to join the 50-year celebrations of the foundation of CIMMYT, world's premier maize and wheat research institute.

Maize is the world's number one cereal crop with a global production of one billion tonnes followed by rice and wheat with an average annual output of around 700 million tonnes each.

Amiruzzaman, a chief scientific officer of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) heads the institute's Plant Breeding Division (PBD). He has been following the research and field-level developments of maize cultivation in Bangladesh for years.

He said while farmers hardly make any profit by cultivating high investment-intensive winter rice, Boro,

their profit from maize is quite significant. Over 3,000 litres of water is required for every kilogram of Boro output but maize requires only 700 litres, he added.

According to a recent US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) report, farmers in Bangladesh earn over \$2,275 by investing \$1,421 for every hectare of maize. Boro fetches them \$1,081 against an investment of \$1,319, a loss-making project, it claimed.

And comparing to maize, growing wheat is less profitable too. Farmers can earn a little over \$823 from per hectare of wheat farming with an investment of \$663, stated the USDA report "Bangladesh: Grain and Feed Annual 2016".

"The gross margin from maize sales, per hectare, is 2.4 times greater than that of wheat or rice. Maize also has fewer pest and disease problems," said a report of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). It also notes, "By shifting from rice to maize during the dry

season, farmers save groundwater from over-exploitation."

Thanks to imports and developments of hybrid seeds, average maize yield in Bangladesh is now over seven tonnes per hectare. Rice yields four tonnes and wheat three to 3.5 tonnes.

Bari has developed as many as 22 maize varieties, 13 of them hybrid with some having yield potentials as high as 10 tonnes a hectare. Currently, over a quarter of maize seeds' requirements are met by the home-grown ones while the rest are imported.

After the release of the Bari Hybrid Bhutta-11 in 2008, the country's premier agro-research institution came up with two more varieties, Bari Hybrid Bhutta-12 and -13, this year.

Amiruzzaman said these varieties were Barendra region's answers to water scarcity. Farmers who cannot grow Boro due to water crisis can grow these new hybrid maize varieties, which require little water, he explained.

He said the government was trying

to promote maize also in the salinity-hit regions of the South. "We're developing salt-tolerant maize varieties and expecting some significant progress in this regard in two years."

He said instead of cultivating Boro, many northern farmers are going for potatoes and then they reap the crop early to make best use of the fertiliser residues for cultivating maize for less cost.

As the country is approaching the three million tonnes mark in maize production, Matia said, "By now we could have probably reached six million tonnes, had there been no hiccup in poultry industry due to avian influenza [bird flu]."

It is evident from production statistics.

Maize production had a sustained growth until the fiscal year 2007-08 when the yearly output rose to 1.34 million tonnes but bird flu-induced demand slump in feed industry brought the maize output down to 0.73 million tonnes in the very next year.

Tight security planned for Durga Puja

FROM PAGE 1

Hindu leaders will hold a meeting with Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal at the ministry's conference room tomorrow. Top officials of different law enforcement and intelligence agencies will join the meeting.

District-level Hindu community leaders will sit with the superintendents of police of their districts within the next one or two days to finalise the security plans.

Central-level leaders of the community have asked the grassroots to keep in touch with local lawmakers, union parishad chairmen or municipality mayors to get their cooperation for holding the puja peacefully.

Talking to The Daily Star yester-

day, AKM Shahidur Rahman, deputy inspector general (media and planning) at the police headquarters, said, "We will call a detailed plan of action at tomorrow's [Monday] meeting."

The five-day Durga Puja will begin on October 7.

Puja will be arranged at 29,395 temples and mandaps across the country this year, which is 324 more than that of last year, say leaders of Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad.

"As Durga Puja is going to be held amid a different situation following some terrorist attacks, we are in a little bit of doubt. But we hope our law enforcers will provide us sufficient security measures," said Taposh Kumar

Pal, general secretary of the parishad.

"In these meetings, we will discuss how security can be beefed up and place our recommendations in this regard," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

This year, Hindu leaders are putting emphasis on deploying volunteers by the puja organisers at each temple. They will discharge their duties as guards along with regular law enforcers.

"It will not be wise to sit idle giving all the responsibilities to the police. We will have to deploy sufficient numbers of volunteers to monitor the temples round the clock," said Rana Dasgupta, general secretary of Hindu-Buddhist-Christian Oikya

Parishad.

Authorities of Dhakeswari National Temple would deploy around 50 volunteers, and the volunteers would be provided identity cards. They would patrol the temple and assist law enforcers in maintaining order, said Taposh.

Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad has recently issued some security directives to all the puja organisers across the country.

As per the instructions, organisers will have to install either temporary or permanent fence around the temple and there should be separate entrances and exits for male and female devotees.

Nowadays, different kinds of music instruments are being used at

temples. High-volume music may affect security. No one will be able to hear anything, if any untoward incident occurs inside temples. So, use of such music instruments must be on a limited scale, says Rana Dasgupta.

A central-level monitoring cell of the puja udjapan parishad has already been set up to coordinate overall activities of puja.

The Hindus at the grassroots have been requested to communicate with the central monitoring cell through the following mobile numbers in case of any emergency or any untoward situation.

The mobile numbers are: 01619802405, 01711361601 and 01711697099.