

HOLEY ARTISAN ATTACK

Japan wants prompt disposal of the case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Japan wants quick disposal of the case filed over Holey Artisan attack last year.

During a meeting with Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal at the secretariat yesterday, Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) President Shinichi Kitaoka also wanted to know whether the government took any initiative for families of the seven Japanese killed in Gulshan.

The Jica president inquired about the progress of the investigation into the attack, the home minister told reporters after the meeting.

Kitaoka led a six-member delegation including the Japanese ambassa-

dor to Dhaka Masato Watanabe. None of the delegates talked to reporters.

"They demanded quick disposal of the case," the minister said.

On July 1 last year, five armed militants stormed into Holey Artisan Bakery in Gulshan area and killed 20 people including three Bangladeshis, seven Japanese, nine Italians, and one Indian. Two police officers were also killed when they tried to take control of the situation. The siege ended through a commando operation in which five militants and a chef died.

The home boss said he informed the Japanese delegation about the progress of the investigation of the case

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Power supply

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in the city's Bidyut Bhaban.

The state minister assured that power crisis would ease by tomorrow as 10,000 MW electricity would be generated from the power plants now under maintenance.

He said the authorities concerned were working to repair the damaged tower, which would require 6-7 months.

Replying to a question, Nasrul said the government would try to ensure normal supply of power during the Ramadan. "We will be in a better position during the holy month."

The CNG (Compressed Natural Gas) filling stations would remain closed from 3:00pm to 10:00pm during the Ramadan for smooth operation of power plants, he added.

"Large-scale power plants are yet to be put into operation. We need three more years for uninterrupted power supply

and upgrading transmission lines across the country."

Earlier, the state minister inaugurated a smart prepaid meter of electricity.

Speaking on the occasion as the chief guest, he said local companies should come forward for automation in the power sector.

"Necessary assistance will be provided by the government to interested entrepreneurs and organisations in this regard," he said, adding that the use of IT in daily life was increasing day by day, but the interest in technological invention was not visible.

Bangladesh Power Development Board manufactured the smart meter, which was introduced with technical support from local firm Aplombtech.

Chaired by Power Division Secretary Ahmad Kaikaus, the ceremony was also attended by State Minister for ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak as the special guest.

The bus stand is where my area starts. It goes till the last lamppost of this street. This stretch of road is what I call mine. It's my street, my Dhaka. That's where we rule, my gang and I.

Yes, the gang. Nobody messes with us. We'll chase you and even tear you apart if necessary. Don't get us wrong, though. We're good folks. It's just that we watch out for each other and that we are very territorial. Nobody takes over our street.

It's survival instinct. If you are living on the streets, you got to be street-smart. Those so-called carpet dogs and pets will not be able to last a day on their own. They're not tough. They eat and sleep all day, getting pampered by their masters.

Not us! Our lives may be hard, but nobody owns us. We are free.

And we try to be nice to everyone. But in the heat of the argument, things can get a little out of paw. You know the phrase, 'to fight like cats and dogs'? It's totally fitting. I can't stand those lazy feline creatures. And for the record, there is nothing royal about a cat. I chase one whenever I can.

Monkeys are good. Smart. Fun-loving. Stealing food from humans. They are cool dudes to hang out with — except that they sometimes 'literally' hang from buildings or trees, which I admit is a little too much of a circus act for us.

There are other creatures on the streets of Dhaka. A lone, harmless goat sometimes walks by. Crows land on the road snatching away

food whenever we are careless.

And as for humans, I have mixed feelings about them. I've met some that are kind and cool, and some who are downright evil. One of my minions the other day got hit by a car! This caused a lot of stir in our community. "They say that we are man's best friend, and yet see how they treat us!" one of the seniors barked. "They don't deserve our friendship!" someone else replied. That poor puppy walks with a limp now.

However, there are good humans out there too. Like the gentleman who comes out for walks every morning, carrying pocketful of treats. Wagging our tails, we surround him and sometimes fight each other for our share. Life's good on the streets!

We even share the streets with some humans. Like us, they have

nowhere to go. Like us, they look for food. And just like us, they are also neglected by most humans.

And then there are people who are just fascinated by us, like the photographer who came the other day, when I was lying about, chilling. Apparently, he was from a newspaper wanting to do a story on street animals of Dhaka. So I tried to be nice and posed in front of the camera for a while. But then I got bored and walked away. We know we're adorable, but we also have work to do: feeding and protecting ourselves. We are our own masters after all.

With my gang, I am always on the streets. We know the city's secrets, shortcuts, the perks and the ugly truths. Nobody knows streets of Dhaka better than us. Because that's where we rule, my gang and I.

MY GANG AND I

M H HAIDER



PHOTO: TOUKIR AHMED TANVEE

Ex-JMB chief Saidur gets 7 years' jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Former JMB chief Maulana Saidur Rahman was sentenced to seven-and-a-half-year of imprisonment yesterday, seven years after his arrest.

