

ABUSE IN THAKURGAON

Son held for torturing 85-year-old mom

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Police detained the man who along with his wife allegedly tortured his eighty-five-year-old mother in Thakurgaon's Haripur upazila on Wednesday night.

Bodir Uddin, 60, eldest son of victim Taslema Khatun of Dangipara village in the upazila, was held near Dangipara High School intersection around 9:00pm.

Police and locals said Taslema lost her husband around 25 years ago. She has two sons and two daughters, who live in the same upazila. After the death of her husband, Taslema used to live with Bodir.

Over the last few months, Bodir and his family was putting pressure on Taslema to register her last 25 decimal of land in their names. As the elderly woman did not, Bodir and his family

members had frequent altercations with her.

On Monday, when Taslema went to the kitchen and asked for rice, Bodir's wife Ranu scolded her. At one stage, Ranu poked a stick into the left eye of Taslema and beat her up.

A few minutes later, Bodir dragged his mother outside the home and told her that if she wanted to stay with them, she would have to register the land in their names, sources said.

Later, Soyodur Rahman, principal of Haripur Moslemuddin Degree College and also Taslema's neighbour, sent her to Haripur Upazila Health Complex.

The deputy commissioner of Thakurgaon came to know about the matter when another neighbour of the victim Anwar Hossain uploaded a video of the woman on Facebook.

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A man tries to catch a running train near Airport Railway Station level crossing in the capital yesterday. While this is a daily occurrence, such an act can have fatal consequences.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

16TH AMENDMENT VERDICT PM informed president about govt stance

Says Quader; Fakhruul terms president-PM meeting unprecedented

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, as the chief of the government and the party, met the president to convey the government's stance over the Supreme Court's verdict on the 16th amendment.

"As the chief of the government and the ruling Awami League, it was her responsibility to convey to the president the government's stance on the 16th constitutional amendment verdict," he told a programme at the secretariat.

Meanwhile, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhruul Islam Alamgir has termed the president-PM meeting "unprecedented" and accused the government of hatching a plot to "snatch the independence of the judiciary".

He was addressing a programme at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday, a day after the PM met President Abdul Hamid at the Bangabhaban. The country's overall flood situation and the SC verdict, among other issues, came up for discussion at the meeting.

Passed in 2014, the 16th amendment to the constitution had restored parliament's powers to remove SC judges for misconduct or incapacity. Last year, the High Court declared the amendment illegal and the decision was upheld by the SC on July 3 this year. The apex court released the full verdict on August 1.

Since then, the AL has been criticising and the BNP has been praising the verdict. Food Minister Qamrul Islam even demanded removal of the chief justice for some of the observations he made in the verdict.

Speaking at the discussion at the secretariat, Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, said apart from the SC verdict, the PM also informed the president about the country's latest flood situation and enquired about his health.

"Who is putting pressure on

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Phone unanswered

Ruling party leader gets angry at UNO

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A ruling party panel chairman of Dinajpur Zila Parishad has threatened to skin an upazila nirbahi officer's back for not answering his phone.

Parbatipur UNO Tarafdar Mahmudur Rahman filed a general diary in this connection Wednesday night.

Citing the GD, Mostaq Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Parbatipur Police Station, said Panel Chairman Shafiqur Raihan Neta, also the information and technology affairs secretary of Parbatipur Awami League, went to the UNO office Wednesday afternoon and threatened him.

Witnesses said the AL leader attempted to assault the UNO and

screamed at him for not answering his phone calls.

Being informed, police rushed to the scene and calmed the situation.

UNO Mahmudur told The Daily Star that his colleagues were upset at the "tyranny" of the AL leader and alleged that Shafiqur recently tried to extort Tk 50 lakh from a government office.

Contacted, Shafiqur denied the extortion allegation, but admitted that he misbehaved on Wednesday.

The AL leader said he had been trying to talk to the UNO about the expenditure details of 18 development projects worth Tk 2.38 crore. But the UNO did not answer his phone.

He then alleged that the money was misappropriated. The UNO later denied the allegation.

SC displeased

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taken against the investigation officers if they have any negligence in conducting inquiry," Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha said, adding that the SC would monitor the investigation of the cases.

He was presiding over a three-member bench of the SC during hearing of two petitions by the ACC, challenging two High Court orders that granted bail to the then BASIC Bank general manager Zainul Abedin Chowdhury in the two cases.

The apex court adjourned the hearing till October 8 and extended its chamber judge's order staying the HC orders of bail to Zainul till that day.

The Commission filed two cases with Motijheel Police Station in 2015 against Zainul Abedin Chowdhury and 15 others on charges of misappropriating Tk 75 crore of BASIC Bank in connivance with each other. Zainul was arrested on April 5 last year.

Following two petitions by Zainul, the HC on May 25 this year granted him bail.

Later, the SC chamber judge stayed the bail upon ACC petitions and asked the Commission to file separate leave-to-appeal petitions with the SC against the HC orders.

While hearing the petitions, the SC on August 10 summoned the case

records, which ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan placed before the top court yesterday.

