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Gold, contraband items seized at Sylhet airport

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Jan 28: Gold bars and other contraband items worth about Tk 1 crore 30 lakh were seized by Customs officials at the Sylhet Osmani Airport this afternoon.

None, however, could be arrested.

The haul included 73 pieces of gold bars weighing 10 tolas each, 200 tolas of gold ornaments, five pieces of satellite receivers, 200 pieces of tube-lights, 71 pieces of shoe shiners and two blankets.

These were recovered from two luggages booked from Dubai on January 13 in favour of two persons, Shahed Miah and MR Ahmed, official sources said.

The luggages had reached Dhaka earlier but were brought to Sylhet by a Biman road transport on Monday last as Biman's connecting flight was cancelled.

The customs officials opened the luggages this afternoon as none claimed those, the sources said.

2 arms, ammunition recovered from DU Zia Hall

Police recovered two firearms and some ammunition from a room at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Hall of Dhaka University yesterday, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip-off, the Detective Branch of police stormed Room 208 of the hall in presence of the house tutors and found one sawed-off rifle, one foreign made revolver and eight bullets.

PM's office

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given to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

Prime Minister's press secretary Jawadul Karim told this correspondent that investigating agencies were suspecting the firing incident to be part of "anti-government terrorist activities." He, however, declined to elaborate.

An official of an investigating agency said, "It was learnt that the shot was fired from near an under-construction building adjacent to Air Force Officers Mess, from the northern direction."

When contacted last night, it was told from Dr Malek's house that he was asleep.

The Officer-in-Charge of Tejgaon thana said, "I am not clear about what has happened. An enquiry is in progress. All senior police officials are engaged in the investigation."

Clinton's State of Union address

US has the power & duty to build new era of peace

WASHINGTON, Jan 28: Declaring America's "unrivalled leadership" abroad, President Bill Clinton called on Congress yesterday to keep US troops in Bosnia, ratify a nuclear test ban treaty, and make another attempt to grant him more authority to negotiate trade agreements, reports AP.

Urging "responsibility not only at home but abroad," Clinton also urged Congress to support international efforts to assist the struggling Asian economies.

Clinton devoted about one-fourth of his State of the Union address Tuesday to assert America's global role.

Saddam Hussein was the only foreign leader mentioned in the speech. Clinton warned the Iraqi leader against defying

efforts to rid his country of weapons of mass destruction.

On other issues, he asked Congress for:

— Passage of the US military mission in Bosnia. "The progress is unmistakable, but not yet irreversible," he said.

— Ratification of a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty.

He announced the support of four former chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff — Gens John Shalikashvili, Colin Powell, David Jones, and Adam William Crowe.

— Admission of three new countries to NATO — Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic. "These three formerly communist countries have said 'yes' to democracy. I ask the Senate to say yes to them — our new allies."

Penthouse offers Lewinsky \$2m for an interview

NEW YORK, Jan 28: After baring her soul in secretly recorded audiotapes, Monica Lewinsky has reportedly been offered two million dollars by US skin magazine Penthouse to bare her body, reports AFP.

Penthouse publisher Bob Guccione sent a letter to the former White House intern's lawyer offering to buy a "world-exclusive interview" and "modest, semi-nude photographs," the New York Post and New York daily news reported today.

The 24-year-old Lewinsky — who reportedly had an affair with Clinton about which he allegedly urged her to lie under oath — would choose the photos for publication, the daily tabloids said.

Reuter says Lewinsky told a former lover in 1995 that she was having an affair with a "high-ranking person" in the White House while she served as an intern, the man's lawyer said Tuesday.

The lawyer, Terry Giles, spoke to reporters outside the Portland home of Andy Bleiler, a 32-year-old high school stage manager who said he had a five-year-extramarital affair with Lewinsky that broke off early last year.

Giles said that while Lewinsky worked in the White House in 1995 she frequently spoke to Bleiler and his wife, Kathy, about sexual activities she said she had with "some high-ranking person in the White House."



"She never used President Clinton's name at any time," Giles said.

AP adds: Anita Hill, who accused US Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment, says she knows what ex-White House intern Monica Lewinsky is going through.

