

140 sued in Sunamganj for graft in haors

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A total of 140 people including government officials, local council representatives and contractors have been sued in Sunamganj for their negligence and irregularities in construction of embankments that collapsed causing the flash flood in haor regions earlier in April.

Sunamganj Lawyers Association filed the lawsuit yesterday with Sunamganj Special Tribunal, the plaintiff and general secretary of the association Abdul Haque, told The Daily Star.

Md Mujibur Rahman, district session judge of Sunamganj accepted the case (special case no 12/17) after hearing of the plaintiff, Abdul Haque said.

In the case, the first 78 accused are president and general secretaries of Project Implementation Committees (PIC), then 15 officials of Water Development Board including (WDB) Executive Engineer of WDB Sunamganj Afsar Uddin and Additional Chief Engineer of WDB Sylhet Abdul Hai.

The case also includes 46 contractors and the last accused of the case is Shah Kamal, secretary of the Ministry

of Disaster Management and Relief, as he did not respond to the situation but neglected it.

Earlier on July 2, Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed a lawsuit with Sunamganj Model Police Station where the ACC sued 61 persons including WDB officials and contractors.

That day, WDB's Executive Engineer Afsar Uddin and a contractor Bachchu Mia was held over the graft in embankment of the haor region.

In that case, the ACC recommended awarding exemplary punishment to Ministry of Water Resources' secretary, director general of Water Development Board and 14 other officials for "utmost negligence".

Triggered by torrential rainfall, flash floods struck the haor belt on April damaging half a million tonnes of Boro crops in the area, according to government estimation.

Three weeks after the flash flood around 900 metric tons (MT) of fish, several thousand ducks, frogs and leeches died because of the flood.

The situation of the region is still in distress though the government have not yet declared the zone as distressed area.



Two firemen help people cross the waterlogged road using a towable tube in the city's Shantinagar area after heavy rain yesterday. Bri Gen Ali Ahmed Khan, director general of Fire Service and Civil Defence, said they bought towable tubes for the recent floods but are now deploying those in different areas of Dhaka and Chittagong to help people, especially the elderly, women and students. Such tubes were deployed in Mirpur, Notre Dame College area and Bangabhaban areas, he said. The picture was taken from the Facebook group "Traffic Alert", posted by Rezwana Rahman Raj.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Madrasa teacher held over 'rape' of 9-yr-old girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

A madrasa teacher in Shahrasti upazila of Chandpur has been arrested for allegedly raping a nine-year-old girl twice in a month.

The madrasa teacher Ohiduzzaman, 30, son of one Bashar Mollah of Char Atjuri village in Mollarhat upazila of Bagerhat was appointed as Muazzin of Battola Miazi Bari mosque two years ago.

When Talimul Quran Nurani Madrasa was established later in the area Ohiduzzaman was given charge of the madrasa. Since Ramadan, students were being taught up to class-III in the madrasa.

The victim was a student of class-III at the madrasa.

On Monday when all other students left, Ohiduzzaman took the girl to a room and raped her.

Ohiduzzaman then threatened to kill the victim's two sisters if she disclosed the incident to anyone. She did not disclose the matter to anyone but when she returned home bleeding her mother rushed her to Shahrasti General Hospital.

The doctors sent her to Shahrasti Upazila Health Complex from where she was sent to the sadar hospital.

Tests found evidence of rape. The victim's private parts were found partially torn.

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Focus on selection, removal will be rare

FROM PAGE 1

in the lower judiciary for 10 years, is eligible to be appointed as a judge of the higher judiciary, according to article 95 (2).

"Now the executive [the government] prepares a list of its choice and then sends it to the chief justice as a formality, as if the office of the chief justice is a post box," said Justice Mirza Hussain Haider, one of the seven judges of the Appellate Division, in the 16th amendment case verdict.

"This practice will hardly find competent persons for appointment as a judge of the higher judiciary. Because the executive as well as legislature are generally comprised of political personalities, they cannot choose the right person having the depth of law," he said.

"Rather, person having political affiliation will get preference over the quality lawyers."

The Appellate Division of the SC, led by the chief Justice, on July 3 this year upheld the High Court verdict delivered last year that scrapped the 16th amendment to the constitution.

