

Recreational centres under defence, paramilitary forces They run those commercially but don't pay taxes

RAFIQ HASAN

Various recreational and entertainment centres under the defence and paramilitary forces do not pay duties and taxes to the government although those are run commercially.

Officials of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) say that Value Added Tax (VAT) and supplementary duties are applicable to earnings from cinema halls, community centres, auditoriums, restaurants and clubs under different cantonments and defence establishments as those are also used by people in general.

But despite repeated initiatives by them, those could not be brought under the VAT and supplementary duty network, the officials said.

The VAT and Excise Commissionerate wrote a number of letters to the authorities of cantonments and offices concerned for registration of those establishments and paying duties and taxes but they did not respond, according to sources.

Show cause notices were also issued against the authorities of those establishments asking them to appear for hearing but they did not, one source said.

As the authorities of cantonments and BDR units did not respond positively, NBR officials had brought the matter to the notice of the NBR chairman.

The then chairman of NBR Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury wrote a letter to the

defence ministry in November 1999 saying it was learnt from the commissionerate offices that cinema halls, community centres and clubs under the defence forces were not paying VAT and duties although those were supposed to.

The ministry then asked the headquarters of army, navy and air force to take steps in this regard on an emergency basis. But they tried to convince the NBR that those establishments were exempted from paying VAT and supplementary duties.

NBR officials however did not find any reason for such exemption as those are run commercially and earn huge amounts. The defence forces also could not produce any documents regarding exemption of duties and taxes, a top official noted.

He said those establishments remained out of tax network because of military rule in the country for long in the past.

The official further said it is not possible for a tax commissioner to conduct raids in those establishments with police force for realising duties and taxes because those are located in cantonments. Defence forces maintain their own security system there.

There are at least six such establishments in Dhaka cantonment. These are Sagorika Cinema Hall, B A F Shaheen Auditorium, Garrison Cinema Hall.

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59 Hajj pilgrims held for arms trafficking!

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi police in Makkah have arrested 59 Hajj pilgrims from the Russian republic of Dagestan over the past week for arms trafficking, the Russian embassy in Riyadh said yesterday.

Forty-two hunting rifles, swords and night-vision goggles were seized from a group of pilgrims who were trying to sell them to other Muslims making the annual pilgrimage, the embassy said.

According to the Arabic-language Al-Hayat newspaper, the members of the group were then released by the Saudi authorities "in an act of tolerance" to allow them to complete their pilgrimage.

A Russian diplomat confirmed the release of the Dagestani pilgrims and said the embassy had been informed of it by Saudi authorities.

"The Russian embassy has not intervened at any point in this business," the diplomat told AFP.

Those arrested belonged to around 2,000 pilgrims from the Caucasus republic Dagestan who had arrived in Saudi Arabia by road via Turkey and Iraq Al-Hayat said.

Bangabandhu Murder Case Prosecution ends reading from paper book

UNB, Dhaka

It is not the killing of an ordinary person, it is the killing of the President of the country. The conspirators knew very well that it would have wider repercussion, Justice Khairul Huq wrote in his judgement confirming death sentences against all the convicts of the Bangabandhu Murder Case.

His observations were read out yesterday from the paper book on the split judgement of the High Court on the appeal and death references in the Bangabandhu Murder Case.

Completing the reading of the judgement of Justice Huq, who upheld the death sentences on all the 15 condemned accused in the two-judge HC bench, Adv Anisul

Huq said the deployment of army on August 15, 1975 was also part of the entire assassination plot.

On the 10th day of hearings in the third judge's court of Justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim, the prosecutor, quoting Justice Huq, said the presence of Maj Ahmed Sharful Hossain, Capt Kismat Hashem, Capt Nazmul Hossain Ansar and Capt Majed in the radio station was not an isolated act.

In his judgement Justice Khairul Huq commented that the presence of those officers in the radio station was part of a pre-planned conspiracy so that other aspects that would follow the killing of a President could

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Handicapped man falls victim to PSA

UNB, Chandpur

The long hand of the Public Safety Act did not spare a handicapped poor villager of Faridganj upazila.

The victim, 40-year-old Mofizul Islam, is now in the district jail detained without trial on charge of extortion, which he never resorted to nor has he known about the crime. Mofiz lost both of his legs due to typhoid in his childhood.

Villagers said that the only "offence" Mofiz committed was to raise objection on installation of high-powered electric pole on his land by the local Pali Bidyut Samity.