During the proceedings, the chief justice asked the ACC counsel to read out the names of the accused.

At one point, the CJ asked whether the then chairman and board members of BASIC Bank had been implicated in the cases.

In reply, Khurshid said one former board member was implicated and others will be implicated as well if their involvement in the loan scam was found in the investigation.

The CJ told Attorney General Mahbub Alam, who represented the government, that the law was equal to all and nobody was above the law.

The SC is the last resort of the people and its dignity must be upheld, Justice Sinha noted.

AM Aminuddin, who appeared for Zainul, said his client did not commit any offence as he had only recommended giving the loans.

Last year, the ACC filed 56 cases, accusing 110 people and organisations over irregularities in disbursement of loans worth about Tk 4,500 crore.

Of the accused, 27 were bank officials and the rest were borrowers and surveyors, according to the ACC.

Project nightmare

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company about Tk 86 crore in bills and "undue" benefits, like advance payment and loan.

Now after four years, the WASTCL failing to restart the plant has stopped working at the project site since June 18 for a second time. It came after the project was extended for the second time.

"As per the contract agreement terms, you cannot stop the commissioning job, and leave site without completing commissioning and PGTR [performance guarantee test run] at this stage because we have already paid you 77.50 percent payment which is Tk 86.12 crore," CCC Managing Director Bidyut Kumar Biswas said in a letter to CEO of WASTCL Li Guoan on May 24.

He wrote the letter as the Chinese company stopped working at the site after failing to complete the PGTR.

"You cannot keep the plant shutdown and cannot leave site without handover of the project," Bidyut said.

Now the Chinese company again demanded the remaining payment to resume work. In the meantime, most of the Chinese officials left the CCC site keeping the plant completely shutdown.

In this situation, it has become completely uncertain if the plant would be in operation again, said several CCC officials speculating that the WASTCL would never be able to do so as it had no experience of taking up such a big project.

The plant authorities and the Chinese company are now busy trading blames and seeking compensations.

Both sides also threatened to take legal actions against each other if demands of the respective sides were not fulfilled urgently.

Going one step forward, the WASTCL even threatened to leave Bangladesh for China without completing successful PGTR.

The CCC and the company have been exchanging a number of letters, blaming each other for the work delay, seeking compensations and warning legal actions against each other since January this year, according to documents and letters from both sides.

The ministry of industries and BCIC high-ups held a joint meeting with the Chinese company on June 7.

The WASTCL had agreed to start the PGTR and set several conditions, including increasing gas supply pres-

sure, nonstop five-day 33kv power supply from June 8, availability of qualified manpower, raw materials and financial support to the company during the production period.

But all efforts went in vain as the company again stopped the work on June 18 and left the site on "personal grounds".

In this situation, the ministry and the BCIC high ups seem helpless.

TRADING BLAME

The WASTCL in several letters to the CCC since January blamed low power supply, gas pressure and problems with the gas engine generator as the main reasons behind the failure to start the test run.

It said since September last year, they started production 25 times, 18 of which were hampered due to power supply problems, according to the company's May 6 letter to the CCC.

The Chinese company claimed that it had completed its work in January. It demanded release of the rest 25 percent payment of Tk 25 crore along with Tk 60 lakh as bank interest and Tk 84 lakh it paid as VAT and tax.

Furthermore, the company sought compensation for its 32 staffs' salaries, and management costs Tk 13.82 crore for 180 days from May 15 to November 11 last year and Tk 6.48 crore for February to May 6 and employees' air tickets worth Tk 4.80 crore.

Urging the CCC authorities to pay high attention to their requests, the company threatened to report to the Chinese embassy in Dhaka and China Export Credit Insurance Company Ltd if the requests were not fulfilled.

They also threatened to stop all work at the site and return to China.

Refuting allegations of power and gas supply problems, the CCC in a letter to the WASTCL on May 24 said the Chinese company did not properly solve 10 mechanical problems to start the Performance Guarantee Test Run (PGTR).

The WASTCL was running the factory violating Standard Operation Procedure (SOP), it said, denying that production was hampered 18 times due to power supply problem.

"Most of the previous times production was hampered due to GEG synchronization failure as a locally-made GEG synchronization panel was installed by [WASTCL] instead of Caterpillar Synchronization panel," he said.

"The project has to be completed in

14 months, but you could not complete it even in 48 months," CCC Managing Director Bidyut said in a letter to the Chinese company.

In another letter to the WASTCL Chief Executive Office Li Guoan, Bidyut said, "Please be noted that without PGTR before handover, there is no scope of payment of the rest amount [final bill]..."

"You are further requested to start the plant immediately to perform PGTR. Otherwise we have no other way than to take legal actions as per the contract," read the letter to the Chinese Company.

Contacted, Bidyut told The Daily Star recently that the company did PGTR once but failed. They would do that again soon, he added.

Meanwhile, the BCIC held fresh meetings with officials from the CCC and the Chinese company in Dhaka in the last two days.

