

For the love of animals

PAW rescues our four-legged friends in distress, provides foster homes

SAIM BIN MUJIB

When humans started to feed wolves, the wolves started to become dogs. In time, man's best friend developed loyal temperament, smaller heads, teeth, and paws. For centuries, dogs assisted humans in hunting and acted as trusted sentinels. But the roles, once indispensable, are redundant in the age of supermarkets and CCTVs.

"That's when our most trusted friend got thrown out onto the street," said Rakibul Haq Emil with conviction.

A graduate of architecture, the incorrigible animal lover recently spoke to this newspaper at his animal shelter in the capital's Beribandh. He



established, "People for Animal Welfare (PAW) Foundation" in 2015, which obtained government recognition last October.

He was obsessed with animals so much that his graduate project was a design of a veterinary hospital.

"It goes way back. When I was a student I carried home an injured dog from the street but he died of his injuries. I was alone then," he said.

Since then Emil rescued many cats and dogs and gave them shelter. "Some likeminded people sometimes joined me and said they would like to contribute. That's when I got the idea of an organisation for animals in distress."

PAW is the country's 2nd registered organisation for animals.

SEE PAGE 11 CO 1



The ginger-white cat Emil cuddles was found lying in the middle of a highway at night. Veterinarians said the cat was in a coma when rescued by Emil. It took a couple of weeks for the one-eyed cat to regain consciousness. Now the happy cat is in Emil's home.

PHOTO: STAR

Village arbitrators shave couple's head

Accuse ethnic minority woman of having an affair with family friend

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Village arbitrators shaved the couple's heads. Then they were made to walk around the village wearing garlands of shoes. Yet it wasn't enough and so they were fined Tk 40,000 and if they fail to pay the fine today, they will be driven out of Hatilet Dublakhola village of Phulbaria upazila.

What was all this for?

One of the victims, Laxmi Rani Cooch said she and her husband Koyes Cooch had long relations with Elim Mia, 45, a father of five children, from the same locality, only 100 kilometres off the capital. But a few neighbours suspected her of having an illicit relationship with Elim Mia.

So, they took the onus on themselves to punish the 35-year-old and her husband, from a small ethnic

group, on Wednesday evening.

Kalimohan Barman, a grocer, and Naren Barman, who runs a tea stall, led the crazy mob. Chandan Barman, Bimol Barman, Rupchand Barman and Poresh Barman joined to watch the show in Rangamatia union.

Chandan's wife Bobita, his sister Aarati, Naren's wife Birola and one Primila, all neighbours of Koyes and Laxmi, came to their house and dragged them out to a courtyard to face the arbitration, Laxmi said.

"My elder daughter Bristi, who studies in class-III, started crying and pleading with them to leave us. But they didn't listen."

Those enthusiasts even slapped and punched Laxmi when she was holding a wailing Bristi against her chest.

The allegation against Lazmi was

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



Village arbitrators shaved the heads of this couple in Mymensingh's Phulbaria upazila yesterday, accusing the woman of having an affair.

Tahmid acquitted

FROM PAGE 1

"Tahmid has been acquitted as the charge against him was not proved through the depositions of eight prosecution witnesses before the court," Metropolitan Magistrate Mahmudul Hasan said in his short verdict.

Tahmid was present at the court during the verdict.

Soon after the verdict, Tahmid's lawyer Masud Arif Bhuiyan told The Daily Star that he was satisfied with the verdict.

Officials of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit arrested Tahmid on August 3 in the city under section-54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) for "instigating" the Gulshan café attackers.

On October 2, police submitted a probe report before a Dhaka court, saying that they found no evidence of his links to the Gulshan attackers or any other militants.

Tahmid was granted bail that day. In the report, investigation officer of the Gulshan café attack case Inspector Humayun Kabir of the CTC unit, however, said Tahmid had withheld information about the Holey Artisan Café attack even though he was asked for information repeatedly.