"Her story — whatever it is — is being used by others to advance their own agenda," Hill writes in the Feb 3 issue of the Village Voice. Unwittingly, she has become a pawn in a national morality play."

Hill was a University of Oklahoma law professor in 1991 when she rocked Supreme Court nomination hearings with her charges against Thomas.

Clinton's Eid greetings

US President Bill Clinton has greeted Muslims across the world on the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr, reports UNB.

In a message, Clinton said this week, which marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan, is a time for rejoicing and celebration as well as "for recommitting ourselves to the values of tolerance, mutual respect and understanding."

The US President expressed concern for those who are suffering in Algeria, Afghanistan and Iraq, and offered his regrets to the people of Iran "for the estrangement between our two nations."

To the Muslims of South Asia, Clinton said he looks forward to visiting the region later this year and to "deepening the bonds between the United States and the peoples of the Subcontinent."

Calcutta book fair Bangladesh pavilion opens

Bangladesh pavilion in Calcutta Book Fair '98 was inaugurated yesterday evening, reports BSS.

Bangladesh Deputy High Commissioner in Calcutta Sheikh Ahmed Jalal opened the pavilion, according to a message received in the city.

The pavilion was constructed in the model of Bangabhaban and a separate Bangladesh Gate has also been erected in the model of historic Lalbagh Fort.

Bangladesh has been participating under one uniform pavilion in Calcutta Book Fair with six major organisations — Bangla Academy, Shilpakala Academy, Shishu Academy, Nazrul Institute, Islamic Foundation and National Book Centre.

3 jute mills

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ceiving only Eid bonus bypassing other demands.

Officials of Mohsin Jute Mills told this correspondent that the question of paying arrear wages and advance against Wages Commission Award cannot be entertained.

UNB adds: About 500 workers of Jute Spinners Limited began the strike on Monday demanding payment of Eid bonus and other dues as per the government-announced Wages Commission.

Police said the aggrieved workers ransacked the General Manager's office on Tuesday night and beat up a security guard to realise their demands.

A tense situation was prevailing in the mill situated in the industrial town of Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation. Police were deployed to guard against further untoward incident.

Poura polls

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will necessitate delimitation of the wards.

The authorities also want to upgrade the voters' list, the sources said.

Election of the rest 50 pouras will be due after March.

"These formalities should take about three months," LGRD Minister Zillur Rahman said talking to The Daily Star.

"The changes come perfectly in line with our emphasis on empowering women through a greater representation in local institutions," the minister said.

Australian FM arrives Feb 10

Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer arrives in the city on February 10 on a two-day official visit, reports UNB.

He will hold official talks with Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad on bilateral issues mainly on trade and economic cooperation.

Regional and international issues may also come up during the talks on February 10.

Bilateral trade between the two countries is heavily inclined for Australia. According to official figures, Australian annual exports to Bangladesh is recorded around 250 million Australian dollar against Bangladesh's export of only about 35 millions Australian dollar.

Australian exports mainly powder milk, chemicals and wheat while Bangladesh exports cane furniture, ready-made garments and tea.

During his brief stay, Alexander Downer will make courtesy call on President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on February 11.

He is expected to visit some Australia-aided projects and give cheques to Dental College and ICDDR,B.

Woodcutter killed in mine blast

COX'S BAZAR, Jan 28: A woodcutter was killed and three others were injured in a landmine explosion in no man's land of Bangladesh-Myanmar border this morning, reports UNB.

Police said Jakir Hossain, 35, of Deipara village of Ukhia thana died on the spot after the mine exploded at Amto village in Naikongchhori thana where he went to collect wood along with three other villagers.

The injured — Alam, 22, Abdur Karim, 30, and Mohammad Islam, 35 — were admitted to Ukhia Thana Health Complex.

With this, a total of five people were killed in mine explosion in different places near Myanmar border during the last one week.

About a dozen wild elephants were also become victims during last one year of the mines that have been planted by the Myanmar government along the border areas.

Lankan dy defence minister resigns

COLOMBO, Jan 28: Sri Lanka's deputy defence minister resigned today owing to his failure to protect the island nation's holiest Buddhist shrine which was badly damaged by suspected Tamil rebels, a government spokesman said, reports AP.

Yes, Gen Anuradha Ratawatta has submitted his resignation," said Aranya Rubasinghe, a government spokesman. It was not immediately known whether the resignation will be accepted.