Family members of the crippled Mofiz told UNB that he had sent a written objection to the PBS authority

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The spotted deer were brought from Rajshahi Central Park

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The four spotted deer, seized by Mirpur police from Gabtali Cattle Market in the capital on Saturday, were brought from the Rajshahi Central Park and Zoo (RCPZ).

One Enamul Haque of Laxmipur-Vatepara in the city bought the deer from RCPZ authorities for Tk 40,000 and later sold those to a trader for Tk two lakh, sources said.

The central park and zoo is run by the Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC). Ali Akbar, Superintendent of the RCPZ had admitted selling the four deer to Enamul Haque.

A city corporation official requesting anonymously said Enamul Haque applied for purchasing the four male deer for rearing in the month of February.

Accordingly, the RCC authorities decided to sell the deer to the applicant for Tk 10,000 each, the official said.

The city corporation asked Enamul Haque to receive the deer from the RCPZ and also sent a letter to superintendent Ali Akbar in this regard on February 28.

"The RCC had earlier sold 23 deer from the central park and zoo," said Ali Akbar. There are now 175 spotted deer in the Rajshahi City Park and Zoo (RCPZ).

Meanwhile, Rajshahi City Corporation in a press release yesterday said the deer were sold to Enamul Haque on condition that he would rear them.

Steps are being taken against him for selling the deer, the release added.



Long queues of customers at all the banks in the city yesterday marked the penultimate day's banking before the Eid-ul-Azha vacation.

Mohammad Ali Hospital ransacked

UNB, Bogra

Angry mob yesterday ransacked Mohammad Ali Hospital in the town after a young man, injured in a road accident, died due to alleged negligence of the on-duty doctors.

They also confined the doctors for sometime after the death of Ritu, 20, an SSC examinee from Armed Police Battalion School, who was hit by a truck in suburban Shakhpala area at about 3 pm yesterday.

Car bomb blast smashes windows of BBC building

AFP, London

British Anti-terrorist police warned yesterday of the risk of further terrorist attacks after a bomb blast outside the headquarters of the BBC blamed on dissident Irish republicans.

One person was slightly injured when the device went off in a taxi outside the British Broadcasting Corporation's offices in west London as bomb disposal experts attempted to carry out a controlled explosion.

Alan Fry, the head of Scotland Yard's Anti-Terrorist Branch, said the bomb, "clearly a big device" and made using high explosive, was being linked to the dissident Real IRA group.

"We have been predicting, since Christmas, that the mainland, and London in particular, were to be subject to terrorist attacks.

"This was one of those attacks. I can only fear that we will see more."

The blast smashed windows in the BBC buildings, destroyed the taxi carrying the bomb and shook houses up to two kilometres away.

One London underground worker suffered cuts around his eyes.

Fry said bomb disposal experts rushed to the scene after receiving a coded warning passed on to them by a London hospital and a charity.

They were attempting a controlled explosion using a remote-controlled robot when the bomb exploded shortly after midnight.

"I believe that those responsible for this explosion are indeed a dissident Irish republican group and that is where we are commencing the investigation," he added.

Asked if he thought the Real IRA, which broke off from the mainstream Irish Republican Army several years ago and is opposed to the Northern Ireland peace process, was to blame he said, "That would

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A woman (left) bursts into tears after losing everything she had in yesterday's fire at a slum in the city's Rayer Bazar that swallowed at least 300 shanties (right).

BBC statement Mahmud Ali was misrepresented in interview

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BBC World Service yesterday issued a statement following media reports regarding the head of its Bengali Section, Mahmud Ali.

The statement said: The head of the Bengali Section, Mahmud Ali, gave an interview in London in February in which he was misrepresented. Subsequently media reports have speculated about his alleged role in the plot against Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Mahmud Ali denies all involvement in the plots. Mahmud Ali has never been named by the current judicial inquiry in Bangladesh which was set up some three years ago to try and identify the assassins of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Mahmud Ali was commissioned in the Pakistani Army just before the 1971 war. Along with many other Bengali officers, he was later disarmed and imprisoned. In a later exchange of prisoners, he was freed and resumed his army career in

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AL preparing to unleash terrorism during coming polls : Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday said the ruling Awami League is preparing to unleash terrorism during the upcoming national elections, as it has no chance of riding back to power on people's votes.

She said the AL is not only giving out sophisticated arms to its activists and notorious cadres but providing licence for them as well.

