

Mismanagement empties Dhaka city corpn coffer

No money even to pay next month's salary

STAR REPORT

Mismanagement and unplanned spending have pushed the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) to the brink of bankruptcy, officials of various sections at the Nagar Bhaban alleged.

Top DCC officials now do not know how staff salaries and Eid bonus will be paid next month. It needs about Tk 14 crore for the payments but DCC's available funds now stand at about Tk two crore.

They termed the situation 'a financial mess' and disclosed that DCC's 'guaranteed monthly incomes' from shopping centres, immovable property transfer tax and

trade licences have been tagged to pay off outstanding bank loans.

However, none of them wanted to make any 'official comment' on the issue while Mayor Mohammad Hanif could not be contacted despite repeated attempts.

DCC's mosquito control drive has now come to a virtual halt after the supplier of adulticide (used for killing adult flying mosquito) stopped supply. The DCC owes the supplier Tk 10 crore.

Nagar Bhaban sources said that amid strong protests from contractors, the Mayor recently paid Tk two crore to the supplier and requested him to continue supply. But it is yet to be done.

They alleged that years of mismanagement and unplanned spending have caused such a crisis. In previous crisis periods, the Mayor was able to overcome the situation either by 'begging' from the LGRD Ministry or taking away money from one of the few foreign aided projects of the DCC. This time, the Ministry is 'very rigid' about any sort of payment to DCC.

For years, DCC's projected incomes from various sources never reached targets and invariably fell far short of those. But every section of DCC kept on spending much more than the projected incomes and allocations by the accounts department and the accounts

started to dip. Moreover, influential Ward Commissioners, close to the Mayor, almost forced their way into the administrative set ups and got away with allocations for various constructions in their respective wards. This not only resulted in massive unplanned expenditures from the 'Special Development Funds' but also plunder of the city's open spaces, footpaths, roads and public lands, of which DCC is the custodian, they mentioned.

DCC owes the Uttara Bank Tk 80 crore and arrangement has been made to pay off the debt with its entire monthly income from immovable property transfer tax.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

'Zia was the architect of modern Bangladesh'

UNB, Dhaka

Speakers at a discussion meeting in the city yesterday termed late President Ziaur Rahman as the architect of modern Bangladesh.

They said Zia had restored multiparty democracy, introduced production and development-oriented politics, and brought about changes in the socio-economic fields.

Prime Minister and BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia was present in the meeting organised by BNP on the occasion of the 66th birth anniversary of Ziaur Rahman, the founder of the party.

Ministers, members of parliament, leaders and workers of BNP and its front organisations attended the discussion that was followed by a cultural function at the Institution of Engineers.

Presided over by Land Minister M SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia placing wreath at the mazar of founder of the party president Ziaur Rahman on the occasion of his 66th birth anniversary yesterday.

Contempt petition against Hasina filed with HC

BSS, Dhaka

A contempt petition was filed yesterday against former prime minister and Awami League president Sheikh Hasina with the High Court for her reported remarks against the judiciary.

Former president of the Supreme Court Bar Association Advocate Habibul Islam Bhuiyan and lawyers signed the petition.

Former secretary of the Supreme Court Bar Association and one of the petitioners Advocate Zainul Abedin told BSS that they took permission from the bench concerned comprising Justice Syed Amirul Islam and Justice Sikder Moqbul Haque to file the petition.

The contempt charge was brought against Sheikh Hasina following her alleged comments in the New York based Weekly 'Thikana' which were republished in the local newspapers on December 22, 2001.

Ainijibi Oiyko Parishad, a forum of nationalist lawyers, wrote a letter to the registrar of the Supreme Court to bring the matter to the notice of the Chief Justice who later advised them to file petition before the competent court if they were aggrieved.

None of 23 most wanted criminals nabbed yet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

None of the 23 most wanted criminals in the city could be arrested even in a month after announcement of their list and awards for their arrest.

The government on December 23 last year made public a list of the criminals and declared awards of Tk one lakh for information leading to arrest of each of the eight 'top terrorists' and Tk 50,000 for each of the rest.

But sources said no special team has been formed to bring the culprits to book. "In fact there was no police activity to nab the notorious criminals responsible for most of the crimes in the city," said a police official seeking anonymity.

There was also no response from members of the public, police sources said. "How can an innocent citizen take such risk (of giving information about the

terrorists) when the police can not do it," a resident of Maghbazar area told this correspondent.

Many people believe law and order could improve remarkably in the city if the culprits could be arrested.

They said special squads should be formed and government should put continuous pressure on the police administration to hunt down the criminals.

When contacted, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner Mohammad Abdul Quiyum however said a special team of detectives is working to nab the listed criminals.

"We are trying to arrest the terrorists. Most them are now outside the capital," he said.

Each of the terrorists are accused in so many criminal cases for murder, extortion, drug trafficking and running 'mini brothe'.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Rejoinders and our reply

The DHV Consultants The Netherlands, China First Metallurgical Construction Corporation and Mahtab Uddin Ahmed, retired chief engineer of the Roads and Highways, have sent three separate rejoinders protesting a report published in The Daily Star on January 15, 2002, headlined "DUTP gets snarled".