Through the amendment, the government had cancelled the chief justice led Supreme Judicial Council and had restored the parliament's power to remove SC judges on grounds of misconduct or incapacity.

Justice Haider said he fully concurred with the decision made unanimously in dismissing the appeal with

observations. In addition, he expressed his own views about the matter.

He said the term 'consultation with the chief justice' should be made more open so that the consultation was not confined only to the chief justice and the representative of the executive.

But the consultation should be meaningful and practical so that the chief justice could discuss the matter with his colleagues and senior members of the Bar for evaluating strengths and weaknesses of a candidate, he said.

In the past, there were instances of ignoring the opinions of the chief justice.

For example, Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha on December 24 last year said he advised the government to appoint eight additional judges to the HC in August 2016 after a long discussion with the law minister.

"On mutual consent, a recommendation was sent to the government for appointing the judges, but the process was yet to see the light of day in four months," he had said while speaking at the national judicial conference.

The chief justice, who is the author judge of the 16th amendment case verdict, emphasised on the selection process.

"... through a rigorous judicial selection process and high standards

of ethical conduct can help avoid the need for the use of removal mechanism. These are basics to be borne in mind but the executive ignores the criteria in the selection process which is seen all the time," said the chief justice in the verdict.

Expressing his views in the verdict, Justice Haider said in many countries, the practice and procedure of appointing judges have changed with time and that the consultation was no longer limited to the chief justice and the law minister representing the executive.

He said objective criteria, transparency, equal opportunity, integrity, moral value and meritocracy should be taken into consideration before appointing someone as a judge of the higher judiciary.

This should be the method of choosing competent persons who could have appropriate role in protecting the people's right and the constitution, Justice Haider said.

"In our country, since after liberation, the process of appointing judges in the higher judiciary is encircling consultation with the chief justice," he said, adding, "In old days the chief justice used to consult his brother judges and senior advocates for determining the credibility of any particular advocate/person if he is to be appointed as a judge of the High Court Division."

"But the said system/process is no more in practice now a days. Rather, it

has become completely different," said Justice Haider.

Referring to article 95 (2) (c), he said, "Unless the appointment process is determined by enacting law as per constitutional provision how removal process could be enacted?"

"First of all there should be a criteria determined by law for appointment of a person a judge in the higher judiciary and then the question of removal of such judge comes.

"But interestingly for the reasons best known to parliament, they have come forward with removal procedure..." Justice Haider said.

"It is not understood as to why in spite of the fact that there are existing procedure in the constitution as to qualification of a person to be appointed as a judge in the higher judiciary as well as the removal process, parliament had been so eager to deal with the process of removal of the judges of the Supreme Court before determining the qualifications for appointment pursuant to article 95 (2) (c)?"

He said until parliament enacts the law for appointing judge in the higher judiciary, "the appointment process should be vested upon the said council headed by the chief justice, who can gather information/opinion through other various methods in respect of any candidate and thereby get the final order of appointment/removal by the president of the republic."

BEATING UP PARENTS Man gets 10 months in jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A young man was sentenced to 10 months in prison for beating up his parents at Sirajganj's Raiganj upazila yesterday.

The injured couple have been undergoing treatment at Raiganj Upazila Health Complex.

Ariful Islam, 25, beat up his parents Abu Bakkar, 50, and Hazera Khatun, 45, yesterday morning after they asked him to sell some vegetables from a field, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Iqbal Akhter said.

As the couple screamed for help, neighbours rushed to their rescue and took them to the hospital.

The villagers then took Ariful to the UNO who sentenced him to 10 months and 10 days in prison.

Upazila Health Officer Farhadul Haque said the victims had bruises all over their bodies and would be released from the hospital in a couple of days.

Section 355 of the Penal Code allows an executive magistrate to sentence a person up to two years in prison.

Ctg airport closes after accident

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

All the flight operations were suspended at Chittagong Shah Amanat International Airport after an aircraft of the navy skidded off the runway while landing yesterday afternoon.

All flight operations were suspended from 5:47pm yesterday, confirmed Wing Commander Reazul Kabir, airport manager.

The manager, however, could not say how the accident happened.

