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Foreign sales fair game

Customs booths to collect taxes, duties

By Rafiq Hasan

Foreign participants will be allowed to sell their goods at the Dhaka International Trade Fair, provided they pay the proper taxes and duties, said officials from the Export Promotion Bureau.

Abdul Jalil, the country's new commerce minister, asked organisers to prevent foreign participants from selling their goods outside the fair during a visit to the Sher-e-Bangla Nagar grounds last Sunday.

Sixty-nine companies from 30 countries are registered to attend the fair, which begins on January 29. They have booked three pavilions, 13 mini-pavilions and 53 stalls. The month-long exhibition will feature 378 stalls in total.

The source said that imposing restriction on selling foreign goods may discourage foreign participants.

"The country follows a free market economic policy. Why should we restrict any one from selling goods?" he asked. "The only thing we should do is ensure the payment of taxes and duties."

The official said it wouldn't be fair to ask foreign participants to take their goods back when the exhibition ends.

A senior official with the Ministry of Commerce agreed. He said restrictions would hamper the fair's international status.

"If we want to increase foreign participation at the fair, the government should not impose any restriction," he said.

The bureau official said tariffs and taxes would be charged on foreign goods entering the country. A special custom booth will be set up on the fairground to collect the taxes and duties.

The commerce ministry official also said a permanent fair ground should be constructed to stop the massive waste on infrastructure annually.

Many companies spend several lakhs to set up pavilions and stalls, which are demolished immediately after the exhibition ends.

The bureau tried to build up a permanent fair ground but couldn't find an adequate space. The existing fair ground, which is in front of the election commission office, is earmarked for a new Secretariat building.

A proposal to shift the fair to the nearby parade ground was also shot down due to a restriction on structures over 20 feet tall near the air force base.

Guests get it but not the state

Hospitable hosts flout law

By Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, Jan 19: The Guest Control Act is being flouted with remarkable impunity here more often than not, due to lack of proper monitoring and action needed to implement it, sources said.

Chittagong district administration sources said that the guest control act was being violated particularly for the past one year in the port city, as mobile courts could not function due to shortage of magistrates and other relevant officers.

District administration is now planning to form mobile courts for raiding the city's community centres and other venues of social functions, concerned sources said. Adding that survey had been made to identify the community centres and clubs in the city and its surroundings where such gatherings were usually held.

But one year ago, the mobile courts launched raids against the violators and realised on the spot fines, administrative sources said.

The host is required to take prior permission from district administration on payment of Taka 25/- against each of the additional guest to be entertained above the statutory limitations.

The administration, however, could issue permission for a maximum of 400 additional guests and a minimum of 100 guests, as per the guest control rule, administrative sources told The Daily Star.

But hardly prior permissions are obtained for hosting marriage ceremonies or feasts bigger than the officially permissible ones, sources said.

Affluent people including the 'sawdagars' (rich traders) in this port city are found hosting different social functions, including marriage ceremonies and the traditional 'mezbanis', treating more than 1000 guests in most cases to feasts of various natures.

Even a local minister also did not lag behind in treating several thousands of guests during his daughter's marriage ceremony recently, while several platoons of police were deployed in an attempt to control the affair. Besides, 'mezbanis' hosted by the affluent Chittagonians are a common function in the port city attended by thousands of guests. The hosts organise such functions in total disregard to the guest control act, sources said.



The mother in her
They may be animals but her affection flows nonetheless.
Star photo: A K M Mohsin

Shikdar's detention extended

Ershad Shikdar, top terrorist of Khulna, was given detention for another six months when he was produced before the Advisory Board headed by a High Court judge, reports UNB.

Arrested on August 11 last year, he was given detention for 30 days, which was extended by another 90 days. He was produced before the Advisory Board as required by the rules before expiry of the detention period.

The Board headed by Justice Mozammel Huq has two members — Justice K M Hasan and Secretary of Cultural Affairs Ministry Syed Abdur Rab.

Shikdar, brought to the High Court from Dhaka Central Jail under heavy security, burst into tears when produced before the Board at 3 pm. He pleaded for his release.

The Board sitting in Court No 5 made several queries to Shikdar relating to his detention.

Wearing lungi, full shirt with jumper, the 40-year old Shikdar was found gloomy and nervous.

The courtroom was jam-packed with members of the public, journalists and security personnel. Ershad Shikdar is accused in 43 criminal cases, including murder.

Clearing the judicial jam

Managing courts is crucial, says US judge

By Mizan Ali

A US based organisation has taken up a project to help Bangladesh better manage the courts.

Justice J Clifford Wallace, an advisor of the Institute for the Study of Development of Legal System (ISDLS), was in Dhaka recently to get a first hand idea regarding court management and the backlog of cases in the courts of the country.

"Backlog is not unique in Bangladesh, it is a world-wide problem," said Justice Wallace, advisor of the ISDLS, that also provides technical assistance to the third world countries to strengthen their legal systems.

The backlog of cases in Bangladesh and Pakistan is almost similar, while that of India is little worse, Wallace added.

The ISDLS is also sponsoring the visit to the US by a five-member in February, he said.

