4.5kg gold seized at Shahjalal airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs intelligence officials seized 40 gold bars, worth Tk 2.33 crore and weighing 4.5kg, at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital early yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of customs intelligence officials conducted a search on Emirates flight EK 584 coming from Dubai soon after it had landed at the airport.

The officials later found the gold bars attached to two seats on the plane and seized it, said Moinul Khan, director general of Customs Intelligence.

There were no passengers on the seats from where the gold was recovered at that time, said the director general.

Left, A car wades through water on a street in front of Hazrat Shahjalal's shrine in Sylhet city. Most of the city streets have been inundated due to an incessant rain since early Tuesday, escalating sufferings of the commuters and residents. *Right*, People travel on a rickshaw-van to cross a waterlogged road in the capital's Tejkunipara. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTOS: SHEIKH NASIR, PALASH KHAN

Editor of Khulna daily sued under section 57

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

A case has been filed against two journalists including an editor under section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) act yesterday in Khulna.

The two journalists are Kazi Motaher Rahman Babu, editor of local daily Somoyer Khobor, and Shohag Dewan, a former reporter of the daily.

Tapon Kumar Saha, administrative officer of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, and another official of the court filed the case with Khulna Sadar Thana.

According to the case statement, the newspaper published two reports, which were inaccurate and had misinformation.

The court conducted a recruitment test of hiring some officials. Later it decided to postpone the test result and publish a statement regarding it in the press. But the newspaper made a report on this beforehand.

Int'l community expresses solidarity with Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

International community has expressed deep shock at the loss of lives and properties in Tuesday's landslides in Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tracts and offered to provide support.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a twitter message yesterday morning said, "India stands shoulder to shoulder with Bangladesh. We stand ready to support local search and rescue efforts if required."

In another tweet, he said: "Saddened by the loss of lives in Bangladesh due to landslides. My thoughts are with the families of the deceased & prayers with the injured."

European Union

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TRAGEDY IN HILLS

19 rights bodies blame hill cutting, deforestation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hill cutting and deforestation are responsible for mass landslides in hill areas that caused the death of at least 143 people recently, rights activists said yesterday.

In 2007, over a hundred people were killed in similar landslides.

They also held the government accountable for its failure to stop recurrence of such incidents by taking necessary measures.

They said this at a press conference organised by Human Rights Forum Bangladesh (HRFB), a platform of 19 rights organisations, at Jatiya Press Club, demanding punishment for culprits responsible for the attack on indigenous people in Rangamati's Longadu and rehabilitation of the victims.

"The disaster [recent landslides in Chittagong, Rangamati, Bandarban and Cox's Bazar] is man-made. But there is a tendency to blame nature for this," said Sheepa Hafiza, executive director of Ain o Salish Kendra.

Speaking on the occasion, Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, said it is told that landslide is a natural cause, but experts say deforestation and unplanned construction of roads are responsible for such incidents.

"Didn't rainfall take place in hills 20 or 30 years ago? But landslide didn't take place at that time. Why now? Because, their [indigenous people] lands are being grabbed and forests are being destroyed mindlessly, causing the landslide," she said.

She warned that more casualties would take place in future if proper steps are not taken.

Protesting the attack on indigenous people in Longadu, HRFB demanded impartial and proper investigation into the incident and punishment for the culprits. It urged the government to scrutinise the role of local administration, law enforcement agency and the army during the incident.

HRFB also demanded full implementation of Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord, and withdrawal of all temporary camps

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JS offers condolence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The House yesterday expressed deep shock at the death of over 100 people, including four army personnel, in Tuesday's landslides caused by torrential rains in Chittagong, Bandarban and Rangamati.

At the beginning of yesterday's House sitting, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury informed parliament that the last two days' torrential rains triggered a series of landslides in Hill Tracts areas including Chittagong.

The Speaker conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved families of the landslides victims and those who suffered injuries. She also prayed for the salvation of the departed souls.

It ruins a family

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, *Ctg*

Nazrul Islam came back home around five months ago from Muscat after hearing the news of his father's death.

Though he had to rejoin work soon, he stayed back to console his grieving mother.

The father of three, living in the hilly areas of Jangal Bogabili in Chittagong's Rangunia upazila, decided to go back after spending the Eid vacation with his family.

The 45-year-old and his family moved to the area from the nearby Halimpur village around 15 years back. They built a hut near a large hill.

Although the hut was not huge, it provided a roof over their heads. Most importantly, it was a place they called home.

But everything ended in the early hours of Tuesday when a wave of mud from the nearby hill caused by the incessant rain buried their home killing Nazrul, his wife Asma Akhter, 36, and their two children in their sleep.

Over 100 neighbours managed to recover the bodies on Tuesday afternoon after frantic efforts.

The lone survivor of the family -- Nazrul's daughter Lucky Akhter was at her in-laws' place when the incident occurred.

"I have lost everything -- my parents, brother and sister," said a wailing Lucky. "My brother and sister were only 14 and seven."

"No one will call me daughter or sister anymore," she said.

The bodies of her loved ones were sent to her grandmother's house nearby, where the 70-year-old was already mourning the recent death of her husband.

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No sincere effort in rescue: BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is not putting its sincere effort to rescue the disaster-affected people in the hilly areas of Chittagong division, BNP alleged yesterday.

"There has been no sincere effort after any disaster. We can see the same situation after landslides took place in the hilly areas," claimed BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Rizvi Ahmed.

"This is due to corruption in the local administration," he alleged at a press briefing at the party's Nayapaltan headquarters in the capital.

