UATTARA GONOBHABAN TREE FELLING
Ministry ignores probe body recommendation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

The housing and public works ministry has asked the deputy commissioner of Natore to file a case against a Public Works Department contractor for illegally felling trees on Uattara Gonobhaban premises in Natore's Dighapatia.

The ministry, however, ignored the probe committee's recommendation to accuse five PWD officials in the case.

In a letter to the DC yesterday, the ministry only held Sohel Faysal, an enlisted contractor of PWD, responsible for the incident, without mentioning anything about the five officials, including PWD Executive Engineer Mashiur Rahman Akando.

DC Shaheena Khatun said she got the letter signed by ministry's Deputy Secretary Suraiya Khatun.

The move by the ministry triggered an outcry among the civil society members who alleged that it was an ill attempt to save the government officials.

Meanwhile, the ministry yesterday suspended Mashiur Rahman, PWD Sub-divisional Engineer Ziaur Rahman and Section Officer Md Kamruzzaman as a part of departmental action, said Aktar Hossain, additional secretary of the ministry.

In its report submitted to the DC on Monday, the committee investigating the incident said Mashiur, contractor Sohel and caretaker Abdus Sabur were directly involved in cutting down of the trees.

It also said Ziaur, Kamruzzaman and another caretaker Abul Kashem aided and abetted the trio.

The committee had recommended filing a case against the six.

Receiving the report, the DC had forwarded it to the higher authorities, including Cabinet Division and housing and public works ministry.

Asked about filing of a case against Sohel, DC Shaheena, also the president of Uattara Gonobhaban management committee, told this newspaper yesterday she would made the decision after consulting the Cabinet Division.

Contractor Sohel reportedly in collusion with the PWD officials felled 25 big old trees on the Uattara Gonobhaban premises in the last two months, although the PWD floated a tender for cutting branches of dead trees only.

The local administration formed the probe committee, headed by Additional District Magistrate of Natore Razzaqul Islam, following media reports about cutting down of the trees.

Questions over questions

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named, demanded their punishment.

In a Facebook post, Rahmatullah Imon, a former Rajshahi University (RU) teacher, said setting such controversial questions was a crime that must not go unpunished.

Imon, who currently is a professor at Ball State University in the USA, also said, "I cannot even imagine how such communal and irresponsible questions were prepared."

He said questions like that on the "greatest book" has got to puzzle students. "And how will the examiners evaluate the answer."

Sumon Sarker, another Facebook user, wrote he did not know how the Rohingya issue was relevant to fine arts students.

Left leaning RU Progotishil Chhatra Jote and RU Central Shangskritik Jote jointly held a human chain and a rally on the campus yesterday afternoon. They questioned the rationale of choosing the questions and demanded punishment for those responsible.

RU Chhatra Federation Organising Secretary Sumon Morol said the questions "deliberately tried to instil communal ideas in the fresh minds of the students".

Ahmed Shafi Uddin, president of Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik in Rajshahi, said the questions were set "as part of a conspiracy to radicalise young minds and damage the educational atmosphere of the university".

Contacted, Prof Mustafizur Rahman, head of the fine arts faculty's admission committee, admitted that they found the two questions "inappropriate, irrelevant and controversial".

"We have decided to give full marks for these questions," he said, adding that they were looking into the matter.

Asked how the MCQ questions were set, Prof Mustafizur, also the dean of the faculty, said they had assigned a subcommittee to seek different sets of question papers from teachers and the admission committee finally approved the questions.

"We get the question in two ways. Some teachers give them in writing while some come up [with the questions] at the committee meeting all of a sudden," he said.

The question on the Rohingya issue came in writing but that on "the greatest book" was included instantly while preparing the question paper, he claimed.

RU Pro VC Prof Ananda Kumar Saha told The Daily Star, "The Vice Chancellor called the dean to his office and discussed the issue with him. The VC also talked to the senior teachers and the chairmen of various departments under the faculty at his office."

He also said, "The university has a clear stance on the issue. It's because it was a disgraceful incident. We are already investigating the matter."

Separated from the arts faculty in 2015, the fine arts faculty has so far held three yearly admission tests. This year, 4,025 students vied for 120 seats of the faculty.

Our RU Correspondent contributed to this report.

A band of brothers

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the run, looked after their local customers, mainly the gold businessmen while another brother, Rahmat Bari, was in-charge of smuggling gold to India, said the DB investigator. Rahmat is also absconding.

