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Fake certificates put DEB on the spot

Authorities appear unwilling to take any measure

By Asad-uz Zaman

An organised gang has been preparing fake certificates for long in collaboration with a section of officials of the Dhaka Education Board (DEB), sources concerned said.

But for mysterious reasons, the DEB authorities are reluctant to take any action although they know who the culprits are, it is alleged.

According to sources in the DEB, the authorities detected at least 609 forged SSC certificates recently. Besides, 411 such certificates were found last year.

The 609 students concerned got admitted and studied for two years in different colleges by producing false certificates and submitted copies of those with the forms for appearing at the HSC examinations.

Most of the fake certificates were detected when records of these students were examined on the basis of secret information from different quarters.

These forged certificates are transacted at a price of up to Tk. 20,000 each, making it a lucrative business for a section of board officials, one source added.

A senior DEB official said the board authorities might ask the colleges concerned to take legal action against the students concerned.

The authorities could not take stern action against officials involved in the shady deal 'due to their limitations'. Cases were filed against some of them but they managed to get bail and come out from jail, he mentioned.

Referring to the suspension of about 10 DEB officials in this connection recently, the official said four or five others are also involved in the mischief.

"Those preparing forged certificates are well organised and very powerful. And they sometimes show more power than the board authorities", he said.

One source alleged that headmasters of many schools and principals of many colleges, head clerks and trade union leaders at the board are also involved in the process and some powerful quarters are there to back them if any problem arises.

But their involvement could hardly be proved. "How could we prove that trade union leaders are involved in preparing fake certificates?" he asked.

A senior DEB official said the board authorities might ask



Murder again
Relatives wail over the dead body of Iftexhar Ahmed (inset), killed on Wednesday by a group of extortionists at his office in Banani. —Star photo

Businessman shot dead in Banani

By Staff Correspondent

A businessman was gunned down at UAE market in the city's Banani area Wednesday night, police said.

The victim, Iftexhar Ahmed Shipu, 38, was an owner of Rajanigandha Mobile Phone shop at UAE market and a resident of house number 45E, block-C Banani.

Abul Kalam, manager of the shop, was also shot in his leg. He was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Hospital sources quoting witnesses said three armed men — Naimuzzaman, Jubayer, Jewel, Saiful Alam — arrived in front of the UAE market at about 7:30 pm in a car and went to the Rajanigandha shop on the second floor of the market.

The miscreants asked the manager to replace a mobile phone, which they claimed was bought from the shop earlier. But the manager requested them to settle it when the owner comes, sources said.

Ignoring manager's appeal, the gang tried to snatch a set from the shop. They fired at Kalam when he tried to resist them, sources said.

Shipu, owner of the shop was on the ground floor. He rushed towards his shop hearing the gunshot, witnesses said.

The gang saw Shipu on the

US Congress okays China trade bill

WASHINGTON, May 25: The US House of Representative gave decisive bipartisan approval to a fiercely debated bill to normalise trade with China, handing a big foreign policy win to President Bill Clinton and corporate America and a bruising defeat to organised labour, reports AP.

On a 237-197 vote, the House voted Wednesday to grant permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) to Beijing and to end 20 years of turbulent annual reviews.

That was 19 more than the 218 votes needed for passage, a far more comfortable margin than either side predicted.

Members stood on the floor watching transfixed as red and green lights on the electric tote board lit up, and supporters broke into applause when the magic 218 number was surpassed.

Clinton appeared in the Rose Garden moments later to applaud the action and pledge to wage a similar effort in the Senate.

"At this stage in China's development, we will have more positive influence with an outstretched hand than with a clenched fist," Clinton said.

He noted that with 1.25 billion people, "China is the largest new market in the world." He said the outcome was particularly welcome after the enactment earlier this month of a bill to expand trade with Africa, Central America and the Caribbean.

House Speaker Dennis Hastert, a Republican who forged an alliance with Clinton that helped propel the measure to victory, wrapped up House debate by telling colleagues, "The Chinese market is opening. Somebody is going to have an opportunity to sell to this vast new market. The question is, Who will be there when it opens?"

