

MOBILE COURT JUDGMENT Now AC land in Dinajpur stand-released

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

An assistant commissioner was stand-released yesterday after punishing a senior lawyer through a mobile court over a trifling matter on Tuesday.

The lawyer is Binod Bihari, 60, a member of the Dinajpur Bar Association.

The incident at the Upazila Land Office of Birganj has triggered widespread rage among the lawyers in Dinajpur.

The incident took place around 11:30am on Tuesday at the office of Biroda Rani Roy, AC-land of Birganj.

Binod said he had gone to the land office to take part in the hearing of a case against his client Md Saheb Ali.

Introducing himself, he entered the office room of the AC-land and sought her permission to sit in a chair. But the assistant commissioner asked him to get out of her office, he alleged.

The lawyer said he introduced himself again and sought her permission to take part in the hearing on behalf of his client.

But the assistant commissioner allegedly acted even more rudely and asked him to get out of her office despite repeated requests from his client. At one stage, the assistant commissioner allegedly said she would not hear the case if the lawyer did not leave.

The elderly lawyer said he remained in the office room as he thought leaving would be further embarrassing for him. At this stage, the assistant commissioner, also an executive magistrate, conducted a mobile court against the lawyer and fined him Tk 500.

The mobile court in the verdict said the lawyer would have to go to jail for a day if he failed to pay the fine.

Binod said he paid the fine and came out of the office to share the incident with fellow lawyers of the district Bar. His colleagues informed the matter to JS Whip Iqbalur Rahim, lawmaker from Dinajpur-3 constituency, and Deputy Commissioner Mir Khairul Alam.

The AC-land also verbally insulted Binod, said Advocate Nurul Islam, who was present there as the lawyer of Khairul Islam, against whom Saheb Ali was fighting the case.

May suffers

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it fulfils its vital purpose," the ministry said in a statement.

It is a blow to May on the eve of a crucial summit in Brussels, where EU leaders are expected to approve the terms of the interim Brexit deal agreed last week after months of tortuous negotiations.

Gina Miller, a leading pro-EU campaigner, reacted saying: "Parliamentary sovereignty wins the day!" But Nigel Farage, a key driving force behind the Brexit campaign, said: "My contempt for career politicians knows no bounds".

The EU (Withdrawal) Bill is intended to formally end Britain's membership of the EU, as well as smooth its exit by transferring thousands of pieces of European legislation onto the UK statute books.

It also gives ministers powers to amend the laws as they move across, to address any technical glitches.

'Feminism'

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Searches rose following the Women's March on Washington and other US cities on January 21, the day after Trump was sworn in as president, the dictionary said Tuesday.

There was another spike when White House adviser Kellyanne Conway, the first woman to run a successful US presidential campaign, said in February that she did not consider herself a feminist.

Interest was also driven by "The Handmaid's Tale," the Hulu series about a dystopian future in which a woman lives as a concubine during a time of dictatorship, and Hollywood blockbuster "Wonder Woman" starring Israel's Gal Gadot.

Merriam-Webster said more look-ups followed the outpouring of sexual harassment allegations that have unseated well-known figures in Hollywood, politics, business, and triggered the #MeToo social media campaign by women all over the world.

The dictionary's current definitions of feminism are "the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes" and "organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests."

Another top trending word for 2017 was "complicit," connected to Trump's sacking of FBI director James Comey, Russian interference in the 2016 election, and Ivanka Trump's comment that she did not know what the word meant -- which was then parodied in a skit for television show "Saturday Night Live."

Among the other spikes recorded was one for the word "dotard," which North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un used in a statement about Trump in September.

Scam fallout

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provide short-term loan amounting to Tk 96 crore by way of repo to meet its instant liquidity demands.

A number of senior officials of Bangladesh Bank and commercial bankers told The Daily Star that in their long banking career they never heard of any bank failing to repay the interbank loans due to cash crunch.

The situation has turned so bad that no bank now wants to lend money to the Farmers in the overnight call money market, BB sources said.

Against this backdrop, the central bank has verbally instructed four state-owned commercial banks to provide Farmers Bank loans through the inter-bank call money, also called overnight money market, after private commercial banks refused to do so even at higher rates of return.

