

MATARBARI POWER PLANT GRAFT

2 govt officials sent to jail

Ex-DC and ADC of Cox's Bazar accused of Tk 23cr embezzlement

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A court in Cox's Bazar has sent former deputy commissioner and additional deputy commissioner of the district to jail in a case filed over misappropriating Tk 23 crore from Matarbari coal-based power plant project in Maheshkhali.

Former ADC (revenue) Zafar Alam appeared before Cox's Bazar's Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court yesterday and prayed for bail. But the court rejected the plea and sent him to jail, said Siraj Ullah, public prosecutor of Anti-Corruption Commission in Cox's Bazar.

On Sunday, the same court sent former DC Ruhul Amin, now working as deputy secretary at the finance ministry's Economic Relations Division, to prison, Siraj added.

Both Zafar and Ruhul are now attached to the public administration ministry as officers on special duty (OSD).

Mahbubur Rahman, the then land acquisition officer of Cox's Bazar, filed 20 cases with Cox's Bazar Sadar Model Police Station in 2014 when allegations of corruption in the power plant were raised.

Police later forwarded the cases to the ACC for investigation. The commission merged the 20 cases into one. On completion of probe, it pressed charges against 36 people, including the DC and the ADC, for embezzling Tk 23 crore through cheque fraud.

On May 9 this year, the anti-graft body arrested Zafar from the capital, and a Dhaka court sent him to jail. Ruhul was also sent to prison on May 22 when he appeared before Cox's Bazar's Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court.

Later, the two were released on bail after a High Court order.

The ACC then prayed to the Supreme Court for cancelling their SEE PAGE 12 COL 6



Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda and other commissioners during yesterday's talks with civil society members. The Election Commission arranged the dialogue at its office to discuss its work plan on the next general polls.

PHOTO: STAR

Model 'kills herself while on video call with husband'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Model and actress Risila Binte Wazer allegedly committed suicide keeping her husband on a video call at her residence in the capital's Badda yesterday.

She was found hanging at her Suvastu Nazar Valley residence in Shahjhadpur in the afternoon, said Rafiqul Islam, assistant commissioner of police in Gulshan division.

Risila was declared dead after she was taken to United Hospital in Gulshan around 2:00pm, said Dr Shagufa Anwar, communication and business development director of the hospital.

"We came to know that she had committed suicide. We are looking into the matter," Rafiqul said.

Quoting Risila's mother and husband, Abu Bakar Siddique, officer-in-charge of Gulshan Police Station, said she had been taking drugs for nearly five months. Just before hanging

SEE PAGE 13 COL 1

Call for army in polls, 'no vote' system

FROM PAGE 1
at 4:15pm with a lunch break for an hour.

The civil society members were the first to hold talks with the Commission, which will also sit with 40 registered political parties, women leaders and the media.

Talking to reporters later, CEC KM Nurul Huda said the dialogue would have an impact on the government as well as political parties and help them reach a consensus over the election.

"I think the messages of the people and the civil society members will reach the government and the opposition parties, including those out of parliament. I hope they reach a consensus," he said.

At the end of the dialogue with all stakeholders, the EC will sit with government representatives to discuss the ways to hold the election freely and fairly.

"We are holding talks with the stakeholders as part of our initiative to earn people's trust," he said, referring to the civil society members' suggestion on this.

After the dialogue, where reporters were not allowed in, former caretaker government adviser M Hafizuddin Khan said that for an inclusive elec-

tion, there should be a level-playing field.

"The Election Commission should tell the government what it wants to do. Also, it has to start working even before the announcement of election schedule for the sake of a free and fair election," said Hafizuddin, also president of Sujon, a citizen platform for good governance.

Debapriya Bhattacharya, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said the main takeaway from the discussion was that the EC must earn people's trust.

The EC has to play a strong and an independent role and its action must be visible, he said, adding that they also discussed what the EC could do to ensure neutrality of the administration.

There was a "huge consensus" on restoration of "no vote," he added.

The provision was introduced by the caretaker government before the 2008 election, but it was scrapped by the Awami League government in 2009.

India, Pakistan, Greece, Russia and Ukraine, among other countries, have the "no vote" system.

Former caretaker government adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman said deployment of army should get impor-

ance to remove fear of voters, candidates and election officials.

Also, parliament should be dissolved before the election to prevent lawmakers from influencing the polls, he said.

Under the constitutional provision introduced in 2011, the next election will be held within 90 days before the tenure of the current House expires.

Regarding the polls-time government, Zillur said, "It is a political issue and talks should be held among the political parties on this."

Former cabinet secretary Ali Imam Majumder said the EC should gain power and exercise it to reduce politicisation in the administration.