DHV Consultants The Netherlands and China First Metallurgical Construction Corporation said they do not have any local agents as stated in the report - so, Mahtab Uddin Ahmed being their local agent is untrue. Ahmed in his rejoinder said he is not, and had never been the local representative of DHV or any

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Shahriar gets interim bail, likely to be freed today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted writer and journalist Shahriar Kabir six months' interim bail in a sedition case. He is likely to be released today.

The court also issued a rule on the government to show cause why the accused should not be granted bail.

A Division Bench of the HC comprising Justice MA Aziz and Justice Nazrul Islam Chowdhury after hearing both the sides issued the bail order yesterday afternoon.

Meanwhile, the Attorney General's office yesterday attempted

to file a provisional appeal against the HC's January 12 order declaring the detention of Shahriar illegal. It also sought a stay on the January 12 order.

However, Chamber Judge of the Supreme Court Ruhul Amin rejected the provisional appeal and suggested the AG to file a regular leave petition.

Arguing for the bail of Shahriar, Barrister Amir-ul-Islam said the allegations against his client were not at all relevant. Shahriar was not involved in any anti-state activities and the allegations were not substantiated with appropriate evi-

dences. He contended that when Shahriar comes out of jail on bail, there would not be any scope for him to destroy the evidences against him (Shahriar) produced by police. Besides, being a noted personality, it would not be possible for him to flee the country.

Countering his arguments, Attorney General AF Hasan Arif said there were evidences against Shahriar, which could be the basis of a sedition case. He opposed Shahriar's bail but said it was up to the court to decide.

The HC asked the AG whether SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Israeli troops blow up Voice of Palestine radio, TV offices

REUTERS, Ramallah

Israeli troops blew up the Voice of Palestine radio and TV offices early yesterday in an apparent fresh retribution for a Palestinian shooting attack on Thursday that killed six people.

The Palestinian gunman's rampage at a Jewish birthday party in northern Israel and new Israeli assaults on symbols of Palestinian independence have left a nearly month-old truce drive in tatters despite US and European efforts to quell more than 15 months of bloodshed.

Israeli soldiers, accompanied by tanks and bulldozers, entered the Voice of Palestine's five-storey building in the West Bank city of Ramallah to lay the charges and clear away its occupants and onlookers. The army had no immediate comment.

A Reuters correspondent at the scene said the explosives set the building on fire, sending up a large cloud of smoke and debris into the sky still dark before dawn. Palestinian firemen tried to douse the flames.

Voice of Palestine regular broadcasts had not begun for the day and it was not yet clear whether the SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Confce on Afghanistan opens in Tokyo tomorrow Dhaka may initially send troops for de-mining

M ANWARUL HAQ

Dhaka, poised to play an important role in rebuilding war-ravaged Afghanistan, has decided to participate in the two-day international conference on Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Afghanistan in Tokyo beginning tomorrow.

It may send soldiers for peace keeping operations and also manpower for reconstruction activities in that country, sources said.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan left Dhaka yesterday to attend the international meet due to be attended by US Secretary of State Colin Powell and chief of the interim Afghan government Hamid Karzai.

Dhaka may initially send troops for de-mining operations in Afghanistan, now littered with some 20 million land mines.

Bangladesh troops possess great expertise in this field and played a crucial role in de-mining operations in Kuwait after the Gulf war.

Dhaka is interested in the outcome of Tokyo conference as it looks forward to participating in the rehabilitation process in Afghanistan, including construction and infrastructure building activities.

Bangladesh had earlier expressed its readiness to provide troops for the British-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) for Kabul. The Afghan government has authorised the formation of 4,500 strong force, initially for a period of six months.

However, deployment of Bangladesh troops will depend on the outcome of the UN Trust Fund.

A separate World Bank Trust

Fund for reconstruction of Afghanistan is also likely to be set up following the Tokyo conference.

A total of 54 countries and 17 international organisations like World Bank and IMF will participate in the conference being hosted by Japan, United States, Saudi Arabia and European Union. Sadako Ogata, former UN high commissioner for refugees, is due to chair the meet.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

INSIDE TODAY

Article 4

90 minutes in an hour of crisis
Column: As I See It
Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi

Law & Our Rights 5-6

Anti-terror campaign cloaking human rights abuse; and More Bangladeshi women become victim of rape

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Jan 20		5-36 pm
Jan 21	6-43 am	

Prayer Timings		
Jan 20		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-40	6-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-40	5-45
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation



Palestinian firemen try to extinguish the flames engulfing the Palestinian radio, TV office building after Israeli troops blew it up in the West Bank town of Ramallah yesterday.

Girls still remain victims of early marriage

NAIMUL HAQ

Despite legal barrier, early marriage of adolescents, especially of girls, remains a widespread practice in the country in flagrant violation of their fundamental rights.

Under the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, a girl cannot be married before the age of 18 and a male person before 21. But this law has little impact on marriage, particularly in rural areas.

According to latest figures, there are about 28 million adolescents in the country and 13.7 per cent of them are girls. About five per cent of girls of 10-14 age group and 48 per cent of 15-19 age group are married.

Early marriage normally ends a girl's education. Only five per cent of girls continued education after marriage, compared to 68 per cent

among unmarried girls, according to a survey.

According to a Unicef survey, the mean age of marriage of girls in the country is between 14 and 15 years. But the Bangladesh Bureau of

Statistics puts the mean age at 18.3 years.

According to social workers, the common belief in the rural area is that early marriage places a wife

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7