

Scramble for share of 'booty' OC suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The officer-in-charge (OC) of the city's Dhamondi Police Station and two sub-inspectors were suspended last night following allegations of scuffle among them at the thana on Sunday over sharing of 'sale proceeds' from two bundles of smuggled Indian saree, sources said.

Earlier on Thursday night, Dhamondi police seized a truck loaded with 35 bundles of smuggled Indian saree worth about Tk two crore from Gausia market. They also arrested four persons -- Shahjahan, Manik, Bishu and Mamun -- in this connection. Police identified Shahjahan and Manik as owners of the clothes.

Following an 'understanding' with businessmen at Gausia market, the sources said, OC Nazmul Islam along with SI Toimur and SI Tareq decided to return 31 bundles of saree and release their owners on

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Announcement



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code of conduct
of The Star
Rangs Toshiba World Cup
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PHOTO: STAR

Spirit undaunted...this year's Pahela Baishakh with mirth and music has flipped the chapter of last year's macabre carnage. Performers of Chhayayanat celebrate the first day of the Bangla New Year at Ramna Batamul where a bomb explosion left ten people killed and at least 20 others injured last year.

Danish charges part of a plot, says Akbar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain yesterday brushed aside the allegation of corruption labelled against him by Danish Under-secretary Peter Lysholt Hansen.

"This is a step to intervene in our internal affairs. It is totally motivated and a highly intentional allegation. It is part of a plot," Akbar Hossain said at a press conference at the PID Press Room yesterday.

Senior officials including shipping Secretary Golam Rahman were present during the press conference.

The minister convened the press conference on the heels of allegations of "serious intention of corruption in tendering four ferries" by Danish Under-secretary Peter Lysholt Hansen at a press conference in the city on Saturday.

The tender was first invited in Denmark for rehabilitation of 10 ferries supplied by Denmark and

nine landing stations in 2000. But those were cancelled due to unacceptable results both to Denmark and Bangladesh.

Later, bids were invited for repair of four ferries in August 2001. Three companies took part in the tender,

but one withdrew from the race and the rest two formed a joint venture (JV).

This was again cancelled as the bidding lacked competition. During the Denmark-Bangladesh annual review meeting in November 2001, three possible options were agreed upon for the rehabilitation of the Ro-Ro ferries.

The first option was to get into a negotiated contract with the Danish JV, the second option was to carry out the rehabilitation by Bangladesh dockyards under a project management model, and the third option was to float an international tender.

"If they (the Danish) raise any corruption charge, then they should come up with sufficient evidence. If they cannot produce evidences, then the law says they should be sued for defamation. However, as they enjoy diplomatic immunity, this is not possible," Akbar said.

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Akbar Hossain

Two rescued, six alleged abductors held in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detective police rescued two persons kidnapped for ransom and arrested six alleged abductors in two operations in the city yesterday and the day before.

One of the victims -- Deen Mohammad alias Rokon, 35 -- was rescued from Gulshan area on Sunday. The other -- Abul Kalam Azad, 25 -- was rescued from Tejgaon area yesterday.

According to DB police and family sources, an armed gang of five led by one Shahidul Islam abducted Rokon from his house at Satarkul road in the city's Badda area on March 31. Next day, they sent one person to his wife demanding a ransom of Tk one lakh for his release. She was warned that her husband would be killed if she informed police about the matter.

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Graft controversy rages on

PM calls in Akbar, foreign office summons Danish envoy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Danish government sniffed irregularity in rehabilitation of four ferries in mid-February when the shipping minister used a "private businessman as an intermediary" apparently to "set up a meeting" with a potential contractor "to solve 'outstanding problems' allegedly not related to the contract negotiations".

In his February 15 letter to the finance and planning minister, Danish Ambassador Niels Severin Munk termed this as "an attempt to conduct economic irregularities in the process of concluding the contract".

"The subsequent use by the minister of shipping of a private businessman as an intermediary to relay messages from the minister to the Royal Danish Embassy must be considered highly irregular and unacceptable," Munk said in the letter.

"The suggestion of a meeting between the minister of shipping and the potential contractor (explicitly excluding representation from the Royal Danish Embassy) to solve 'outstanding problems' allegedly not related to the contract negotiations but nonetheless blocking for an approval from the

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Only one mayoral candidate has election manifesto

NAZRUL ISLAM

With the city corporation election just nine days away, only one contestant for the mayoral post outlined his election manifesto.

Of the 28 mayoral candidates in the three metropolitan cities, Fazle Hossain Badsha alone -- of the left-leaning 11-party alliance in Rajshahi -- has recently announced his 24-point manifesto for the April 25 election before the press.

"It is all too frustrating that none of the leading candidates came up with their commitments," said a citizen preferring anonymity.

Voters have every right to know the commitments the elected representatives will implement in their five-year tenure, he pointed out.

Although graffiti are prohibited by

the election code of conduct, some city walls still carry slogans of what the mayor-hopefuls would do for city dwellers, if voted to office.

A week ago, the Election Commission has asked the contestants to wipe graffiti off the walls. A similar directive was also given to the police.

This time, the election fray has become a rather downbeat affair due to the Awami League's abstention.

The city elections first took place in 1994 when the outgoing mayor Mohammad Hanif as a candidate pledged to fight violence and mosquito-menace. Yet, the last eight years did not see his pledges implemented.