Gen Ratawatta, in a letter to President Chandrika Kumaratunga, said he felt responsible for the failure to protect the shrine where a tooth of Buddha is kept.

Ganges Barrage

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and agencies including Japan, Italy, the Netherlands and Asian Development Bank (ADB) for the Ganges Barrage.

The government considered Ganges Barrage as priority project after the signing of the Ganges Water Treaty with India in December 1996.

An estimated Taka 14,000 crore is expected to be spent for construction of the Ganges Barrage on the river Padma, ERD sources said.

Three separate feasibility studies were also conducted earlier. Tames of USA conducted the first feasibility study in 1963 while IECO of USA and Ace of Pakistan conducted the second and third feasibility studies respectively in 1964 and 1968.

The greater Kushthia, Khulna, Faridpur, Barisal, Rajshahi and Pabna districts are known as the Gangetic regions of the country.

26 to die

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bomber were convicted of murder, their lawyers said. Others who helped in the planning or provided transportation, housing or food to the killers were convicted of lesser charges such as abetting a crime.

Lawyers for the accused had said they would appeal the convictions.

Karthikeyan relayed developments in the court room to reporters gathered at a road block a kilometer (half mile) away. Because of security concerns, only those involved in the trial had been allowed inside.

Karthikeyan led a team of 180 officers who examined hundreds of thousands of documents, photographs and hours of videotape. Their first break came when they developed film from a camera found at the scene of the assassination, and identified Tamil militants in the photographs.

Gandhi's widow, Sonia, was campaigning today for her husband's Congress Party in northern India.

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He also questioned BNP's

rigidity on the issue of proportionate representation in JS bodies with the Treasury Bench agreeing to accommodate all the BNP MPs in those bodies.

With majority of its lawmakers preferring an end of the indefinite boycott, the BNP is now "ready to compromise on a shortlist of demands" to pave its return to parliament, party leaders negotiating with the government admitted.

The other demands as stated by the party's Secretary General Abdul Manan Bhuiyan earlier were : withdrawal of "political cases" against BNP legislators and other leaders, permission for holding public rallies on the Topkhana Road adjacent to the Jatiya Press Club and at the Manik Mia Avenue, withdrawal of the circular renaming Zia International Airport, adequate time for the opposition lawmakers to speak in the House and "impartial" coverage of the JS proceedings by the electronic media.

These are the minimum demands, acceptance of which will enable us to go back to parliament," he told The Daily Star last night.

The BNP Secretary General did not include the JS committee issue in the "shortlist" while talking to two vernacular dailies earlier this week.

Asked on the matter, he said, "We've not dropped the demand. It is still there in our list". He claimed that the two dailies had misquoted him on the issue.

Meanwhile, Telecommunications and Works Minister Mohammad Nasim who is also the key negotiator from the ruling Awami League, told a vernacular daily on Sunday that his government would not reinstall the floating bridge at Zia's mazar.

The pontoon bridge over the Crescent Lake, connecting the road behind the Sangsaddha Bhawan with Zia's mazar, was taken to Shyestaganj and installed over the Khoai river in September last year. This caused a furor among BNP leaders, workers and supporters across the country.

At that time, Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Manju had said that the pontoon would be brought back to Dhaka after the original bridge over the Khoai was recon-

structed.

When contacted last night, Manju said that he had promised to bring the pontoon back to Dhaka, not to reinstall it at its earlier site.

"We always spoke of the bridge's purpose — to use it for emergency purposes — and accordingly, it was taken to Shyestaganj," he said adding that the bridge could not be brought back right at the moment as it was still necessary to keep it over the Khoai for the pedestrains.

The bridge is unlikely to be removed from its present site in the next two years", Manju said and added that as communications minister he had no business regarding the bridge at Zia's mazar in the capital.

The minister also wondered how the issue could be related with his job. "It's under the Works Ministry," he pointed out.

In this regard, he blamed the former BNP government for "misusing" the pontoon bridge, donated by the OXFAM for use for emergency purpose.

Commenting on Manju's statement, Manan Bhuiyan said, "We don't know what is in the government's mind. But we'll continue our agitation to have the bridge back to its earlier site."

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