According to a database, Customs Intelligence and Investigation Directorate (CIID), customs officials and different other agencies seized over 2,000kg of gold in the last three years.

According to officials, there was no import of gold through LC (letter of credit) in the last three decades in Bangladesh.

Detectives and investigators suspect the seized gold made up only five percent of the total gold smuggled into Bangladesh during that period. A small portion fed the demand in the local market and the rest went to India, the world's second biggest consumer of gold after China.

A section of higher-ups -- political and government high-ups -- and some dishonest officials in the administration, law enforcement and intelligence agencies collude with around 30 gold smuggling syndicates, according to an intelligence agency report submitted to the Prime Minister's Office in 2015, jewellers and investigators.

THE SMUGGLER'S SET-UP

Exploring the method used by the smugglers, a culture of complicity, advanced planning and international involvement all surfaced.

Faruk told investigators that his brother Rana, while staying in Dubai four years ago for business purposes, met a gold smuggler and joined the racket.

Upon Rana's return home, he communicated with local syndicate members using the Dubai-based link and worked his way up to becoming the ring leader.

Investigators said he used to draw people to his syndicate from the pool of people who were released on bail.

He would then bring in the gold while helping other smugglers too by bribing the cabin crew of two airlines and airport staff, a service by which he brought in additional revenue.

One of the arrestee, Meer Hossain, was a staff of a catering centre of Regent Airways. The air hostess or cabin crew would give Meer the seat numbers where the gold would be kept hidden.

Meer would later carry the gold out by putting it inside a bin bag and keep it in the garbage truck.

For his job, Meer would get Tk 2,000 for each gold bar which meant he received Tk 1,60,000 for bringing out 80 gold bars from the airport.

The garbage truck driver, who reportedly got Tk 10,000 to Tk 20,000 for a single shipment, would meet the smugglers in a safe location near the airport and handover the gold to them, the DB official quoting Faruk said.

Another arrestee, Shahin, was the car driver, who was hired for his ability to drive fast.

Detectives are now interrogating the three arrestees, who were placed on two day remand yesterday.

The latest consignment seized by the police has gold shipments for three to four smugglers which were smuggled in from Dubai last Tuesday by a Regent airlines flight.

The DB official said that Faruk told them that it was the third shipment of the gang this week. Earlier on October 21, they brought in 60 pieces of gold bars weighing around 7 kg and 45 gold bars weighing around 5 kg on October 22.

The gang mainly smuggled gold in the country from Dubai, Masqat, Kuala Lumpur and Jeddah.

Nazmul said that primarily they found the involvement of Nazrul Islam Liton, the ringleader who smuggled in 105 kilograms of gold worth around Tk 46 crore. DB police arrested Nazrul on June 2, 2014 but he reportedly secured bail two months after the arrest and fled from the country.

Besides Liton, DB police have so far got the names of 17 others involved in the gold smuggling racket.

According to First Information Report filed with Airport Police Station, these 17 were identified as Md Reza, who owned the seized private car, Murad, Manik and Amzad, cleaners of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, Mishu, a cabin crew of Regent Airways, Sakib Chowdhury, Masud Karim Rana and Rahmat Bari, gold smugglers and gold carriers Azmeer, Dinesh alias Dinaj, Reaj, Amjad, Rafiq, Mofiz, Ershad and Shaheen.

Mohorom Ali Masud, senior assistant commissioner of DB police, told The Daily Star that they have got some smugglers names from the arrestees and they are now checking their involvement.

Of the suspects, a number of them were arrested earlier but went back to their profession after securing bail, he said. "We are conducting drives to arrest the absconding criminals."

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"But we have to ensure proper implementation of the existing laws," he said.

Regarding proposals of the political parties, Huda said the EC would work on the proposals within its jurisdiction. The proposals beyond the purview of the EC's activities will be sent to the government.

"If they (government) do not take any step, the commission will have nothing to do."

Asked what the election-time government would be like, the CEC said his office had no scope to mount pressure on the government regarding polls-time government.

In reply to a query, he said the commission would not take any step to bring the political parties to a consensus in this regard.

"Political problem should be solved politically."

Huda said the commission had earned trust of the political parties and that was why they had joined talks and placed their proposals.

He then clarified his position, saying he stood by his earlier comment that BNP founder General Ziaur Rahman had restored multi-party democracy in Bangladesh.