According to the BB data, the ailing bank is now receiving about Tk 150 crore from the state-owned banks every working day through the inter-bank call money market. And to take loans, Farmers has to count 4.5 percent interest, higher than the average 3.8 percent in the market.

Contacted, former caretaker government adviser AB Mirza Azizul Islam said, "The central bank should take over the Farmers Bank if it fails to pay back depositors' money."

Mustafa K Mujeer, former chief economist of the BB, said corruption and a lack of governance turned Farmers into a bad bank. Once, the Oriental Bank (now ICB Islamic Bank) faced a crisis and the BB rescued it by appointing an administrator there.

"Those who are liable for this situation [at the Farmers Bank] should be punished," said Mujeer, now the executive director of Inclusive Finance and Development.

Earlier in January last year, the BB appointed an observer at the Farmers Bank after it found gross violation of banking rules in sanctioning and disbursing loans and hiding defaulted loans amounting to around Tk 400

Deposit: Tk 5,170cr
Lending: Tk 5,066.39cr
Default loans: Tk 377.68cr
Capital shortfall: 75cr
BB finds anomalies involving Tk 400cr loan in Nov 2015
BB appoints an observer in Jan 2016
Chairman Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir forced to step down on Nov 27

FINANCIAL DATA AS OF SEPT 2017

crore.

That was the first time the central bank appointed an observer for a new bank since the government allowed nine banks in 2013 on political consideration, according to the sources.

As the situation turned from worse to worst, the BB forced the bank's Chairman Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir and its Audit Committee Chairman Mahabul Haque Chisty to step down on November 27.

In line with the BB directives, the Farmers Bank, established just four years ago, restructured its audit, risk management and executive committees on that day.

In a statement, the BB had said the restructuring of the board would help the Farmers Bank restore confidence of the depositors who have been withdrawing funds due to its deteriorating financial health.

Meanwhile, the BB Standing Committee, headed by its Deputy Governor Abu Hena Mohd Razeeq Hassan, yesterday grilled Farmers Bank Managing Director AKM Shameem, asking him to explain why he should not be removed from his post for failing to manage the bank efficiently and address its liquidity crisis.

Despite repeated attempts, Shameem could not be reached over the phone for comments.

Akayed followed

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He was addressing a press conference at the media centre of Dhaka Metropolitan Police yesterday.

CTTC officials on Tuesday quizzed Akayed's wife Jannatul Ferdous Jui, her father and mother. The officials, however, didn't find any book of Rahmani at her father's house on Moneshwer Road in the city.

Meanwhile, Jannatul yesterday said she could not imagine in her wildest dream that her husband would get involved in such an incident.

"I still can't believe my husband can carry out such an attack," Jannatul told The Daily Star at her father's home.

She said she didn't notice any change in her husband's behaviour or lifestyle when he came to Dhaka about three months ago.

The ABT, later renamed as Ansar al Islam or Bangladesh branch of al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), had claimed the responsibilities for the murder of a number of bloggers, publishers and freethinkers. The government banned the ABT on May 27, 2015.

Rahmani, now behind bars, was convicted and sentenced to five years in prison in December 2015 for killing blogger Ahmed Rajib Haider on February 15, 2013. He is also facing several other cases.

In June last year, Director General of Police Bureau of Investigation Banaj Kumar Majumder sent a letter to the Police Headquarters requesting it to remove all the videos of Rahmani's sermons from YouTube as militants had confessed to courts of listening to those before getting involved in militancy.

The CTTC chief said they didn't find any criminal record of Akayed in their database or his links to militancy.

Those with whom Akayed communicated with during his stay in Bangladesh also don't have any criminal record, he added.

Monirul said police were suspecting that the 27-year-old might have been radicalised through internet contents after going to New York.

"Usually, Akayed didn't mix with any of his friends or relatives here. He spent most of his time at home," said Monirul, adding that they were looking for his friends with whom he used to maintain contact.

He said Bangladesh police would extend its full support to the US investigators if they seek help under a "mutual legal agreement treaty".

According to CTTC officials, an uncle of Akayed took his seven-year-old elder brother to New York. His brother then set up a business there and processed migration papers for his other family members.

Akayed was a BBA student at Dhaka City College in 2011 when he migrated to the USA. He came to Bangladesh in January last year and got married to Jannatul before returning to New York.