The team led by former Chief Justice Mustafa Kamal will visit the US in February to study their legal system and find whether some of their techniques could be adopted in the Bangladesh for court management.

"Pakistan has started a pilot programme to cope with their backlog cases through mediation," he said, adding that the programme is being assisted by the ISDLS. India has asked for such assistance, he told The Daily Star.

"The ISDLS is now helping the countries of the Middle East, South America and Africa for better court management", Wallace added.

"In the US, a system has been devised to ensure that the courts do not suffer from the backlog problem. There, the courts encourage mediation of the cases, before they go for trial," he said.

"Only 10 per cent cases go for trial in the US, and the remaining 90 per cent are mediated by the courts," he said.

The courts in the sub-continent get burdened with the problem of increasing population and in the absence of such a system of mediation, Wallace observed.

The five-member study group from Bangladesh will visit the US for a couple of weeks to study the legal system there and explore possibilities of adapting the principles into the country's system, he added.

Members of the group would prepare their recommendation soon after the study tour, finding ways for handling the backlog of cases in the country, he noted.

The mediation programme adopted by some Pakistani courts under a pilot programme have shown that 70 per cent of the cases were settled even before they were sent for trial!

"Once the dispute is mediated, the parties do not have to go to the court for trial. It saves money, saves time and relieves the courts of its burden," he said.

"Less than 10 per cent cases used to be mediated outside the court in Pakistan earlier," he said adding, under this mediation programme both sides agree to compromise with the help of a mediator.

Pakistan has started the 'pilot programme' for the last four months. The programme was initiated by a family court in Lahore, he said, adding that it was being extended in other courts as well.

Hasina wants direct train service with India

Visiting Indian State Minister for External Affairs Ajit Kumar Panja yesterday said a joint expert group meeting between Bangladesh and India will be held in Dhaka next week to discuss existing problems between the two countries, reports UNB.

He said Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee had directed to identify all existing bilateral problems and take effective steps for their solutions, Panja said.

Panja who arrived here yesterday stated this when he called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her official residence at Ganobhaban.

The Prime Minister discussed various issues with the Indian State Minister. Referring to the Dhaka-Calcutta bus service introduced last year, she stressed the need for direct train service between the two countries.

Road accidents kill 11 in three districts

By Staff Correspondent

BSS adds: Four people were killed and 27 others injured in separate road accidents in Jhenidah, Magura and Cox's Bazar yesterday.

Of them, four people were killed in Jhenidah, three in Magura and four in Cox's Bazar.

Our Jhenidah Correspondent reports: Four people were killed in separate road accidents here yesterday.

Police and witnesses said three people were killed and three others injured when a tempo hit a lorry at Atharomile in Sadar thana in the morning.

The dead were identified as Haider Ali, 48, Nuruddin, 50, and Jhantu, 25. The injured were admitted to sadar hospital.

In another accident, a boy, identified as Azimuddin, 12, was crushed under the wheels of a lorry at Ganna Bazar in Sadar thana at about 7.30 am.

Our Correspondent from Magura adds: Three people were killed and 25 others injured when a truck at Bagat on Magura-Faridpur Highway yesterday.

Police said the Dhaka-bound coach of Eagle Paribahan from Khulna collided with the truck coming from opposite direction at around 5 am, killing three, including the driver of the coach on the spot and injuring 25 others.

The injured were admitted to Magura, Faridpur and Modukhali hospitals.

Assault victim 'identifies' Russel, Tutul at DB office

By Staff Correspondent

The woman assaulted at the TSC of Dhaka University during the New Year's celebrations has identified at DB office two students of the university — Fazlul Huq Russel and Khan Meshbahul Alam Tutul — as the main accused.

The victim came to the DB office late Wednesday night and identified Russel and Tutul as members of the gang that had attacked her.

The two were identified in presence of the DB investigation officer, police said.

Meanwhile, some human rights organisations have blamed police for handling the case in such way that the real culprits could escape punishment.

Russel and Tutul are now on a five-day police remand from Sunday. Police may seek further remand.

The DU authorities had earlier expelled them from the university as primary investigation revealed their involvement in the assault. Both are leaders of Bangladesh Chhatra League.

Four persons have so far been arrested in connection with the incident. The other two — Mamun and Mokhtar — have been sent to Dhaka Central Jail on one month's detention. They, however, claimed that they were trying to save the victim.

Deal with US gives India edge over Pakistan

NEW DELHI, Jan 20: India and the US have agreed to form a joint working group to counter terrorism, marking a small victory in New Delhi's campaign against alleged Pakistani involvement in terrorist activity, reports AFP.

During two days of talks in London that ended Wednesday, both sides also agreed to work together to bring the perpetrators of last month's Indian Airlines hijacking to justice.

India has produced what it says is incontestable proof that the hijackers were Pakistanis, and insists they are currently being sheltered in Pakistan — charges denied by Islamabad.

Analysts here said India would be happy with the outcome of the talks between Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh and US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, with the focus having clearly shifted from the nuclear non-proliferation concerns of previous discussions.