Explaining further, he said there was no democracy in 1975-77 in the country. "I said Zia restored democracy; didn't say that he introduced it. Multi-party democracy was restored through the general election of 1979, in which all political parties including Bangladesh Awami League took part."

At the EC's dialogue with the BNP on October 16, Huda came up with the statement triggering a controversy among pro-Awami League elements.

Three B'Baria

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of the investigation centre entered the woman's house around 8:00pm on October 4 and ransacked it. The male members of that family were not present at that time.

As the woman tried to stop the policemen, they threatened her and took her to a boat at a nearby ghat. There, they gagged and gang raped her and then left, the statement said. Hearing her screams, some locals rescued and took her to hospital.

The woman said she filed the case with the court as police did not take the case. This paper could not verify the claim.

Inspector Mahfuzul Hasan Siddique refuted the accusation. He said a police team had gone to the house receiving a court order to evict them from a piece of khas land.

EU launches probe into UK tax scheme for multinationals

AFP, BRUSSELS

The EU yesterday announced a major probe into a British scheme protecting multinationals from tax avoidance rules, in the latest move in the bloc's campaign to get international companies to pay their share.

Europe's competition chief Margrethe Vestager will investigate whether certain exemptions allowed under British rules amount to a breach of European Union regulations against state aid.

The EU has waged a major crackdown on member states bending rules to give big international firms unfair tax breaks in recent years, with US tech giants such as Apple and Google in the firing line.

"We will carefully look at an exemption to the UK's anti-tax avoidance rules for certain transactions by multinationals, to make sure it does not breach EU State aid rules," EU competition commissioner Vestager said in a statement.

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the situation and asked them to prepare the runway for an emergency landing," he said.

Capt Atiq said every six months they have to go through training, including how to make emergency landings in situations like the one on Wednesday.

"So I decided to follow due procedures, I prepared my crew and other staffers for emergency landing."

He said before the aircraft's emergency landing in Dhaka, he made several low passes over Dhaka airport so that the ATC tower officials could see and be sure of which wheel was actually missing.

"After being sure that the number four wheel fell off, I decided to use the left-wing down technique to ensure that the left landing gear touched down first and the right landing gear touched down gently.

"Before landing, I briefed passengers about the incident and requested them to fasten and tighten their seat belts, hold on to the seat in front of them, not panic and that they might have a bumpy landing."

"As it touched down, the plane veered to the left and I applied significant amount of right rudder to hold the aircraft steady on the runway," he said.

"Then I used the emergency brakes to bring the aircraft to a halt on the runway and the passengers were able to disembark through the front left door and by that time the airport authorities got all precautionary measures in place, including the deployment of fire engines to address any unwanted situation."

Captain Atiq said it seemed to him that the passengers were not panicked.

The pilot's skills were praised by aviation experts. They said had the pilot lost control while landing, the accident could have claimed lives.

Meanwhile, a Biman Bangladesh Airlines official investigating the matter speculated that the bearing of the wheel probably got jammed and locked up the wheel when it was taking off. The wheel eventually fell off after the bearing tore off, the investigator said.

Without one of its four core landing gear wheels, Captain Atiq successfully landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport using his efficiency and sound technique and saved the lives of 71 passengers and crew on board, the official said, requesting anonymity.

The investigator said they were suspecting that a faulty part or poor maintenance could have been the primary reason for the wheel failure. The situation could have been deadly if the aircraft veered off the runway and crashed.

The four-member probe body led by Capt Enam, deputy chief of flight safety of Biman, has started their enquiry into the incident.

Landing gear failures are not uncommon when it comes to the Canada-made Bombardier Dash-8. According to Reuters, Scandinavian airlines SAS decided to stop using the Dash-8 Q400 in 2007 after a series of crashes owing to landing gear issues.

CID official suspended

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The complaint came to light a couple of days after seven members of the Detective Branch of police were detained with a ransom money of Tk 17 lakh in Cox's Bazar on Tuesday. The seven, who allegedly abducted a local trader, were detained soon after they freed the abductee.

On Monday, the Anti-Corruption Commission filed a case against Subhash Chandra Saha, former Faridpur superintendent of police, and his wife for allegedly amassing Tk 8.36 crore illegally.

About the bribery, victim Anupom Banik, a co-owner of Mohammadi Trading International and Shahpur Tour and Travels at G-Net Tower, told The Daily Star that SI Susanta along with an informant went to Shahpur Tour and Travels on October 8.