City drowns in record rain

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"Heavy rain is normal this time of the year, but 121mm rain in such a short time is a record," Bazlur said about yesterday's downpour, adding that more rain was expected in the coming days.

As a result of such heavy rain, much of the capital quickly turned into a waterbody. On the waterlogged city streets, buses, private cars and three-wheelers came to a standstill for hours.

"I used to love rain. But now I've come to fear it because commuting on Dhaka streets after rain has become virtually impossible. This can't go on. I don't see any visible steps to solve the problem," said Masud, who travels from Dhanmondi-27 to Gulshan-2 five days a week.

Experts have no new suggestions to offer. They say inadequate storm-water drainage system managed by seven different authorities with little coordination among themselves is the reason why Dhaka streets suffer deluge every time there is a moderate rain.

They do the job haphazardly and have little clue to what the other agencies are doing, they add.

In a well-managed network of storm

drainage system, rainwater instantly runs into the low-lying retention areas. But, it takes hours for rainwater runoff if the network is faulty or destroyed, leading to immense public sufferings. As there was a heavy rainfall in a short time yesterday, things took a turn for the worse.

The worst-affected areas in the capital include Shantinagar, Khilgaon, Bashabo, Malibagh, Shantibagh, Rajarbagh, Mugda, Mohammadpur, Badda and different parts of Old Dhaka.

In the sunken city, almost all commuters had a similar story to tell.

Abdul Jalil, 60, got on a bus in front of the Jatiya Press Club around 2:30pm amid heavy rain. The bus took more than one and a half hours to reach Engineers Institute, around a kilometre from the Press Club. He sat still in the bus for half an hour more, all the while hoping that the bus would move.

"We were stranded like hostage. I felt so helpless. I could not get down even after the rain stopped as the road went under knee-deep water with filth floating," said Jalil, a private jobholder.

However, finding no alternative, he eventually started walking towards

Farmgate where he works.

"Even the footpath went under water. It was a terrible situation," he added.

Having remained stuck in the traffic for hours, many walked miles to reach their destinations. A huge number of people were seen walking just by the central reservation as much of the Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue stretching from Karwan Bazar underpass to the first footbridge at Farmgate was inundated, forcing vehicles to move slowly.

In some places, fire servicemen were seen helping people cross water-clogged streets on towable tubes.

Brigadier General Ali Ahmed Khan, director general of Fire Service and Civil Defence, said they bought towable tubes for flood situation but now they deployed those in different areas of Dhaka and Chittagong for the service of people, especially the elderly, women and students, who got stuck in waterlogging.

Such tubes were deployed in Mirpur, Notre Dame College, Bangabhaban areas, he said.

Sanjida Khanam, a housewife from Sukrabad, had been facing severe problem to get her kids to school in

Dhanmondi for the last two days.

"I had to struggle to get a rickshaw in the morning, but then got stuck in jam. It took me around an hour to reach the school," she said yesterday.

Maksud Reza, a banker, said he had to wait for around an hour to get on a bus after office hour.

"There were a handful of buses but those were crammed with passengers. It took me around three hours to reach my home in Kalabagan from Banani," he said.

Bishwajit Roy, a private service holder, said he had to walk for around one hour to go to Farmgate from Shantinagar as no rickshaw or CNG would take him due to waterlogging.

"On my way, I saw an elderly man falling into water while wading through near Karwan Bazar. He hurt his legs," he said.

Zina Tasreen, a resident of Mohakhali DOHS, said a large part of the posh neighbourhood went under knee-deep water on Wednesday noon.

"Residents parked their cars in dry parts of the area and away from their plots. To get to the cars, they have to hop on rickshaws to avoid the unclean water," she said.

Russia slams US for waging 'economic war'

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recent defeat in the Senate on his health care reform plans.

ECONOMIC WAR

Medvedev fumed Wednesday evening on Facebook that the move "ends hopes for improving our relations with the new US administration."

"It is a declaration of a full-fledged economic war on Russia," Medvedev wrote.

"The Trump administration has shown its total weakness by handing over executive power to Congress in the most humiliating way."

The head of Russia's largest oil firm Rosneft -- which has already been targeted by earlier US sanctions

imposed over the Ukraine crisis -- promised the company would try to avoid more pain.