The measure would open the way for American businesses to take full advantage of a series of market-opening concessions China has made to join the World Trade Organisation.

Opponents said liberalising trade ties with China would reward a brutal regime and cost American jobs. "You can't have free markets without free people," complained House Minority Whip David Bonior of Michigan, the chief Democratic opponent.

A vote is expected next month in the Senate, where it has wide bipartisan support. The bill has already won the 18-1 backing of the Senate Finance Committee.

Sen. Jesse Helms, a Republi-

Subsidy to continue

Motia assures farmers

By Staff Correspondent

The government will continue price support to farmers to encourage them adopt new input and technology in agriculture.

Agriculture Minister Motia Chowdhury said this yesterday, adding that it is preferable to enhance subsidy in agriculture rather than spending money on food import.

"Paying fat import bill for food is nothing but giving subsidy to foreign farmers," she said while speaking at a book launching programme at IDB Bhaban.

International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) hosted the launching programme of the book titled "Out of the Shadow of Famine: Evolving Food Markets and Food Policy in Bangladesh."

Published by John Hopkins University Press, the book is co-edited by IFPRI Division Director Raisuddin Ahmed, its Research Fellow Steven Hagblade and a former food secretary of Bangladesh Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury who is now the energy secretary.

Agriculture Secretary Dr AMM Shaukat Ali supported the minister's view, saying that there was no alternate to putting more money in agriculture if poverty had to be reduced.

Highlighting the contribution of agriculture, he quoted the latest Bangladesh Bank report that inflation rate was held down because of tremendous growth in the crop sector.

Motia Chowdhury also defended the government's policy of keeping high food stock as against the donors' view of keeping it to a low level.

She referred to the 'hidden drought' experienced in 1997 when rice prices shot up and the government had to intervene into the market with its low level of food reserve.

"The donors wanted us to keep the food stock below seven lakh metric tons, but we decided to keep the level above on million MT," Motia explained the government's food security policy.

Anticipating an aggregate

LTTE ultimatum for Lankan troops

NEW DELHI, May 25: Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers set Friday as the deadline for an estimated 40,000 government troops defending Jaffna to surrender or face a "bloodbath," reports AP.

The Voice of Tigers radio, monitored in Sri Lanka's northern city of Vavuniya, today said rebel combatants were poised for the final assault on Jaffna city and wanted to give the troops a last chance to surrender.

Soldiers who lay down arms will be handed over to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the radio broadcast said, according to residents reached in Vavuniya.

This is the first time that rebels from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam have set a deadline for the military to surrender. In the past weeks, the rebels have made offers for safe passage, which were rejected by the government.

There was no immediate comment from the Sri Lankan defense ministry on the rebels' offer. President Chandrika Kumaratunga has said in newspaper interviews that her troops are in control of two-thirds of the Jaffna peninsula and there was no question of a withdrawal.

The Friday deadline and the threat of a "bloodbath" came soon after the rebels opened a new front in the east, forcing the military to spread its soldiers to guard areas in the east where, until now, fighting has been sporadic.

Fighting was reported for the second day from Batticaloa, 280 kilometers (175 miles) southeast of Jaffna city, which the rebels are trying to recapture. But Thursday's clashes were not as intense as Wednesday's, when rebels fired mortars on an army camp and an air force base, according to Sri Lankan government and TamilNet, a Web site that provides the perspective of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

Details of the fresh fighting was not immediately available.

Reports from the military and the rebels cannot be verified because neither side allows journalists into the war zone.

Kader Siddique hurt in Tangail clash

By Staff Correspondent

At least five persons including Krishak Sramik Janata League (KSJL) chief Abdul Kader Siddique were injured in a clash between supporters of the party and police at Tangail yesterday.

The clash took place in front of Siddique's family home as police tried to prevent his supporters from holding a rally in violation of Section 144, reports received from Tangail said.

KSJL has called a hartal on Sunday in Tangail District protesting the incident.

DC of Tangail Molla Waheeduzzaman, when contacted, said that the party activists hurled home made bombs at police, prompting them to open fire to disperse the mob.

Police arrested four close associates of Kader Siddique, who resigned as a ruling Awami League MP last year and formed KSJL.

Earlier, the local administration imposed Section 144



Children from different schools thronged the tomb of Kazi Nazrul Islam yesterday to pay tribute to the national poet on his 101st birth anniversary. —Star photo

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Process of new electoral roll not acceptable

BSEHR proposes alternative mechanism

By Staff Correspondent

Barrister Nazmul Huda of Bangladesh Society for Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR) has rejected Election Commission's method of preparing the fresh national electoral roll and proposed an alternative mechanism.

"The Election Commission's method of preparing a new voters' list is not acceptable," said Huda, also a BNP legislator, addressing a press conference in the city yesterday.

"It is difficult to say that there is transparency in the preparation of electoral roll. Why should I need to be included in the new list when my name is already there in the existing one?" he asked.

Proposing his alternative mechanism, Huda said "the state should entrust the responsibilities of preparing voters' list to the ward level committees, headed by the elected member of the ward of a Union Parishad. Other members of the committee would be those who

5 new add judges for HC

By Staff Correspondent

President Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday appointed five additional judges for the High Court Division of the Supreme Court, sources said quoting a government notification.

The five new judges are NK Chakrabarty, Deputy Attorney General Barrister AKM Shaifuddin, Advocate AFM Misbahuddin, District Sessions Judge of Comilla, Begum Nazmun Ara Sultana and Advocate Mansurul Haq Chowdhury.

Nazmun Ara Sultana is the first female judge in the High Court, sources said.

The oath taking of the newly appointed judges is expected on Sunday.

Panicked people still leaving Mashaldanga

By Staff Correspondent

More and more people are leaving Mashaldanga enclave because of insecurity and taking shelter in the mainland said, reports received in Dhaka said.

ADC of Kurigram Biman Kumer Saha, when contacted over telephone, said 50 people came from the enclave yesterday raising the total to 450 who have given shelter at Pashjani Government Primary High School near Maida border outpost, 50 km from the district headquarters. They are given emergency food and medicare.

The DC of Kurigram sent a letter to the district magistrate of Kuchbihar in India yesterday, requesting him to allow officials from Bangladesh to go to Mashaldanga with humanitarian aid.

People coming from the enclave are complaining of scarcity of food and medicine in the area.

The district administration of Kurigram has estimated that 25 tonnes of rice, 1000 pieces of Sari and 1000 pieces of Lungi are required for the affected enclave people. It has also asked for Tk 200,000 to meet the losses caused to them by Indian intruders.

Director General of BDR Maj Gen ALF Fazlur Rahman yesterday visited Maida outpost and the school where the affected people have been given shelter.

A BDR-BSF flag meeting at battalion commander level is scheduled to be held today, sources said.

A joint investigation team will be formed to estimate the damage of property and other losses caused to Mashaldanga people by the Indian intruders.

Those who have left the enclave people are scared of returning home due to lack of security there, district officials said.

Dhaka has protested the intrusion of Indians into Bangladesh territory through Mashaldanga and BSF action in the enclave. The protest note was handed over to the deputy high commissioner of India on Wednesday and a copy of it was faxed to the Indian foreign office yesterday.

Hearing on charge framing June 7

Jail Killing Case

By Court Correspondent

The Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday fixed June 7 for hearing on charge-framing in the Jail Killing Case.

The Judge Ahmed Jamil Mostafa adjourned the proceedings of the case upon a prayer for extension of time filed by the prosecution lawyers on grounds that the Special Public Prosecutor, Serajul Haq could not appear in the court due to heavy rain.

The seven accused detained at the Dhaka Central Jail were produced in the court.

Four national leaders — Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, A H M Quamaruzzaman, Captain Mansur Ali — were killed inside the Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975.

Then DIG Prison, Abdul Awal, filed the Jail Killing Case on November 4, 1975 under Section 302/34 of the Penal Code.

The CID took up the case on September 10, 1996 and submitted a chargesheet accusing 23

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