The CID official seized around 1,200 passports and detained two staff at the office. He offered Anupom to release the passports and the detainees in exchange for Tk 1 crore, the businessman alleged.

Anupom said they negotiated the ransom amount down to Tk 50 lakh. The SI immediately took Tk 12 lakh and another Tk 8 lakh at night that day.

The following day, Susanta contacted Anupom and asked him to take back the passports. Anupom withdrew Tk 20 lakh from his bank account and borrowed another Tk 5 lakh from his acquaintances. Later, he along with a staff and a friend took Tk 25 lakh to the CID office in Malibagh.

After receiving the money, Susanta returned 1,100 passports, but seized 101. He subsequently filed a case against Anupom's brother Probir Banik, another co-owner of the firm, and its two staff under Bangladesh Passport Order, 1973.

Asked why he bribed the CID official, Anupom said, "Most of the passports contained visa seals and many foreign jobseekers would have been in great trouble had their visas expired. So, I agreed to bribe the policeman although I did nothing wrong."

He also alleged that CID men threatened him to implicate in a human trafficking case and do whatever necessary to put him behind bars for life.

He said he feared harassment by law enforcers as he disclosed the bribery incident.

Talking to this newspaper, Susanta brushed off the allegations, claiming that those were not true.

Abdul Kahar Akand, additional deputy inspector general of the CID, confirmed that the SI was suspended.

Another CID official said suspension is an immediate action taken against a member of the agency if an allegation is raised. Further actions are taken against the member if investigations find the allegations to be true, he added.

Sources said the CID used to raid the offices of recruiting and travel agencies in the city's Fakirapool area for quite a long time and force the businesses to bribe them hefty amounts of money.

On October 19, when the news of CID men's presence at the G-Net Tower spread, businessmen and staff in the building thronged there and started protesting the harassment by the CID men.

Following the incident, Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agency (Baira) wrote to the Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Hoque, seeking time for a meeting.

The letter said some 50 manpower recruitment agencies were "harassed" by the CID recently.

"Some CID officials have carried out sudden raids at the offices of different recruiting agencies in Motijheel, Paltan, Fakirapool, Kakrail and Malibagh areas in between September and October 10. In the name of conducting search, they first disconnect the CCTV cameras and seize the phones of the employees.

"Then they seize passports and threaten businessmen to implicate them in cases under the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act, 2012. They [CID men] misbehaved with the employees…. the harassment ends only after illegal transaction [of money]."

7 DB MEN LAND IN JAIL

A Cox's Bazar court yesterday sent seven DB members to jail in connection with the case filed for kidnapping a businessman and taking Tk 17 lakh as ransom.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Mir Mosharraf Hossain passed the order after Md Shafiul Azam, inspector (operation) of Teknaf Police Station and also the investigation officer of the case, produced them before the court.

Six of them were detained with Tk 17 lakh ransom money in Teknaf on Wednesday, around half an hour after the seven DB men freed a local trader they had abducted on Tuesday.

The seventh DB men, who escaped the detention, surrendered before the law enforcers on Wednesday night.

The DB team kidnapped blanket trader Abdul Gafur, younger brother of Teknaf Municipality Mayor Moniruzzaman, from Cox's Bazar town and demanded Tk 50 lakh as ransom.

Hours after walking free, Gafur filed the case with Teknaf Police Station against the DB men. The victim in the case complained that the DB men abducted him and threatened to kill him if he failed to pay them Tk 50 lakh as ransom.

The seven are Inspector Yeasir Arafat; sub-inspectors Abul Kalam Azad, Golam Mortoza and Firoz Ahmed, Moniruzzaman; Assistant Sub-Inspector Md Nuruzzaman and constable Mostafa Alam.

OC Shafiul said police formed a one-member probe body, led by Afjurul Hoque Tutul, additional superintendent of Cox's Bazar police, to probe the incident.

Our Cox's Bazar correspondent contributed to this report.

Tigers go down fighting

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and Mahmudullah Riyad took the sting out of what was shaping to be a spirited chase. In the end, rookie Mohammad Saifuddin had to ensure that Bangladesh played out the full 20 overs with 39 not out as Bangladesh reached 175 for nine.

Mushfiqur was fourth out with the score on 98 in the 11th over, and that just set the stage for a procession. Mahmudullah top-edged a slog off Andile Phehlukwayo in the next over and departed with three further runs added. Sabbir Rahman hit two sixes in his 19 but departed top-edging a Beuran Hendricks slower ball. Even Mehedi Hasan Miraz hit a six as the seventh-wicket pair added 23 runs, before he was bowled by Dane Paterson in the 17th over to leave the score on 147 for seven. Off the next ball Paterson had Taskin Ahmed trapped in front and Duminy won his second review of the day. Shafiul was then caught off David Miller in the next over.