During the meeting, the Chinese company said it would not resume work without the rest of the payment while the CCC and the BCIC insisted that the company would carry out the PGTR, said BCIC Director (planning and implementation) Lutfor Rahman, who looks after the project.

Trump's far-right defence 'a huge mistake': Germany

AFP, Berlin

Germany's Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said yesterday US President Donald Trump had made "a huge mistake" by failing to clearly condemn a white supremacist, neo-Nazi and "alt-right" rally.

Trump on Tuesday said there had been "very fine people, on both sides" at a violent clash between the far right and anti-fascists Saturday in the Virginia college town of Charlottesville.

Gabriel said that "creating an equivalence between the two sides instead of clearly rejecting the Nazi-leaning side, that was a huge mistake".

"And it is wrong," he said in an interview with national news agency DPA. "It shows how enmeshed part of Trump's support base is with the far-right in the United States. His chief ideologue (Steve) Bannon is close to them."

Militants

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Police filed a case with Kalabagan Police Station early yesterday accusing Saiful and his unidentified associates, planners and masterminds.

Counterterrorism officials said Saiful checked into the hotel, where he was killed, Monday morning carrying a small polythene bag. Explosive was supplied to him later by others.

DMP Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia earlier said Saiful had some associates and police were trying to arrest them and those who sent him for to attack.

Meanwhile, Khulna police yesterday placed Saiful's father Abul Khayer and his friend Abdullah Bin Mosaddek Sami before a Khulna court with a seven-day remand prayer in a sabotage and sedition case filed with Dumuria Police Station on December 19, 2015, reports our Khulna correspondent.

The court sent them to jail. The remand petition would be heard later, said Sirajul Islam, a sub inspector of Dumuria Police Station.

Immense sufferings, scanty response

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Talking to The Daily Star, Sazzad Hossain, executive engineer of Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre, said, "The water level in the major rivers has already dropped below the danger mark upstream. The flood situation will improve if it doesn't rain upstream."

In Dhaka, five rivers around the capital are now flowing below the danger level, he added.

Sayed Hasan Imam, executive engineer of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) in Sirajganj, said all embankments in the district still face threat of erosion.

Contacted, Abdur Rahim, district relief and rehabilitation officer, said a total of 491 villages were flooded in the district over the last five days and more than three lakh people remain marooned.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is

expected to visit the flood-affected areas in Dinajpur and Kurigram on Sunday.

SUFFERINGS FAR FROM OVER

Many of the flood-hit people are unable to return home from temporary shelters as their houses were badly damaged.

In Lalmonirhat, 68-year-old Madina Bewa of Shiberkuti village cannot return home though floodwater receded from her house.

"A large portion of my house got badly damaged in the flood. I don't have the money to repair it," said Madina, who has taken shelter near the main road in Mughalhat area, around one kilometre from her home.

Like her, 48-year-old Abbas Mia has no option but to stay at a temporary shelter.

"I'll have to arrange money to rebuild my house that got destroyed in flood... I along with my four family

members must stay on the BWDB dam till then," said Abbas of Char Kulaghat village in the district.

Many others face similar crisis in Kurigram, Thakurgaon, Gaibandha, Panchagarh, Nilphamari, Bogra, Jamalpur and Naogaon.

Flood is also taking a heavy toll on cattle farmers in eight districts -- Sirajganj, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Tangail, Gaibandha, Dinajpur, Nilphamari and Jamalpur.

They are struggling to find a safe place for their domestic animals. Most of them brought those to higher places near the main roads to save those from floodwater.

"I have three cows. My home got submerged a couple of days ago. I had to take the animals to a place near Belkuchi-Enayetpur road on Tuesday," said Fazlur Rahman of Ambaria village in Sirajganj.

Not only Fazlur, hundreds of

cattle farmers in the district had to bring their animals to higher places near the main roads. They are also facing a shortage of fodder for the animals.

"The grasslands in my village are flooded. Now I have no choice but to buy fodder for my cattle," said Akbar Hossain, a cattle farmer from Shahzadpur upazila.

In Jamalpur, the bodies of two missing persons, including a student, were found floating in a waterbody at Bhaluka village yesterday morning.

The two were washed away by strong current on Wednesday, said Mazharul Karim, officer-in-charge of Melandah Police Station.

In Rajshahi, a woman has been missing since 1:00pm yesterday as she fell in a beel (a waterbody) in Govindapara Union of Bagmara Upazila.

Govindapara Union Council

Chairman Bijon Sarker said divers of the fire service launched a search for Jaynur Bibi, 45, wife of Abu Sayeed.

6 LAKH CHILDREN AFFECTED

At least six lakh children have already been affected by floods, according to an estimate of Save the Children in Bangladesh.

Hundreds of schools remain closed, disrupting studies of thousands of children in 20 districts, reports UNB citing a press release of Save the Children.

It also mentioned that floods have affected half a million families.

According to the disaster management and relief ministry, 2.2 million people have become homeless due to flood in the country's northern region.

[Our correspondents from Dinajpur, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Rajshahi, Manikganj, Pabna, Tangail, Jamalpur, Gaibandha and Nilphamari contributed to this report]