It was a massive landslide and flashflood in areas of Chittagong, Rangamati, Bandarban and Cox's Bazar -- not seen since 2007 -- where at least 143 persons died.

PHOTO: MONIRUL ISLAM

FLY OVER OR SLOW DOWN? A bus stop has been created on Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover, meant for swift movement of vehicles, near the Jatrabari intersection in the capital. A heavy-duty metal staircase has also been installed there so people can get on and off the flyover. Moreover, road barriers have been placed in the spot to slow down oncoming traffic. The chaotic movement of traffic in the area has been contributing to serious accidents. The photo was taken yesterday.

ABDULLAH MURDER AFTER ABDUCTION

One sentenced to death, three to different terms

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced a man to death and three others to different terms of imprisonment for abducting and killing 11-year-old Abdullah of Keraniganj in Dhaka district.

Abdullah

The death row convict is Md Khurshed Alam, who remained absconding after securing bail from the High Court.

Of the other convicts, Mehedi Hasain Shamim was jailed for ten years, while Mitu Akhter was given one year and Nasima Akhter three and a half months on charge of hiding evidence.

Mehedi, Mitu and Nasima were present when Judge Sayeed Ahmed of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-3 of Dhaka pronounced the verdict.

Prime accused in the case Motahar Hossain was killed in a "gunfight" with Rapid Action Battalion on February 7 last year. Mehedi is Motahar's son while Mitu is his daughter and Nasima wife. Khurshed is Motahar's friend.

Abdullah's mother Rina Begum expressed dissatisfaction over the verdict. She, however, became senseless on the court premises just after the verdict. His aunt Mamtaz Begum said they would file an appeal with the High Court.

On January 29, 2016, Abdullah, a class-V student of West Mugarchar Govt Primary School at Mugarchar village of Keraniganj, went missing. Later, kidnappers took Tk 2 lakh as ransom from his father. Despite the payment, they did not return the boy. On February 02, Abdullah's decomposed body was found inside a plastic drum at a room in the house of Motahar, also Rina's maternal uncle, in the area.

NARAIL WAR CRIMES

ICT wants probe report, if any, on six men

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal (ICT)-1 yesterday directed the prosecution to submit investigation report, if have any, on July 30 in a case filed against six Narail men for allegedly committing crimes during the Liberation War, 1971.

Earlier, the tribunal fixed yesterday for submitting the report but Prosecutor Rezia Sultana Chaman sought two more months for preparation.

Of the accused, Gulzar Khan, Mohammad Daud, Md Badruddoza alias Badiuzzaman, Abdul Wahab and Omar Ali Sheikh are now in jail while Khandakar Shawkat Ali Babul is yet to be arrested.

All the accused, of Narail Sadar upazila, were alleged members of Razakar Bahini, an auxiliary force of the Pakistani army.

Meanwhile, the tribunal deferred the date to July 12 to decide whether it will take the charges into cognisance brought against four Netrakona men for allegedly committing crimes during the Liberation War.

5 held over killing of Jatrabari FF

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five alleged muggers were arrested in connection with the killing of a freedom fighter in the capital's Jatrabari area on June 1.

The five -- Foysal Islam Momen, Porosh alias Palash, Rana Bepari, Masudur Rahman alias Shanto, and Farhadul Islam Shihab -- were arrested from different areas of Narayanganj and Dhaka in the last two days.

Police said Jahangir Alam Sarder, 65, a freedom fighter and managing director of a security company, was stopped by muggers in Dholpur area while he was on a rickshaw.

He was stabbed dead by the muggers as he tried to run away after the criminals tried to snatch his briefcase, police added.

'FORCING SERVANT TO WORK WITHOUT PAY'

Bangladesh diplomat released on bail in NY

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The New York-based Bangladesh diplomat, who was indicted on charges of labour trafficking and assault for forcing his servant to work without pay through threats and intimidation, was released on bail on Tuesday evening.

Police arrested Shahedul Islam, deputy consul general of Bangladesh, on charges of forcing his servant to work for his family in Queens without pay and assaulting him on several occasions.

He has been charged in a 33-count indictment.

He was produced before a court in Queens on Monday and indicted. The judge set bail at $50,000 bond or $25,000 cash.

The diplomat was released on bail, 36 hours after his arrest.

"Shahedul Islam... has been released at 8:20pm (Eastern Time) today (June 13) from Vermon C Bain Correctional Center, Bronx, New York," Shameem Ahsan, consul general at the Consulate General of Bangladesh in New York told The Daily Star yesterday.

Meanwhile, Dhaka yesterday expressed serious dissatisfaction over the detention of Shahedul. The foreign ministry summoned the acting US envoy and sought an explanation.

"We have reasons to believe that the arrest is a clear violation of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations 1963.

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Thimphu, Dhaka sign MoU to curb graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chairpersons of both Bangladesh and Bhutan's anti-corruption commissions yesterday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) at its headquarters in Dhaka's Segunbagicha to fight curruption.

This signing is a mutual cooperation in eight sectors, including identifying, investigating and proving corruption cases, said a press release.

Visiting Chairperson of Bhutan's ACC Kinley Yangzom said the types of corruptions in both Bangladesh and Bhutan are similar.

A craftsman weaving a Jamdani sari at a fair in the capital's national museum. The ten-day Jamdani fair started at the museum on Tuesday. The weaver makes the Jamdani, the country's one of the finest textiles, on the premises upon receiving orders from potential buyers. The event is organised by Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC).

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED