

Muazzem Ali new foreign secretary Sami to get special assignment

By Diplomatic Correspondent

Syed Muazzem Ali will take over as the new foreign secretary from CM Shafi Sami, it was learnt from well-placed sources.

Sami, whose tenure ends today, is expected to be given new responsibilities as a Special Envoy, the sources said.

Ali, now posted as the ambassador to France, earlier served as the country's envoy to Iran and Bhutan.

Sami, who joined civil service in 1966, served as the country's envoy to Pakistan, China, Saudi Arabia and India.

Sami was the country's High Commissioner to New Delhi from April 1995 till his retirement in 1999, was made foreign secretary on a two-year contract.

Sources said government would like to utilise the services of Sami, an accomplished diplomat for the 13th NAM Summit in Dhaka, now scheduled to take place early next year. Sami was the chief coordinator of the first SAARC Summit held in Dhaka in 1985.

He is also tipped to get the designation of a Special Envoy.

Slow progress in ADP projects irks JS body

Shipping and water resources ministries put up poor show

By Nazrul Islam

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Planning has expressed dissatisfaction over the "frustrating" progress in implementation of various projects taken up by the ministries of shipping and water resources under the current Annual Development Programme (ADP).

The Ministry of Water Resources was allocated Tk. 980.02 crore for 86 projects in the current financial year. It spent only 30.37 per cent (Tk 297.64 crore) of it in the first half of the financial year, meeting sources said.

In the previous financial year (1999-2000), the ministry spent only 80 per cent (Tk 1070.58 crore) of the ADP allocation (Tk 1335.82 crore).

The JS body asked some project directors to give reports on the implementation status of their projects under the two ministries and decided that a four-member parliamentary sub-committee headed by Enamul Haque would visit those after filing of the reports.

The sub-committee will also file a report on their implementation status and causes of delay.

Representatives of the Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) of the Planning Ministry were also present at the meeting.

They identified five common impediments to implementation of

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Customs officials confiscated 300 gold bars worth nearly two crore taka from two Bangladesh Biman flights at the Zia International Airport yesterday. --Star photo

Tk 2cr gold seized from Biman flights

By Staff Correspondent

Customs official seized smuggled gold worth Taka two crore from two Biman flights yesterday, official sources said last night.

The officials recovered 100 gold bars worth Tk 65 lakh from the toilet of a Biman aircraft for Dhaka-New York flight at about 11 am. The aircraft was kept in a hanger.

They also recovered 200 gold bars worth Tk 1.30 crore from another Biman flight for Kuwait in the afternoon. None was however arrested in this connection.

Notice

Due to last-minute technical difficulties, today's issue of The Daily Star on Friday will be 16 pages, instead of 20 pages. We regret the inconvenience it may cause to the readers.

Management

Change of e-mail addresses

The Daily Star has changed all the old e-mail addresses. Our valued readers and contributors are requested to use the following e-mail addresses from now on:

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In thru' diplomatic channel, out to open car market

Tk 50cr revenue loss in 5 yrs; NBR seeks permission for probe

By Rafiq Hasan

A significant number of cars imported through diplomatic channel without paying duties and taxes are being sold to others, depriving the government of a huge amount of revenue.

According to an estimate by the National Board of Revenue (NBR), duties and taxes of at least Tk 50 crore were evaded this way during the last five years.

NBR Chairman Zakir Ahmed Khan in a letter to the foreign ministry on December 3 last year sought its permission and cooperation in investigating the matter.

A probe would help check this corrupt practice and facilitate collection of duties and taxes on cars imported earlier, the letter noted.

However, NBR sources said they are yet to get green signal from the foreign ministry to go for an investigation. They suspect that a section of officials at the ministry are also 'involved' in duty-free import of cars for diplomats and sale of those to

others. When contacted, an official at the foreign ministry's protocol wing which deals with matters relating to foreign missions said she did not know if permission was sought for a probe into the matter.

She also could not say how many duty and tax exemption certificates were issued by the ministry during the last five years for import of cars by diplomats.

A diplomat can import only one car for personal use without paying duties and taxes during his tenure in the country. But every diplomatic mission can import a reasonable number of cars for official use.

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Ershad's prayer for parole rejected

By Special Correspondent

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday rejected a petition by jailed former president H M Ershad for parole.

After a brief hearing, the SC Bench comprising Justice Mahmudul Amin Choudhury, Justice Mainur Reza Choudhury and Justice Mohammad Ruhul Amin rejected the petition.

Barrister Rafiqul Huq moving the petition said that his client is having chest pain and other complaints and needs parole for a month to have treatment abroad.

Opposing this, Additional Attorney General Mahbub-e-Alam citing provisions of law for bail said Ershad was not entitled to parole since his conviction.

The prayer for parole came after the SC recently ordered return of Ershad's passport, seized in October last.

After the rejection of the prayer, Barrister Huq drew the attention of the court saying that his client

Announcement

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Security beefed up at airports

Emergency steps following Paltan blast

By Staff Correspondent

Security has been tightened at the country's airports including the Zia International Airport following Saturday's bomb explosions in the city which left seven persons killed and over 50 injured.

Top officials of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) yesterday held an emergency meeting with representatives of 19 agencies engaged at ZIA, reviewed the situation and gave necessary direc-

tives, sources concerned said. The decisions taken at the meeting are applicable for all airports.

CAAB Chairman Air Commodore Iqbal Hossain presided over the meeting.

Mentionably, CAAB launched a 'service week' on Wednesday to improve services against the

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Fire at Bashpatti slum Sequel to tussle over drug trade

Star Report

The fire at Bashpatti slum at Moghibazar in the city on Wednesday was a sequel to a long rivalry between two gangs of drug-trading terrorists -- BNP backed Sobhan group and Jubo League backed Kiron group.

Sources claimed that the slum was used as a "centre" for drug

trade. The drug traders operated smoothly as Ramna and Tejgaon thanas took weekly 'tolls' of Tk 2 lakh and Tk 3 lakh respectively from them, they claimed.

The drug market there was being controlled by Kashem Bepari, Sobhan, Solaiman and

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