"During his stay in Bangladesh, he spent most of his time with his wife and baby," Monirul said.

WIFE TAKEN ABACK

Akayed's wife Jannatul said CTTC officials on Tuesday checked her mobile phone and found an app on Rahmani. But she claimed she had no idea about the ABT leader.

She often talked to her husband over phone early in the morning. She talked to Akayed on Monday morning, but never thought that he could get involved in such an incident just a couple of hours later.

The mother-in-law of Akayed demanded a fair investigation into the incident to find out whether her son-in-law was guilty as they never noticed any extremist tendencies in him.

According to NY police, Akayed set off a crude bomb strapped to his body in a crowded New York subway passage on Monday. But the device failed to detonate properly, leaving him the only one seriously injured.

He survived with burns and lacerations and was taken to a hospital in police custody. Three bystanders sustained minor injuries.

SANDWIP RESIDENTS STUNNED
Residents of island upazila Sandwip, the ancestral home of the US immigrant, were stunned by the news of the New York blast, reports our staff correspondent in Chittagong.

Locals said Akayed's family left the area over 30 years ago. Some who saw Akayed visiting his maternal grandfather's home three years back said they didn't notice anything suspicious about him.

"His act has tarnished the image of Sandwip at home and abroad. His family has only a piece of land here, but his act has brought a bad name to the upazila," said MA Hannan Tarek, a businessman.

Joynal Abedin, maternal uncle of Akayed, said they felt embarrassed about the heinous crime.

He said Akayed had offered prayers when he visited them three years ago. However, he had deleted the audio files of the sermons of some local religious preachers from his mobile phone and asked him not to listen to those.

BANGLADESHIS FEEL EMBARRASSED

Bangladeshis in the USA felt embarrassed about the Monday's incident, said Shamim Ahmad, press minister at the Bangladesh embassy in Washington DC.

He said Bangladeshis in general had a good track record of being honest and sincere at their workplaces. But they might have a difficult time finding jobs following the New York bomb blast incident, the official told the diplomatic correspondent of this newspaper yesterday.

Shamim, however, said Bangladeshis condemn terrorist activities by any individual or organisation. They are of the opinion that the individual who commits such a heinous crime should be held responsible instead of his entire community.

'Criminal' killed in 'gunfight' in Tejgaon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An alleged criminal was killed in a "gunfight" with police in the capital's Tejgaon area early yesterday.

Abdullah, 30, from Kishoreganj, was a wanted criminal, said Mohammad Rasheduzzaman, an inspector of Tejgaon Industrial Area Police Station.

He said police raided the BG Press field around 3:30am on information that some criminals gathered there to commit a robbery.

Sensing the presence of police, the criminals opened fire. The law enforcers retaliated, triggering the "gunfight". When the criminals fled, police found the bullet-hit body of Abdullah lying on the spot, the police official said.

Abdullah was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead, he added.

Police claimed to have recovered a revolver, three bullets and two sharp weapons from the spot.

Even class-I

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Majid, Barguna district primary education officer, told The Daily Star, adding that the tests would be held after new questions had been prepared.

On Tuesday, the district administration had to cancel this year's English final test for class-IV for the same reason.

The deputy commissioner of Munshiganj on Tuesday also had to postpone tests for class-II and class-IV at 119 schools after the question papers had been leaked.

This is the first time first graders' question-paper had been leaked in such a way.

Parents in Barguna yesterday were astonished by the development. They said leaking of question papers was nothing new but it was unbelievable that question papers for primary school students were leaked.

Yunus Ali, a teacher of a local primary school, said, "I believe such a thing never happens in any other country."

Expressing concern and shock, Sultana Kamal, leading human rights activist and executive director of Ain o Salish Kendra, told The Daily Star, "Children, who have not grown up mentally, are being subjected to corrupt process. Nothing could be more frightening than that. These shocking incidents are taking place as we have failed to stop corruption."

Deputy Commissioner Mokhlesur Rahman of Barguna said they have formed a probe body and asked it to submit the report within seven days. "After getting the report, we will take necessary action," he said.

The two-member body is led by Mahbul Alam, additional deputy commissioner (education).

Barguna Youth Forum yesterday formed a human chain in front of Barguna Press Club protesting the leak and demanded exemplary punishment of the perpetrators.