Addressing a joining function at her 29 Minto Road official residence last night, Khaleda called upon party leaders and activists to get ready to give a befitting reply to the acts of terrorism unleashed by Awami League during the election.

Leading transport leader of the country's northern region and former leader of the Workers Party Advocate Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas from Pabna along with his followers, local elite, teachers, workers, leaders and activists of Jubo and Chhatra Maitree, Jatiya Party, and farmers and peasant

activists joined BNP.

Former chairman of Dhaka and Rajshahi Education Board Prof. Boyen Uddin also joined BNP.

The opposition leader also said the AL government has crammed jails with the leaders and activists of BNP and its different front organisations under false charges and filed false cases against unspecified number of activists to weaken BNP.

Said Khaleda: "Inshaallah (God willing), we will win the next election and put the Awami leaders and activists involved in terrorism, killing, hijacking, corruption and other illegal activities behind the bars in accordance with law of the land."

The BNP chairperson said the AL would not win the ensuing national election, and arrangement will have to be made with the help of people so that this "fascist" party can never assume power in the future.

She said the AL terrorists are being set free even after harrowing killings like cutting someone into six

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AL, BNP clash in Rajshahi: 20 hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

At least 20 people were injured, four of them bullet-hit, in a gunfight between Awami League and BNP activists at Baneswar Bazar in Puthia upazila yesterday afternoon.

The four bullet-hit persons were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital in critical conditions.

They are Dablu, 27, Ashraf Islam, 35, Asad, 40, and an unidentified man.

According to police and local sources, BNP had announced to hold a rally at Baneswar Bazar Sunday afternoon demanding withdrawal of cases filed against Nadim Mostofa MP, leaders and activists under Public Safety Act.

The local Awami League also arranged a 'peace procession' at the same time at Baneswar Bazar. Local administration yesterday imposed Section 144 to avoid any untoward incident there. But Awami League and BNP activists brought out processions defying Section 144 and were locked in a clash. Both the sides used fire arms and hand made bombs.

Police lobbed tear gas canisters and resorted to lathi charge to bring the situation under control.

Two murdered, body recovered from bus in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two persons were murdered, body of another was recovered from inside a bus and one allegedly committed suicide in the city yesterday.

Iqbal Hossain, 23, a garment worker, was murdered by a gang of muggers in front of meat shops at Hatirpool in the city's Dhanmondi area yesterday afternoon.

Iqbal, an employee of Antana Fashion Ltd at Hatirpool was returning home at Mirpur Section-10 from his workplace at about 3-30 pm.

When he reached in front of meat shops, a gang of muggers hit him on the head with a machete and took away Tk 1800 and a wrist watch from him.

He was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

In another incident, a young man was shot dead by unidentified assailants in front of a club at Humayun Road in the city's Mohammadpur area yesterday evening.

Mohammad Palash, 28, a resident of Zikatola, was shot in his head at about 5:30 pm yesterday. The incident took place when Palash was sitting in front of the club.

He was rushed to the DMCH by Mohammadpur police where the doctor declared him dead.

Sutrapur police recovered the body of an unidentified young man aged about 30, from a passengers bus at Fulbaria in the city yesterday afternoon.

On receiving information, police went to Fulbaria and recovered the body from inside a Mawa-bound bus at about 3:30 pm.

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Tremor jolts northeast India, Myanmar

AFP, Guwahati

An earthquake measuring 5.1 on the Richter scale shook India's northeastern region and parts of neighbouring Myanmar early yesterday morning, officials said.

The quake caused panic among the people living in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur and Mizoram, though there were no reports of any damage to life and property.

According to AK Sahu, a seismologist with the Regional Seismological Centre in Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya, the epicentre of yesterday's quake, which occurred at 04:26 AM was plotted along the Indo-Myanmar border.

Reuters adds, a tremor measuring 5.2 on the Richter scale hit the western Indian state of Gujarat yesterday, more than a month after a giant earthquake killed an estimated 30,000 people there.

Residents of Ahmedabad, the state's biggest city, ran out of their homes in panic but there were no reports of any casualties or damage to property.

An official at the local meteorological office told Reuters the tremor was felt at around 1.45 pm and lasted eight to nine seconds.

Several high-rise buildings in Ahmedabad, Gujarat's commercial centre, were flattened in the January 26 killer quake that measured 7.7 on the Richter scale. India has felt a series of tremors since then.