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In hell and home

Care for Bangladeshi and Indian HIV patients is world's apart

By Naimul Huq

Pale and exhausted, a man in his mid-twenties rests in a shabby room of a worn out hospital. He eats, urinates and sleeps in the same room, completely isolated from the rest of mankind.

Three policemen stand guard around the clock to make sure he doesn't escape.

Solitary confinement has been imposed on the man since he tested positive for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

Maung was arrested for illegal fishing off the coast of Mongolia and tossed into Chittagong's central jail. He was transferred to Infectious Disease Hospital in Mahakhali after he tested positive four years ago.

"I don't know why I am locked up here, but I know I have the AIDS virus," said Maung, who has a six-year-old daughter back in Myanmar.

Myanmar officials visited Maung three times, but denied that he was a citizen.

"When I left my house for fishing I had told my wife I would be back with enough money to feed us, but I guess I won't see my family ever again."

In New Delhi, Lian Sang, 33, leads a cheerful life in a men's dormitory, despite his HIV positive status.

Sang, who hails from the state of Manipur in north eastern India, used to be addicted to heroin. He thinks he contracted the fatal virus from the needles he shared with other drug users.

However, Sang kicked his heroin habit three years when he arrived at Sarah house, a home for people with mild mental illness, drug addiction or HIV.

Sang is married with two children. His five-year-old daughter tested positive a couple of months ago and now lives with her brother in an NGO operated home for children in the city.

"Sarah has given me a life full of joy," said Sang. "I feel so confident about life that I sometimes forget that I am an HIV positive."

"Before coming to Sarah, I was very weak and scared and thought I would die pretty soon but I no longer believe that. There is life even if you are HIV positive."

Sarah's residents enjoy a much different life than Maung's isolation. The management finds jobs for patients in good health. They also emphasise regular exercise so they remain active and strengthen their muscles.

There are special lessons on vocational training and basic health care. Severely ill patients are provided with and individualised diet rich in vitamins.

The environment resembles a university dormitory. A stranger wouldn't know the difference unless told about their illness. The 80 residents are also friends who help each other make the beds and tidy the house. Nobody feels sorry for themselves; most don't want to be called patients.

"About 30 per cent of those living here, including some Bangladeshis, are HIV positive. But we don't treat them as HIV patients," said Neville Selhore, Sarah's 17-year-old director. "We have no specialist here. The important thing here is everyone learns to live together with the risk of contracting a disease like AIDS."

Meanwhile, Maung waits for the inevitable, while his family wonders what happened.

However, there is some hope. The Rotary Club of Dhaka and the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh have established a pilot project that is helping Naung in various ways.

Prayer Timings

January 21

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-40	6-10
Juma	12-30	1-20
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-40	5-45
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation



Thirty is not enough
Bangladesh Mahila Parishad staged a rally at the central Shaheed Minar yesterday to demand more parliamentary seats reserved for women.
—Star photo

Face to face with fear

The GTF wants to preserve tigers but Ghazali Ismail wants his wife back

By Cameron Kennedy, in Malaysia

By the time Ghazali Ismail reached his wife, Khalijah had tumbled into a deep ravine, bowled over by the force of the attack.

Blood, gushing from bites and skull punctures, stained the white latex, collected early that May morning on her plantation rounds, red.

The tiger, an orange and black ghost in a jungle of rubber trees, ferns and bamboo thickets, had already disappeared back into the forest, leaving a trail of fear in its wake.

"I've lived on this plantation for 25 years and nothing like this has ever happened," said Ismail, whose wife later died in hospital. "But in the last two years, the attacks have become more frequent."

Ismail, 54, now works alone on his 18-hectare rubber plantation near the village of Sri Jaya, Kelantan, four hours by jungle train south of the state capital, Kota Bharu.

Khalijah's tattered and bloody head scarf, tied to the tree where she was attacked, reminds Ismail daily of the risk he takes.

"I'm very scared of tigers but I have to collect the rubber," said Ismail. "If I could get a different job then I would, but this is a small town and there isn't any work."

Ismail's story is becoming

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Bangladesh new GTF chair

By Staff Correspondent

Over 40 conservationists from 14 countries nominated Bangladesh to chair the Global Tiger Forum at the concluding session of its first general assembly in Dhaka yesterday.

Forest and Environment Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, who was presiding over the session, said Bangladesh will follow India's example of conservation during its time as the forum's chairman.

Formed in 1994, the forum is an intergovernmental organisation dedicated to tiger preservation. There are just over 4,600 tigers left in Asia due to poaching and the demand for tiger parts, which are revered as folk medicines and aphrodisiacs.

Delegates also confirmed their joint commitment to reconcile human development with tiger conservation.

National action and international co-operation will be required to stop habitat and prey loss, poaching and the illegal trade in tiger parts, the assembly said.

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Queens University

Time Table for Admission Test

Admission test will be held on Saturday, the 22nd of January, 2000 for admissions in CSE (Hons), Eng (Hons), LLB (Hons), BBA (Hons) and MBA at the Queens University campus. This test will be held from 11.00 AM to 1 PM.

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