Judge KM Imrul Kayes of the Special Judge Court-6 of Dhaka also handed down the same sentence to two other members -- Abdullah Hel Kafi and his wife Ayesha Akhter -- of the banned outfit in a case filed for planning subversive activities in May 2010.

"This is the first time Saidur has been sentenced in a case," Saidur's lawyer Shajanz Sathi told The Daily Star.

Saidur is also accused in seven other militancy-related cases filed with different police stations. He was indicted in two of the cases.

He took the helm of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) after its founding chief Shayakh Abdur Rahman, his deputy Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai and four other top leaders of the outfit were executed on March 29, 2007.

On May 25, 2010, police arrested Saidur and two others from a house in the city's East Dania area. During the raid, they also recovered a huge cache of bomb-making materials, firearms and ammunition and jihadi books.

Later, a case was filed against Saidur and two others under the Anti-Terrorism Act with Kadamtoli Police Station.

According to the prosecution, it was alleged that Saidur and others planned to create anarchy by carrying out subversive activities across the country. Saidur was brought to the court in a wheelchair yesterday. The two others convicted in the same case are on the run.

Kafi and Ayesha went into hiding after obtaining bail from the High Court and were tried in absentia.

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United Nations honours 117 fallen peacekeepers

Three Bangladeshis among them

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Three Bangladeshi peacekeepers along with others who laid down their lives while serving in the UN peacekeeping operations last year have been honoured in a ceremony at its headquarters in New York.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Wednesday led a moment of silence to remember the fallen peacekeepers on the occasion of the International Day of United Nations

Peacekeepers.

The three Bangladeshis are among the 117 peacekeepers from 43 countries who died while serving under the UN flag last year.

The Bangladeshis are: Abul Bashar, a soldier of Bangladesh Army, serving in the UN stabilisation mission in Mali made the supreme sacrifice on October 13 last year; constables Motafer Hosen and Samidul Islam of Bangladesh Police, serving in the same mission also died on May 15 that year.

The Dag Hammarskjöld Medal was awarded to the peacekeepers who have been killed while serving in the cause of peace.

"Those we honour today died while protecting the world's most vulnerable people and supporting countries in making the difficult transition from conflict to peace," the UN secretary general said.

"They are the best of all of us, and we must always pay tribute to their sacrifice

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UN Secretary General António Guterres lays a wreath in honour of all peacekeepers who lost their lives while serving under the UN flag.

PHOTO: UN

Session fees illegal: HC

FROM PAGE 1

The committee would audit the accounts of the schools and make the audit reports available to all parents and on the website of the institutions.

In the judgment, the court also said the managing committee would work to ensure that a child spends less than the current four years to get promoted to grade-1 from playgroup.

Hailing the HC verdict, guardians said many schools claim they do not take any session fees but in reality, they charge students the same amount of money in the name of "adjustments" to the annual and other fees.

They urged the authorities concerned to ensure a proper monitoring system to prevent the institutions from making such "adjustments".

"After the verdict, some schools may realise the money by increasing the monthly tuition or other fees. The government should monitor the matter closely," Marisha Khanam, mother of a third grader in an English medium school in Dhanmondi, told The Daily Star.

On being informed about the verdict, Habibur Rahman, whose son is a student in Mastermind School, said it was encouraging that guardians would be included in the managing committee. "Now the schools won't be able to hike fees or take any decision at will."

Talking to The Daily Star, several teachers said most of the English medium schools stopped taking session fees several years ago and many of the institutions already had managing committees.

Yasmeen Habib, vice principal of Sunnyside School in Dhanmondi, said, "We haven't taken any session fees for several years. As far as I know, most of the English medium schools don't take it, but many Bangla medium schools do."

On the managing committee, she said it would be difficult for many schools if they were to form the committees like those in the Bangla

medium schools.

"I think the private English medium schools should be accredited by a government body, which will check the standard of education in the institutions," Yasmeen said.

She also said there should be a mechanism to ensure that schools, which do not maintain standard education but charge high fees, stop mushrooming.

Contacted, GM Nizam Uddin, secretary general of Bangladesh English Medium School Association, said the HC verdict would impact only a handful of English medium schools as "most of the institutions don't take any annual session fees."

He said the Private English Medium School Registration Rules, 2007 had the provision of forming the managing committees. But, the provision does not mention how the bodies would function, he said, adding, "Now the board [Dhaka education board] should prepare a set of guidelines about the function of the managing committees."

Yesterday, the court said the English medium students must be taught lessons on Bangla language, culture and heritage. They also must be taught the history of Bangladesh, including the contribution of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, freedom fighters, eminent writers and poets, including Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam.

The school authorities would also properly teach Bangla to the students so that they could learn, say and write Bangla fluently. The schools also must organise functions on the occasions of national days, the court said.

Both Yasmeen and Nizam said most of the schools teach students Bangla as it has been made a compulsory subject as asked by the government.