Ensure refund

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The HC bench of Justice Quazi Reza-Ul Hoque and Justice Mohammad Ullah came up with the order during the hearing on the suo moto rule issued by it in 2014 questioning the legality of charging extra fees from the examinees.

Mizanur Rahman, lawyer for Dhaka Education Board, told The Daily Star that the HC yesterday passed the order as it noticed that some educational institutions were charging additional fees from the SSC and HSC examinees, violating its 2015 order.

The court in January 2015 directed the government to make the schools and colleges refund extra fees charged from the candidates within 15 days.

The management committees of those institutions would otherwise be dissolved, and the members would be barred from holding any position in such committees for three years, the HC had said in its order.

The HC order will remain in force, Mizanur added.

Deputy Attorney General Tapas Kumar Biswas represented the government.

Trump loses

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TRUMP REFERENDUM?
The Alabama race showed there were limits both to Trump's endorsement power and his judgment.

Even as senior Republicans urged Trump to abandon Moore, the president decided instead in the campaign's final days to throw the full weight of his office behind him. In the end, that was not enough, and early turnout reports suggested that many Republicans stayed home.

Moreover, despite the sexual misconduct allegations against Moore, the race near the end increasingly seemed to become about the president. Moore's camp this week said the contest was specifically a referendum on Trump and his presidency.

Red blinking

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"Some of these borrowers seem to be willful defaulters. They are running their businesses, but they are not paying back their loans," Abdus Salam Azad, managing director of the state-owned Janata Bank, told The Daily Star.

Md Shahabuddin Alam, owner of SA Group, is also a member of the board of directors of Mercantile Bank while Maksudur Rahman, managing director of Ratanpur Group, is a director of South Bangla Agriculture and Commerce Bank (SBAC).

Janata Bank last month served notices on the boards of both banks, and told them to ask their directors to settle the companies' dues with the state-run bank within two months.

As per the Banking Company Act, if the two fail to settle the loans within the stipulated time, their posts of director will automatically fall vacant.

SA Group had its loans of Tk 928 crore from six banks restructured in 2015, but it later became a defaulter with Rupali and Agrani banks.

It also failed to pay back its loans from First Security Islami Bank Ltd, according to BB data.

The company, however, managed to keep the status of its loan of Tk 256 crore from Bank Asia as unclassified by taking a stay order from the High Court.

Alam, owner of the Chittagong-based conglomerate, told this newspaper that the group could not generate enough income to be able to continue the payments.

This is because none of the lenders gave the group the working capital it was supposed to get after it took the restructuring facility, he claimed.

However, a senior official of Janata Bank told this correspondent that the SA Group didn't approach the bank for working capital after having its loans restructured.

The official further said Ratanpur Group and MR Group were provided with working capital in the form of LC (Letter of Credit) after the two availed themselves of the loan restructuring facility.

But both the groups failed to pay the first instalments in December last year, around a year after getting the facility.

The official also noted that loan limits were not raised for some business groups as they didn't have adequate collateral.

Asked about the reason for failure to pay instalments, MD of Ratanpur Group Maksudur claimed, "We could not continue regular payments because of the big size of instalments."

The size of the loan instalments

should be reduced, he said.

The group in 2015 had its loans of Tk 535 crore restructured from two banks under the BB's special package.

Modern Steel Mills, a sister concern of Ratanpur Group, has recently approached the central bank to have its loans of Tk 121.39 crore from Trust Bank rescheduled just two years after the regulator allowed it to get the loans restructured.

Trust Bank approved the client's proposal for further rescheduling and sent it to the BB for approval.

Another company, Keya Group, got its loans of Tk 879 crore from five banks restructured under the BB package.

Its sister concern Keya Yarn, which got its Tk 34 crore loan from Agrani Bank restructured, failed to make the required down payment. The firm was stripped of the restructuring facility, and it later became a defaulter.

The Group also failed to continue the regular payments of its Tk 14 crore loan from Bank Asia, which had been restructured in 2015. It is now negotiating with the bank to settle the loan, said a senior executive of Bank Asia, seeking anonymity.

Also, MR Group had its loans of Tk 572 crore restructured with four banks, including Agrani and Janata.

The company couldn't pay regular instalments to the banks. It, however, managed to keep the status of the loans as unclassified by getting a stay order from the HC.