Former bureaucrat Sadat Hossain said the home ministry, finance ministry, public administration ministry, LGRD ministry and information ministry should be under the EC's jurisdiction during election.

Former ambassador Waliur Rahman, however, said there was no need for army deployment, and more importantly, they "do not want to come."

He also opposed the idea of dissolving parliament, saying that would require constitutional amendment.

TIB Executive Director

Iftikharuzzaman said the EC needed an effective leadership for it to earn public confidence. He suggested effective enforcement of electoral laws and ensuring transparency in campaign finance and expenditure.

Prof Asif Nazrul of Dhaka University stressed the need for ensuring a congenial environment so that no one got scared to come to the polling stations.

Supporting the restoration of "no vote," he said, "This is practised across the world. Also, it must be ensured that no one gets elected uncontested." Political scientist Dr Dilara Chowdhury suggested that the armed forces be given the power they had during the 2008 parliamentary election.

At the time, members of armed forces engaged in polls duty were empowered to arrest anybody without warrant during voting for gross violation of electoral laws. But the provision was scrapped in 2009.

Dilara said she personally believed that the idea of a free and fair election under the current polls-time government system is absurd because parliament would be functional. "Can we imagine 300 people running against 300 lawmakers? It is impossible."

Brac U students protest assault on teacher

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Students of Brac University yesterday took to the streets to protest assault on a teacher of the law department allegedly by the registrar of the private university.

Against the backdrop, the university authority decided to form a committee to investigate the matter.

Lecturer of the law department Farhaan Uddin Ahmed filed a complaint against Registrar Muhammad Sahool Afzal, Assistant Registrar Md Mahi Uddin and senior officer at the office of co-curricular activities Javed Rasel over the alleged assault on him on Sunday.

On his Facebook page, Farhaan wrote he had been called to the registrar's office on Sunday and then to the human resources department where he was handed a cheque and documents for immediate termination of his contract with the university.

He refused to accept the cheque and documents. "Since I had submitted an official grievance application against the administration, I refused to accept

SEE PAGE 12 COL 2



Woman councillor Rumki, main accused Tufan's wife Asha, and Rumki's mother Rumi Khatun -- accused in a case filed over the rape of a girl in Bogra-- being produced before the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court in the district yesterday

Crime, politics

FROM PAGE 1

while in class-IX. It was like his family business, they added.

No locals would be quoted by name as they fear backlash from the Sarkar family.

In 2013, Tufan was made accused in a case over the murder of Jubo Dal activist Imran, who was hacked to death in his house in Chaksurapur. Police officials say Tufan's brothers paid the complainant a good amount of money to drop his name from the case.

After walking out of jail following the 2011 incident, he joined Bogra town unit of Sramik League, a pro-laboring Awami League workers body. After that he did not look back.

He paid huge sums to some local AL leaders and grabbed the convener post of the unit at the end of 2015.

Now he focused on extortion from easybikes (imposed three-wheelers) and battery-run rickshaws.

Every easybike had to pay him Tk 15,000 to 20,000 to start plying the road and battery-run rickshaws Tk

2,500-3,000 each. In addition, he got Tk 30 daily from every battery-run rickshaw.

About 10,000 easybikes and 20,000 battery-run rickshaws are operating in Bogra town.

Tufan formed separate groups for extortion and drug business, police and locals said.

Allegedly with the help of local administration, Tufan and Motin organised a fair in 2015, the main purpose of which was to arrange gambling. The fair lasted till Ramadan last year.

Bogra Deputy Commissioner Nure Alam Siddique said he took charge of the district last month and so was not in a position to make comments about why actions were not taken against Tufan.

"He is now arrested on specific charges. The law will take its own course."

Bogra District AL President Momtaz Uddin termed the rape and torture of the girl a heinous crime and said Tufan should stand a "special trial".

Asked why action was not taken despite Tufan's involvement in various crimes for years, he said, "Who will take action? Do they [people like Tufan] follow by party decisions?"

He said he did not understand how a man like Tufan got into AL politics.

Motin Sarkar could not be reached for comments.

Tufan on July 17 abducted the girl from her home and raped her and then asked his party cadres and a woman councillor to make sure everything was hushed up.

Accordingly, they picked up the student and her mother on Friday, tortured them for four hours and then shaved their heads.

People from different quarters and various socio-cultural and political organisations expressed deep shock over the incident and demanded the government ensure safety and treatment of the victim and her mother.

The incident also triggered outrage in social media as the photos of the mother and daughter with their shaved heads were shared online.

Tufan admits rape: police

FROM PAGE 1

Bogra magistrate described how Tufan committed the crime with his help.