The same day, the court asked the law enforcers to press charges against Tahmid for hiding information.

Tahmid, a Toronto university student, and Hasnat Reza Karim, a former teacher of a private university, grabbed media and social media attention after photographs and video footage showed they were appar-

ently having conversations with the attackers during the siege.

Tahmid came to Dhaka a day before the attack on July 1, when armed militants held diners and staffers hostage in the café.

The attackers killed 20 hostages -- nine Italian, seven Japanese, two Bangladeshis, one Indian and one Bangladesh-born US citizen -- and two police officials who tried to end the standoff soon after it began around 8:40pm.

Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack.

Tahmid went to the restaurant with two female students of a private university, who survived the attack.

Hasnat, also a British citizen, was also arrested under section-54 of CrPC on August 3 last year.

Section-54 says police can arrest any person on suspicion without any arrest warrant.

On August 13, Hasnat was shown arrested in the terror attack case. Tahmid and Hasnat were interrogated for several days on remand.

While police kept claiming that Hasnat and Tahmid were released after questioning, their families insisted that they never returned home and could not be reached by any means.

Hasnat went to the restaurant with his wife and two children, said family members, adding that they were celebrating the birthday of one of his daughters.

The attackers allowed Tahmid and Hasnat to leave Holey Artisan with other hostages before army commandos stormed the café to end the country's deadliest militant attack.

Cut kerosene, diesel prices

FROM PAGE 1

government to lower the VAT rate without adverse earning consequences.

The civil society body also suggested adjusting VAT rates to the prices of utilities such as electricity in a way that the combined effect does not create a serious burden on consumers.

CPD warned that the cost of production in almost all sectors might go up in the coming months as a result of the new VAT law.

There might also be depreciation of the money exchange rate, a rice price spike and a further increase in tariffs for electricity and gas.

Consumers will have lower disposable income due to the declining remittance inflow and the increase in indirect tax coverage.

To reduce the impact, the think-tank suggested cuts in the prices of kerosene and diesel, which would help raise consumers' disposal income.

"Private investment is showing promising signs. At this moment, it is necessary to provide relief to the private sector so that they can remain competitive," said CPD distinguished fellow Debapriya Bhattacharya.

CPD also urged the government to slash the personal income tax rate for the lowest threshold to 7.5 percent

from 10 percent.

A reduction in personal income tax will help boost people's disposable income, especially of those belonging to the middle-class, Debapriya said.

"This cut will bring more revenue to the state as it will increase domestic demand."

CPD also recommended providing strategic protection to domestic market oriented industries.

According to Debapriya, incentives to domestic market-oriented small and medium enterprises will have a positive impact on the economy as a whole.

The sector has potential to take Bangladesh forward. A revolutionary change may take place from rural to urban areas if these enterprises get minimal support of what the export-oriented sectors have been getting for the last two and a half decades, he said.

CPD recommended an expansionary fiscal policy to spur private investment and attain development goals for the nation, citing that economic indicators such as falling inflation and interest rates are favourable for such moves.

But realistic targets should be fixed, said CPD.

It also suggested carrying out proper assessment of fiscal incentives through observing performances since fiscal incentives are not always given based

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cut kerosene and diesel prices

Promote domestic market-oriented industries

Raise allocation for education and health

Implement National Social Security Strategy

Depreciate taka to boost export and remittance

Ensure performance-based project evaluation

Expedite reforms

on scientific analysis.

"This is a matter of political economy. Those who have lobbying power and political connections control budgets," said Debapriya.

On budgetary framework, he said quality of fiscal structure deteriorates gradually.

Referring to the gap between targets set and the actual realisation of budgetary goals, he said big budgets are prepared without any realistic analysis and without taking the institutional capacity into consideration.

"This creates a sort of fiscal illusion ... it seems big but it is not big in reality," Debapriya added.

Bangladesh's budget implementation capacity is quite low compared to other developing countries such as India and Vietnam.

"It is high time to turn this so-called big budget myth into reality," CPD research fellow Towfiqul said.

One of the reasons behind the inadequate implementation of budget is lack of ownership, particularly among the public representatives, as budgets are not prepared based on adequate consultations, Debapriya said.

At the end of the day is the budget, a document containing some figures put by some bureaucrats or a document that comes through a political process, he said.

The CPD also suggested depreciating Bangladeshi taka to boost remittance inflow and export receipts.

Debapriya said there is an apprehension that new VAT rate will increase the burden of indirect tax on people. Efforts should be on to collect increased direct tax to ensure equity.

The implementation of new VAT will fuel prices of various goods and services in the market and increase financial burden on people.

CPD suggested increasing allocation for education and health and expediting reforms.

Chaired by CPD Executive Director Fahmida Khatun, CPD distinguished fellow Prof Mustafizur Rahman and CPD Research Director Khondaker Golam Moazzem also spoke at the event.

Where crimes draw no flak

FROM PAGE 1

ABM Ferdous, now posted to the ICT department, on January 15 wrote to the three asking them to return the money within 15 days or face legal actions.

No action was taken against any of them even though they did not pay a penny back.

Bulk Trade's owner Aminul Islam Mamun said his company delivered the fertiliser and that they had proof of this. It was not their concern if the fertiliser was misappropriated from the BCIC warehouse.

In another internal probe report submitted on March 2 this year, the BCIC again found Nabir and Masudur responsible for misappropriation of around 3,890 tonnes of fertiliser worth Tk 13.63 crore -- in the same fiscal year and from the same warehouse.

Transport contractor M/S Delta Shipping and Trading submitted a bill for delivering 8,500 tonnes of fertiliser to the warehouse. The company even received most of the payments for the delivery.

However, the warehouse officials told the BCIC headquarters that 3,890 tonnes were unaccounted for.

Again, neither Nabir nor Masudur faced any actions.

Masudur told The Daily Star that Nabir forged his signature to misappropriate the fertiliser. "I want a fair probe into the allegations."

Contacted by phone, Nabir first said he could not hear this correspondent. He did not pick any of the calls later.

Following a probe in 2009, the industries ministry asked the BCIC to file a departmental case against the then deputy-chief of personnel Momtaz Begum for "corruption, nepotism, taking financial benefit and leaking recruit-

ment exam's question paper in 2009".

Since then, no action has been taken against Momtaz. The BCIC even promoted her to the post of chief of personnel (CoP), a crucial post in the corporation, superseding several other officials. She also was made director (company board) of six factories of the BCIC.

Momtaz could not be reached for comments despite repeated attempts for five consecutive days.

Allegations of fund misappropriations in 2015 against BCIC Director (Production & Research) Mohammad Shaheen Kamal were proved in an internal probe late last year. Shaheen was the controller of accounts of the BCIC at that time.

Like Momtaz, he was promoted first to the post of secretary of the BCIC and then made a director superseding other officials.

The BCIC probe body submitted its report to the parliamentary standing committee on the industries ministry with a recommendation for taking punitive actions against him.

Shaheen told The Daily Star that the allegation of misappropriation of funds was not true. "The money was spent as per the rules."

He said the authorities issued a show-cause notice on him following a probe body's recommendation.

"I responded to the notice. If the authorities are not satisfied, they may take action against me," he said.

Momtaz and Shaheen were rewarded instead of getting punished because they have "blessings" of BCIC Chairman Mohammad Iqbal, sources in the corporation said.

A number of officials were found involved in misappropriating fertiliser

worth crores of taka in the last several years in the name of "fertiliser in transit" but they faced almost no punitive actions, apart from a few transfers.

In November last year, the parliamentary standing committee suggested that the ministry take legal actions against those people, but to no avail.