Khondkar Ibrahim Khaled, former deputy governor of the central bank, said the BB had provided the restructuring facility to large borrowers to reduce defaulted loans, but that did not work.

He cited lax monitoring by the BB as the main reason for the failure to ensure regular payments from the big borrowers.

If they are given the facility again, it will lead to indiscipline in the banking sector, he said.

The former BB deputy governor suggested that the banks concerned should take legal steps against the borrowers.

The average loan default rate in the banking sector was 9.69 percent in December 2014 before the BB offered the facility. The rate came down to 8.79 percent at the end of 2015 after the restructuring of loans.

But the downward trend didn't continue for long, and the rate went up to 9.23 percent in December last year. It kept rising throughout the year and stood at 10.67 percent in September this year, according to the latest data of the BB.

Muslim world

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to Christians, Jews and Muslims, is perhaps the most sensitive issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel sees the entire city as its undivided capital, while the Palestinians want the eastern sector, which the international community regards as annexed by Israel, as the capital of their future state.

Erdogan -- who sees himself a champion of the Palestinian cause -- sought to underline his point with a powerpoint map presentation, flashing a laser pointer at how Palestinian territory had shrunk since the 1948 creation of Israel.

"The real proprietor of these lands is Palestine," he told the final press conference.

"Mr Trump wants all this to be Israel. This is the product of an evangelist and Zionist mentality," said Erdogan, the current chair of the OIC.

Using unusually strong language and bitterly anti-American rhetoric, Abbas warned that there could be "no peace or stability" in the Middle East until Jerusalem is recognised as the capital of a Palestinian state.

Moreover, he said that with Trump's move the United States had withdrawn itself from a traditional role as the mediator in the search for Mideast peace.

"We do not accept any role of the United States in the political process from now on. Because it is completely biased towards Israel," he said.

The final statement from the OIC echoed his words, saying Trump's move was "an announcement of the US administration's withdrawal from its role as sponsor of peace" in the Middle East.

Erdogan added that there can no longer be "any question" of the United States being a mediator. "This period is now over," he said bluntly.

Successive US administrations have sought unsuccessfully to broker a final peace deal since the 1990s Oslo accords. Trump, too, is working on such an offer through his son-in-law Jared Kushner.

But bridging the gaps between 57 OIC member states -- who include arch rivals Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shia Iran -- was always a tall order.

Key players, like Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, were unlikely to want to risk their key relationship with Washington by putting their name to anti-American measures.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Jordanian King Abdullah II and Lebanese President Michel Aoun were among the heads of state present, as

well as the emirs of Qatar and Kuwait and presidents of Afghanistan and Indonesia.

But there was no sign of Saudi King Salman or his powerful crown prince and son Mohammed bin Salman, who has reportedly been in close contact with Trump over the Middle East. Instead, Riyadh sent a senior foreign ministry official.

"Some countries in our region are in cooperation with the United States and the Zionist regime and determining the fate of Palestine," seethed Rouhani, whose country does not recognise Israel and has dire relations with Saudi Arabia.

But as the summit was being held, King Salman echoed the calls over Jerusalem in an address in Riyadh, saying it was the "right" of the Palestinians to establish "their independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital".

Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court for genocide and war crimes, was also in attendance and warmly greeted by Erdogan.

A surprise guest was Venezuela's leftist President Nicolas Maduro whose country has no significant Muslim population but is a bitter critic of US policy.

Trump's announcement last week prompted an outpouring of anger in the Muslim and Arab world, where tens of thousands of people took to the streets to denounce the Jewish state and show solidarity with the Palestinians.

The decision sparked protests in Palestinian territories, with four Palestinians killed so far in clashes or Israeli air strikes in response to rocket fire from Gaza and hundreds wounded.

Revive

FROM PAGE 2
Al Quds as its capital. Such a Palestinian state must be spatially and demographically contiguous, viable in political and economic way, and stable with just and lasting peace arrangements," he added.

Hamid also called upon the OIC member states to exert continued pressure on Myanmar so that the Rohingya can return to their ancestral home in Rakhine State immediately with safety, security and dignity from Bangladesh and elsewhere and the root cause of their problem is addressed with restoration of their citizenship and all related rights by Myanmar.