Fisheries and Livestock Minister Sadeque Hossain Khoka, a BNP-led four-party alliance candidate,

stands out of the 20 candidates in the capital by his wide popularity.

To make "the city free of traffic jam, violence and mosquitoes, if elected" is the main slogan of his campaign. Khoka could not be reached for his comments despite repeated attempts by telephone. He was out of the city, said his family members last night.

The campaign for other candidates, though in a low-key fashion, also runs in the city.

On the eve of Pahela Baishakh, Fazle Hossain Badsha out of the five candidates in Rajshahi pledged to institute a corruption and nepotism-free city corporation.

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Pahela Baishakh celebrated

UNB, Dhaka

The nation yesterday welcomed the Bengali New Year, cherishing expectations that rival political quarters will narrow their differences and gear all their efforts towards building a happy and prosperous country.

Thousands of people from all walks of life joined the artistes of "Chhayayanat", a cultural organisation, in the capital in singing the traditional Tagore song "Esho Hey Baishakh" to welcome the sunrise of Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla New Year 1409.

The main Pahela Baishakh congregation was at Ramna Batamul where people stood in solemn silence for a minute remembering those killed in a terrible bomb explosion there last year while taking part in a similar celebration. At least 10 people were killed in the bomb blast.

Due to tight security in and

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Open heart surgery blocked since Oct

NICVD lacks vital devices

NAIMUL HAQ

More than 460 patients have been awaiting open-heart surgery at the country's lone state-owned hospital since October last as it has run out of some vital lifesaving devices.

Sources said the 250-bed National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) has run out of valves and oxygenators, two vital devices to keep a heart patient alive.

Out of 250 seats, 67 are paying beds while the rest are non-paying for the poor.

Most of the open-heart surgeries at the NICVD are performed free of cost. Only patients at paying beds have to bear their surgery costs.

An artificial metal valve allows flow of blood from one chamber of the heart to the other and prevents reverse flow of blood to the same chamber.

An oxygenator is used to supply fresh oxygen when the heart remains temporarily non-functional during an operation.

According to hospital sources, all patients requiring open-heart surgeries are sanctioned with valves and oxygenators from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) free of cost. The patients have to apply for the

devices, explaining their inability to afford the costly implant. Each valve roughly costs Tk 55,000 while an oxygenator costs around Tk 25,000.

Since 1996, a total of 869 poor patients have been sanctioned with such free valves and oxygenators. Out of them, 404 patients received the devices and were operated upon for replacement of valves. But the rest, many of whom need urgent surgery, have been asked to wait until fresh supply is available.

"We don't have any valve and oxygenator since October and so, we are unable to perform the operations," said Professor Mohammad Nazrul Islam, director of the NICVD.

Minarul Islam, a patient with the serial number 732, of Naohata village under Poba thana in Rajshahi, applied to the PMO for two valves and an oxygenator on February 11 last year. He was sanctioned with the devices ten days later.

Fatema Ali (serial number 745) of Khubijpur under Gurudaspani thana of Natore applied for a valve and an oxygenator to the PMO on March 8 last year. She received the sanction letter thirteen days later. Hasina Begum (serial number 762) of Golokhat under Mirsharai in Chittagong had applied on February 5

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Air China plane crash: 54 out of 166 survive

More than 50 people rescued



AFP

AGENCIES, Kimhae, South Korea

Fifty-four people are reported to have survived after an Air China jet, carrying 158 passengers and 11 crewmembers, smashed into a mountain in rain and fog yesterday as it was preparing to land in South Korea's second largest city.

The Boeing 767-200 was on a non-stop flight from Beijing to the southern city of Busan when it crashed in bad weather, officials said.

In heavy rain and fog, and as darkness fell, soldiers used dogs to help search for any humans still trapped amid the wreckage.

Flight CA129 crashed at 11:23 am (0223 GMT) after aborting a first attempt to land in bad weather at Busan-Kimhae International airport, a transport ministry official said.

Vice Construction and Transportation Minister Choo

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Youth with knife runs towards Alamgir in jail?

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A jail inmate was caught with a knife when he ran towards former state minister and Awami League leader Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir inside Dhaka Central Jail on Sunday night, jail sources said.

The youth scaled the wall of Old Cell 20 where Mohiuddin is interned, spotted him and ran towards him with a knife at about 11 pm.

Other jail inmates there cried for help. The jail guards rushed to the spot, caught the youth and took him elsewhere, the sources said.

When contacted over telephone last night, Jailer Anwarul Haque first said, "No such incident took place in the jail."

But when this correspondent raised some points, he said, "It was

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Bail prayer of SA Malek's son rejected

UNB, N'ganj

The District and Sessions Judge here yesterday refused bail to Dr Abdullah Al Mamun, son of former prime minister's political advisor Dr SA Malek, and his friend Al Amin.

Police produced Dr Abdullah Al Mamun and his associate Al Amin, who were earlier arrested with arms and phenylidyl from Mograpara in Sonargaon upazila, before the court which, after hearing prayers, sent them to jail rejecting their petitions.

Advocate Mahbubur Rahman Masum along with some 50 other lawyers pleading for the young physician said the government implicated Dr Mamun in such a case because he is the member of a political family.

"The matter of traffic jam and ransacking of cars at 5 in the dawn and that a responsible doctor can carry phenylidyl are unbelievable. The whole thing was done in a pre-planned way to harass him," said the lawyer.