In chase of 196 -- which would also have been their highest T20I score -- Soumya and Imrul Kayes started like a house on fire, racing to 43 off just 3.4 overs before Imrul was caught at fine leg off a Beuran Hendricks full toss that the left-hander timed too well. Before that, the left-hander had hit the first ball from Dane Paterson over mid off four, and in the following over Soumya hit an impeccably timed six over wide long on off Hendricks. He added two pick-up fours to the leg side in the next over and two more boundaries in the next before Imrul's dismissal.

New T20I skipper Shakib came in and added 21 runs in the 3.1 overs, but perished trying to go big off 33-year-old debutant Robbie Frylinck and AB de Villiers completed an excellently judged catch running back from mid off. Mushfiqur came in and thumped a slog-swept six off JP Duminy in the last ball of the eighth over to take the score to a dangerous 79 for two. Soumya hit another six in the ninth over from Aaron Phangiso, but had to walk back for a 31-ball 47 in the next over when he walked down the wicket and was struck in front by Phehlukwayo, and the decision came out in South Africa's favour when Duminy reviewed the not-out decision.

In the next over, which started with Bangladesh needing a manageable 99 runs from 10 overs, Mushfiqur holed out to De Villiers at midwicket off Phangiso for 13 and effectively dash all hopes of a confidence-boosting chase.

Earlier, it could have been worse for Bangladesh after being asked to field first on a dream batting surface. For the first 10 overs opener Quinton de Kock and de Villiers were hitting the ball almost at will and a total well in excess of 200 was in the offing, but spirited bowling from spearhead Rubel Hossain and off-spinner Mehedi kept the Proteas to 195 for four in 20 overs.

Shakib chose to open with two spinners -- himself and Mehedi -- after Bangladesh had opted to include all four fast bowlers in the squad. Mehedi bowled Hashim Amla in the second over with one that held its line and beat Amla's inside-out cover drive. From 18 for one after two overs, De Villiers and De Kock put on 79 runs in just seven overs.

Mehedi pulled things back in the eighth over, which was the first without a boundary and Shakib followed that up with another boundary-less over. The pressure told, as De Villiers miscued a slog aimed for long on off Mehedi in the 10th over and Mahmudullah Riyad took a fine catch to send back the maestro for a 27-ball 49 studded with eight sublime boundaries.

In the next over, De Kock completed a well-compiled half century off 35 balls when he hammered a six over cow corner, but off the fifth ball of the over Duminy was undone by arguably Bangladesh's best moment on the field on this tour. Duminy hammered a ball high and to the left of Imrul Kayes at long off, who made a hopping attempt to catch the ball, but it lobbed up and away and Imrul continued his sprint to dive forward and take a special catch.

In the 15th over, Rubel bowled a great over of full-pitched deliveries aimed at De Kock's pads and after two pitched outside leg and thudded into the pads, the fast bowler managed to land one in line to trap the half-centurion in front for 59 off 44.

Farhaan Berhardien and David Miller then took over, combining for 62 runs off the last five over. It was a sad comment on Bangladesh's bowling that despite using six bowlers, Taskin and Shafiul's below-par bowling -- they conceded 21 and 33 off two overs each respectively -- a seventh bowler in Mahmudullah Riyad had to be used, and he outperformed them by conceding just 23 off three.

'Planet-engulfing'

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Institute.

Future surveys of the gluttonous star's planetary system could provide new insights into how solar systems form and evolve, according to Semyeong Oh, an astrophysicist at Princeton University.

Binary stars are typically near-identical twins.

Kronos and Krios, however, have vastly different chemical makeups including the largest difference in metal content of any binary system yet studied.

"We started discussing what could make two stars that must have been born together have such different chemistry now," Dr Oh said.

The compositional differences between Kronos and Krios are most pronounced for elements such as iron, silicon, magnesium and lithium — metals that make up the bulk of rocky planets such as Earth.

Because these elements are concentrated in Kronos's outer layers, rather than mixed throughout the star itself.

The researchers conclude that the star probably consumed many planets worth of rocky material a billion years or more after its formation.

They added material altered the composition of Kronos's outer layer relative to its sibling star.