

Extortion has many faces

Student unions in medical colleges raise lakhs of taka from admission seekers in the name of welfare funds

NAIMUL HAQ

Even before students could enroll at medical colleges, they had to contribute to students' welfare funds.

Students unions in different medical colleges have raised illegal 'tolls' worth lakhs of taka from admission seekers who have already taken written tests for admission in medical colleges recently.

Such illegal acts took place for the first time at the Dhaka Medical College (DMC) in the name of welfare of the students apparently with the authorities' knowledge. In the DMC alone as many as 4,500 students bought admission forms.

Similar allegations also run against the student unions in other medical colleges of the country, admission seekers alleged.

Many students who had visited the DMC office to buy application forms for Tk 20 in December for admission tests were asked to pay an additional Tk 100 at the adjacent student's union office. Each student was given a receipt for the money and a small brochure detailing the history of the college and names of the teaching staff.

In addition, each student had to pay a non-refundable amount of Tk 350 as registration fee during submission of admission forms.

Students alleged that they were forced to pay the 'tolls' fearing that their

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

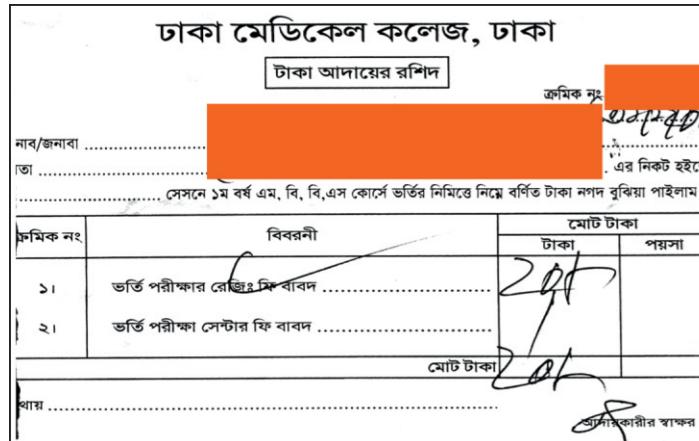


PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

The ever-shrinking channel of river Turag flowing under Amin Bazaar bridge in Dhaka city is on the brink of being dried up due to earth filling by traders in sand and soil.

2 shot dead as
terrorists
clash in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two persons were gunned down in Shutrapur area in the city last night.

Both of them were killed during a clash between two groups of terrorists at Shutrapur at around 8:00pm, police said.

The dead were identified as Yunus, 28, reportedly a student of Suharwardi College and Tauhid Khan, 40, a resident of Nawabpur area and also a local BNP leader.

Both of them were shot in their chests and heads.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

INSIDE TODAY

Article 4

Saudi-US relations: Growing rum-
pus over military base

Column: Perspectives

M Abdul Hafiz

Supplements 8 & 10

Two supplements: One page Awami
League supplement on Page 8 and
one page Iranian supplement on
Page 10

**JS debates 'graft'
in its secretariat**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday listened to an unscheduled debate on alleged graft in the parliament secretariat punctuated by rejection of sensitive questions by the Speaker.

No less than ten lawmakers including five ministers voiced their views during the over-an-hour debate. Leader of the House Prime Minister Khaleda Zia was also present.

The legislators brought allegations of multiple acts of grafts by late speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury, chief whip Abdul Hasnat Abdullah and other whips in the treasury bench in the previous parliament. The MPs also slapped corruption charges on a section of parliament secretariat officials and demanded transparency in its accounts.

Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain suggested that the relevant parliamentary standing committees look into such allegations of graft while others said the speaker had better form a special committee to probe the charges and recommend actions.

The chief whip however did not like the House to debate on alleged grafts by a speaker and called it a bad precedence.

"I think the relevant parliamentary standing committee should deal with such graft charges based on specific information... formation of a special committee on the issue would linger and complicate the legal procedure," the speaker ruled.

Earlier, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda said people had given their mandate against corruption committed during the previous regime and elected the present government. So, all sorts of graft charges shall be raised in the House.

Industries Minister MK Anwar suggested a special audit of the accounts of the parliament secretariat for the past five years. "People have the right to know about financial irregularities during the last parliament," he said.

The debate spent most of the time seeking explanations for rejection of



**First anniversary
of death of
Towfiq Aziz
Khan today**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first death anniversary of Towfiq Aziz Khan, an eminent journalist, sports commentator and Executive Editor of The Daily Star, will be observed here today.

See also page 5

He breathed his last at a city hospital at the age of 64. He was

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

**IMF to continue
cooperation,
hopes PM**

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday expressed the hope that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) would continue its cooperation in various welfare oriented programmes undertaken by the Bangladesh government.

Khaleda Zia expressed this optimism when Executive Director of IMF Vijay L Kelkar made a courtesy call on her at her office.

Kelkar appreciated the steps undertaken by the government in economic plan, imposition of ban on polybags, withdrawal of old vehicles from streets and launching programmes on women and children education.

He also appreciated the Prime Minister's firmness to rejuvenate the country's ravaged economy.

They discussed IMF's cooperation in the development process of Bangladesh. They also discussed the state of Bangladesh economy and global economic scenario in the wake of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon in the United States.

Principal Secretary to the Prime

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

2 phone projects hit snag

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

Two projects for installing five lakh telephones in the city by 2003 have met with virtual deaths for one reason or another.

The US\$ 310 million project for three lakh land phones by British company WorldTel is now virtually dead six months after the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MoPT) signed a contract in July last.

Another project for two lakh Personal Handy Phone System (PHS) at a cost of US\$ 200 million by a Japan-Bangladesh joint venture named Bangladesh Broadcasting and Telephone Technology (BBTT) also remains unimplemented two years after the deal was sealed.

The WorldTel deal has become uncertain due to graft allegations by the present government, sources said. The Bureau of Anti-corruption (BAC) filed a case against the managing director of WorldTel on January 8.

Interestingly though, the government has not yet

directed the Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) to scrap or carry through the project, sources said.

Meantime, WorldTel is now taking a backseat as regards the project supposed to be completed by the middle of 2003. Sources said the company was discouraged by the graft charges.

The WorldTel deal was initiated through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) during the visit of former US President Bill Clinton in March 2000.

The telecom sector is the second largest foreign investment-puller after the energy sector. Foreign companies have so far invested about \$ 1 billion in telecom, next to the power and energy sector's over \$ 1.3 billion since 1995.

Meantime, some 175,000 prospective clients are waiting to get phone lines from the state-owned BTTB.

With such a poor show in the telecom sector, pro-

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

**Asian Highway
Dhaka to place
its route map
at Bangkok
meet in Apr**

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh will place the final route map in its portion of the proposed Asian Highway at the UN-ESCAP expert group meeting in Bangkok in April.

The cabinet will soon decide on the plan of the route through Bangladesh territory, as the preparation for building continental road-links is at the final stage.

Communications Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda said this while explaining Bangladesh's position to a visiting UN-ESCAP mission for Asian Highway and Trans Asian Railway affairs yesterday.

The minister said, "the country's interests will be given the topmost priority in planning the route."

Bangladesh is examining all available route options and will take up the appropriate ones in consultation with neighbouring and regional countries, Barrister Huda told the delegation.

Led by Martin Lentsch, the mis-

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8