In April last year, BCIC Director General (admin) Saki Hossain in a letter asked the authorities to take action against Shahidul Islam Biswas, deputy-chief engineer (mechanical), after a departmental enquiry found him guilty of taking personal benefits from a company.

In the letter, Saki mentioned that Shahidul provided false information regarding offloading of fertiliser from a ship.

The BCIC authorities took no action against Shahidul.

Shahidul Islam said M Trading, the international carrier, gave false information regarding offloading of fertiliser. Based on the claim, he had informed the BCIC that offloading of fertiliser had begun. "I did not do it with evil intentions."

He said he was transferred to the Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd headquarters in Chittagong. But the CUFL managing director asked him to discharge his duties in Mongla until a suitable person could be found to replace him.

According to documents obtained by this paper, the BCIC in 2013 found negligence of duty by several officials in connection with misappropriation of fertiliser from three vessels.

No action was taken against them.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

"We even recommended the ministry suspend four to five officials for their

involvement in corruption and misconduct, but unfortunately no action has been taken yet," said Mohammad Omar Faruque Chowdhury, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the industries ministry.

He said they repeatedly warned the ministry and the BCIC to be more careful about some issues, including fertiliser import and transportation. But those malpractices have been continuing, he said expressing frustration over the ministry's inaction.

"We only play advisory role. We can't take action as we have no administrative authority. We only ask the ministry to take action against anyone for misconduct and it's up to the ministry to act," he said.

Officials alleged that due to the corruption and mismanagement, the BCIC incurred a loss of Tk 81 crore last year and Tk 93 crore the previous year. The organisation was a profit making entity for three consecutive years before that.

CHAIRMAN'S SAY
Asked why actions were not taken against the officials despite probe bodies' recommendations, the BCIC chairman said, "To run the BCIC, we need some competent officials."

He dodged the question about why Momtaz was made the CoP.

On allegations that corruption and mismanagement led to the BCIC incurring losses, Iqbal claimed that he took the BCIC forward in the last two years.

Late last month, the government transferred Iqbal to Bangladesh Climate Change Trust as its MD. The new BCIC chairman joined office on March 30, but Iqbal did not hand over the responsibility.

Instead, he is lobbying hard for extension at the BCIC, sources said.

Service 'local', fare special

FROM PAGE 16

September 2015, published on the BRTA website a fare chart for bus service providers following discussions with bus owners.

According to chart, the fare for bus and minibus is Tk 1.7 and Tk 1.6 for per kilometre. The minimum fare was fixed at Tk 7 and Tk 5 respectively.

MOBILE COURT DRIVE

Five executive magistrates from BRTA led the mobile courts at Asad Gate, Agargaon, west side of Airport, in front of Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh and Changpai restaurant at Jatrabari.

Transport leaders in Jatrabari area were seen near Changpai restaurant passing idle time instead of enforcing the regulations before the magistrate appeared at the scene around 11:15am.

Earlier, the leaders took position on the opposite side of the road, making it quite impossible for them to monitor the buses starting for Shabbagh, Mirpur, Gabtoli and Uttara from the other end of Jatrabari.

Abul Kalam, president of Sayedabad Bus Owners' Association, told The Daily Star around 10:30am that the vigilance

team did not want to stop the buses, as that could have added more suffering to office-going passengers.

There were sufficient buses there at that time.

But as soon as the mobile court began its activities, the number of buses started to decrease. Most of the buses then used Shahid Faruk Road as diversion.

BRTA Magistrate Sujit Howlader said they had fined some buses for having carriers and angles. Asked about high fares, he said most of the vehicles used other routes to avoid the

vigilance team, and for that reason he could not check properly.

Contacted, Khondaker Enayet Ullah, general secretary of Dhaka Sarak Paribahan Malik Samity, said the decision of stopping special service was made in order to check transport crisis in the capital and monitor no extra fare was charged.

"Many charged high fares and had no fare chart," he said, adding that the drive would be conducted on the first three days of every week.

"We'll continue it [the drive] until discipline is established."