Meanwhile, Barrister Bodruddoza Badal, Barrister Aneek R Haque and Advocate JR Khan Robin, lawyers for Javed Faruque, one of the two writ

petitioners, told The Daily Star that following the HC verdict, the authorities of English medium schools could take admission charge only once from students and they could not demand any session fees.

The managing committee would have to be formed three months after receiving the full text of the verdict, they said.

"It [the verdict] was long overdue. This is undoubtedly a landmark decision..." Barrister Masood R Sobhan, lawyer for another writ petitioner barrister Fatema S Chowdhury, told this correspondent.

He said the education ministry would have to issue a circular with the HC directives in a month after receiving the judgment.

The ministry would submit a report before the HC in six months after complying with the directives, he said, adding that there was no scope for the ministry to do any negligence in implementing the directives.

Barrister Fatema S Chowdhury filed the writ petition with the HC in 2012 challenging the legality of session fees and value added tax (VAT) charged by English medium schools.

Javed Faruque moved the writ petition with the HC in 2014 challenging the legality of charging the session fees and praying to the court to issue guidelines for smoothly running the institutions.

Deputy Attorney General Rashed S Jahangir told this newspaper that the government was sincere in formulating a guideline on the schools.

Contacted, advocate Ahsanul Karim, a lawyer for five English medium schools, said his clients would decide on appealing against the HC verdict after receiving its full text.

Currently, the country has 150 English medium schools with more than 1.93 lakh students, according to the draft of Bangladesh Education Statistics-2016.

Mamata at it again

FROM PAGE 1

She asked the Indian government to prepare a comprehensive plan to address the problem.

The Atrai, Tangon and Punarbhaba originated in Bangladesh and then entered India before flowing back into the country. The natural flow of the waters has been affected by barrages and river-controlling structures in Bangladesh, resulting in a decline in water flow in lean months, Mamata said in the letter, adding that water supply for irrigation, drinking, horticulture and pisciculture was badly affected in Dakshin Dinajpur district of West Bengal.

"It is reported that Bangladesh government has constructed a rubber barrage on Atrai at Mohanipur in Dinajpur (Bangladesh), which is

about four km away from Indian border," reads the letter that was released at a media conference in New Delhi.

The letter also cited that the Indian state minister for water resources had acknowledged the decline in water availability on the Indian side due to dams and other structures in the Atrai in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh suddenly released heavy quantum of water from the river-control structures on the upstream in the last week of April, causing inundation of crops in West Bengal, its chief minister said, putting the loss estimation at Rs 32.80 crore.

Nearly 3,000 farmers were affected by floods in India, she said asking the Indian government to take up the issue with Dhaka at "the appropriate

level."

In the letter, Mamata also claimed that West Bengal Pollution Control Board had found severe level of pollutants in the waters of the Mathabhanga river that originated in Bangladesh and entered Nadia district of West Bengal as the Churni river.

The quality of water of the Churni on the Indo-Bangladesh border is "extremely poor" and cannot be used for purposes like fish farming, she said, asking the Bangladesh government to consider the seriousness of the problem and initiate remedial measures.

Mamata has been facing criticism both in India and Bangladesh for repeatedly obstructing the signing of the Teesta water sharing deal. She

refused to budge from her stance during talks with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Modi when Hasina visited India in April this year.

Mamata said West Bengal government's experience with the 1996 India-Bangladesh Ganga water sharing treaty was not a happy one. She pointed out the "adverse" impacts on the availability of water in her state and land erosion in Malda, Murshidabad and Nadia districts.

The lack of water in the Ganga during the lean season occasionally causes shutting down of the National Thermal Power Plant in Farakka. "The promise of making water available" has not been fulfilled, according to the letter.

In 2005, the Indian government agreed to take up anti-river-erosion

work along a stretch of 120km in the Ganga-Padma river system in Malda and Murshidabad districts, but the commitment was not kept by the Indian government, Mamata said.

As per an estimation made in 2015, the damage of public and private properties due to land erosion was Rs 707 crore. Since then, further erosion along the river has been noticed and the total loss of private and public properties caused by the Farakka barrage would now exceed Rs 1,000 crore, the West Bengal chief minister said.

Mamata asked the Indian PM to direct the Farakka barrage authority to draw up a comprehensive plan in consultation with West Bengal to take up anti-erosion and bank protection work on the entire stretch of the

Ganga-Padma river both downstream and upstream.

MAMATA'S OTHER COMPLAINTS She said Bangladesh sharply hiked the import duty on mangoes from Malda district of West Bengal, which had an adverse impact on the livelihood of lakhs of mango growers on that side of the border.

Bangladesh usually consumes around 70 percent of the mangoes grown in Malda district and the import duty has been increased from Rs 13.5 per kg to Rs 29 per kg in 2016.

This has resulted in drastic reduction of exports from 2,900 tonnes to nearly 46 tonnes from West Bengal to Bangladesh, Mamata said asking the Indian government to discuss the matter with Bangladesh in the interest of mango growers in the state.