SANCTIONS

BACKFIRING

"We will seek to work in such a way as to minimize the impact of the sanctions," Igor Sechin, told Russian news agencies, adding that sanctions had "started backfiring" to damage American interests.

Iran reacted angrily, saying the new sanctions against it "violated" its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, and warned it would respond "appropriately."

The sanctions seek to penalize the Kremlin for allegedly meddling in the

2016 US presidential election and for Russia's annexation of Crimea.

Washington has already slapped several rounds of sanctions on Moscow over Ukraine since 2014, and in December then leader Barack Obama turfed 35 Russian diplomats out due to accusations of election interference.

Trump had received the legislation at 1:53 pm on Friday, but waited until Wednesday to sign it.

The delay had raised speculation that Trump might veto or try to somehow shelve the sanctions, which were approved in a 98-2 Senate vote.

By signing it, he avoided the humili-

ating prospect of Congress overriding his veto.

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said on Wednesday that he would meet with his Russian counterpart Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov over the weekend, but warned US-Russia ties could still get worse.

A special prosecutor is investigating whether Trump advisers colluded with what US intelligence has concluded was an attempt by Russia to covertly support the real estate mogul's 2016 campaign.

The US president, who often called for warmer ties with Moscow during the White House race, has furiously denied the charge.

TOXIC PARACETAMOL

HC enquires about negligent drug officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday ordered the government to inform it within 72 hours what action has been taken against two officials of the drug administration for their negligence in dealing with the case filed for manufacturing toxic paracetamol syrup that killed at least 28 children in 2009.

The officials are Assistant Director of the Directorate General of Drug Administration Shafiqul Islam and its Deputy Director Altaf Hossain.

Health secretary and director general of the Directorate General of Health Services have been asked to report to the HC about the steps taken against the two.

The HC bench of Justice Syed Muhammad Dastagir Husain and Justice Md Ataur Rahman Khan passed the order after Supreme Court lawyer Manzill Murshid moved a petition on behalf of Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh.

Murshid said the health secretary recently submitted a probe report to the HC as per its earlier order, saying

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MATARBARI GRAFT CASE

Six more sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Two courts in Cox's Bazar yesterday sent six more people to jail in a case filed over misappropriating money from Matarbari coal-based power plant project in Maheshkhali.

Member of Zila Parishad Ruhul Amin, former UP chairman Ahsan Ullah Bachchu, Aminul Islam, Jahangir Alam and Muhibul Islam appeared before Cox's Bazar's Special Judge's Court yesterday and prayed for bail. But the court rejected their plea and sent them to jail.

In another incident, Cox's Bazar's Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court sent Fakhru Islam, former surveyor of the district administration, to prison, rejecting his bail petition.

On July 31, a court in Cox's Bazar sent former deputy commissioner Ruhul Amin and additional deputy commissioner Zafar Alam of the district to jail in the case.

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.

Husband, 4 others 'rape' pregnant woman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A pregnant woman has allegedly been gang-raped by her husband and four others in Abhaynagar of Jessore.

The victim made the complaint in a media briefing at Crime Reporters Association Bangladesh in the capital's Segunbagicha yesterday.

She said her husband on July 7 took her to the hotel he owns for arbitration over abortion and then tried to force her to abort the pregnancy. She was three months pregnant then.

When she refused, her husband, former general secretary of Abhaynagar upazila Jubo League Sheikh Saifar, Sumon, Azim Mollah and Rubel Mollah raped her, she alleged.

She claimed that she filed two cases on July 25 with a Jessore court as the officer-in-charge of Abhaynagar Police Station refused to record a case and asked her to file the complaint with a court.

The victim said one of the case was for rape and the other case was against her husband for adultery.

The court later asked Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) to investigate the cases.

Contacted, Sheikh Saifar refuted the allegation. "I am 57 years of age and cannot even think of such a thing," Saifar told The Daily Star. He claimed that he was victim of a conspiracy.

Anisur Rahman, OC of Abhaynagar Police Station, said the woman never went to him.

At the press conference, the victim alleged that she fled home due to continuous threat from the rapists.

Emdadul Haque, inspector of PBI of Jessore, also the investigation officer of the case, told The Daily Star yesterday that he got the investigation charge of the rape case on Wednesday.