Investigators were interrogating Tufan, now on three-day remand, in a rape case filed with Bogra Sadar Police Station. He told police that he first tried to earn the girl's confidence by pledging to help her get admitted to a college.

"He [Tufan] said he was very influential in Bogra and could do anything without facing any trouble. He didn't think he could be arrested for his misdeeds," said the additional SP.

The accused said he took Tk 4,000 and educational certificates from her, but eventually couldn't help her get admitted.

"Tufan called the student in the morning of July 17 and asked her to come to his house to take the money back. But she refused," said Sonaton quoting the arrestee, adding the arrestee did all these to be in touch with her.

Tufan's wife Asa had been in Dhaka on that very morning. He sent Atiq to the girl's home in Bogra town.

Accordingly, Atiq reached the victim's house and took her to Tufan's home by a rickshaw. The suspended convener of Bogra town Sramik League then raped the female student, leaving her sick, said the police official.

Wishing anonymity, a police investigator said the girl kept mum on the rape as she was afraid of Tufan's power and political influence.

"Even the influential people in Bogra don't dare say anything against Tufan. How can a poor girl like the victim raise voice against him?" he questioned.

DELAYED COMPLAINTS

Asa learnt from Atiq about the rape incident only after returning to Bogra from Dhaka. She then shared the information with her sister Marzia Hasan Rumki, a woman ward councillor in Bogra.

The two women engaged some cadres of Tufan and Rumki in bringing the girl and her mother to their home. The cadres went to the victim's house, but found nobody there.

The victim and her mother returned to Bogra from the capital on Friday only to be picked up by the cadres and taken to Tufan's house. The two faced inhuman torture for about four hours and their heads were shaved by a barber.

The victims on the same day went to Bogra Sadar Police Station to file a torture case against Asa, Rumki and others. But the girl still didn't disclose the rape incident.

As the two victims started describing the torture incident, police came to know that they were taken to Tufan's house. The two were then grilled separately.

"The girl at one stage disclosed that Tufan raped her," said an official of the police station.

Additional SP Sonaton said they didn't arrest Tufan immediately. "We first picked up Atiq to be sure about the rape incident. We arrested Tufan after Atiq confessed the crime."

Mother of the student on Saturday night filed two cases against Tufan, Asa, Rumki, Rumi, Atiq, Munna, Ali Azam Dipu, Rupom, Shimul and Zitu under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act and the Bangladesh Penal Code.

Sources at Bogra Sadar Police Station said police called in Tufan and Atiq and grilled them separately on the rape incident after the cases were filed.

Law enforcers blindfolded Atiq and produced him before Tufan. As Atiq described the July 17 incident, Tufan admitted that he made a mistake and would marry the college girl.

STORY BEING MADE UP?

Some locals alleged that a group of people, including family members of Tufan, were trying to make up a story that the victim girl was in a relationship with the Sramik League leader and was planning to marry him.

They were telling that the girl went to Tufan's house with bad intentions and no rape incident took place there. They were also arguing that neither the girl nor her mother filed any complaint with police for 11 days.

"I also heard some people speaking about the incident. But nothing can

save the accused," said Additional SP Sonaton.

The college girl and accused Tufan and Atiq already gave statements to police about the rape incident, he added.

Bogra police Superintendent Md Asaduzzaman said the victim is an underaged girl and having sex with an underaged girl is illegal.

SEVEN MORE REMANDED

A Bogra court yesterday placed seven more arrestees on remand in the rape case. They are Tufan's wife Asa, his two associates Munna and Zitu, sister-in-law Rumki, mother-in-law Rumi, father-in-law Jamirur Rahman Runu and barber Jiban.

Asa, Munna and Zitu were arrested from Savar's Hemayetpur while Rumki and Rumi from Pabna and Runu from Bogra town on Sunday night.

Police produced them before Bogra Chief Judicial Magistrate Shyam Sundar Roy seeking seven-day remand for each. The court, however, granted four-day remand for Rumki and two-day for others each.

Police picked up Jiban from the town's Badurtola area around 3:00pm yesterday on charge of shaving the heads of the two victims.

Law enforcers arrested Atiq on Saturday, but didn't file any remand prayer for him as he gave a confessional statement before a magistrate.

Tufan, an accused in five cases including one for murder, has amassed huge illegal wealth through drug peddling and extortion with blessings from some local Awami League leaders and administration officials, alleged locals.

The district Sramik League suspended Tufan from the organisation on Sunday amid a public outcry over the rape and torture incidents.

Also yesterday, locals under the banner of Bangladesh Narimukti Kendra held a rally in Bogra's Saatmatha area protesting the abduction and rape of the college girl. Speakers at the rally demanded the accused be tried under the speedy trial act.