

# US seeks Pak permission to raid for Laden: Time

AFP, Washington

The United States believes Osama bin Laden is hiding in the mountains of Pakistan along its border with Afghanistan and is seeking Islamabad's permission to stage a raid there, the US newsweekly Time reported.

In the Sunday's issue, the magazine said Christina Rocca, assistant secretary of state for South Asian affairs, visited Islamabad last month seeking permission for the raid from Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf.

Musharraf is hesitant to approve the operation, the magazine quoted sources as saying, because the fierce tribes in the region are well-armed and sympathetic to Afghanistan's former Taliban regime.

Bin Laden -- chief suspect in the deadly September 11 suicide attacks in the United States -- has so far eluded US attempts to capture him. President George W Bush said earlier this month he did not know if bin Laden was dead or alive.

But Time said US officials now

seem convinced bin Laden is hiding somewhere along the rugged and untamed border between the two countries, possibly due to intelligence gleaned from captured documents and militants belonging to bin Laden's al-Qaeda group.

Among those captured recently was Zayn al-Abidin Muhammad Husayn, or Abu Zubaydah. Abu Zubaydah, believed to be a key lieutenant of bin Laden with particular knowledge of operations outside of Afghanistan, was among 29 people captured late last month in Pakistan in raids on suspected al-Qaeda hideouts.

Interim Afghan foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah said Sunday during a visit to Abu Dhabi he also believed bin Laden was alive and living somewhere on the borders of Afghanistan.

Foreign office spokesman Aziz Ahmed Khan said no such request had been received and Washington had repeatedly expressed its satisfaction with the cooperation it had been receiving from Islamabad.

He said "terrorists" from Afghanistan may be trying to cross

the border but avoided referring directly to al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, blamed for the September 11 attacks on the United States.

"There is no need for any outside forces in this regard ... Our record in apprehending terrorists who have crossed into Pakistan from Afghanistan has been impeccable and has been very successful," he told reporters.

"We hope to continue to chase those terrorists who might try to seek refuge here."

He said Pakistan had been sharing intelligence with the United States but there were no discussions on possible joint military operations on Pakistani territory.

Pak Defence Secretary Hamid Nawazkhan, on a visit to Azerbaijan, said he did not believe Laden was hiding out on Pakistani territory.

"I do not have information about bin Laden's whereabouts but as far as I know it is impossible for him to be in Pakistan right now," Nawazkhan told reporters in the Azerbaijani capital, Baku.

# Gunfight at AJM

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The arrested yesterday include Nazrul, 25, and Dula, 24, with a sophisticated revolver.

About 350 police and three platoons of paramilitary BDR have been deployed in the area following Friday's clash.

Locals said most of the arrested persons were innocent, who included rickshawpullers, carpenters, workers and pedestrians. The real culprits have gone into hiding, they said.

The arrested, tied with ropes, were produced before the court as their wailing relatives crowded the court premises.

Police said they raided the houses of top criminals but failed to catch any. Nor could they recover any firearms from those houses except for the revolver found with the two youngsters arrested from Shimulpara yesterday.

Most men of Dhaka Baju Colony,

New Colony, Kancha Line, Pucca Line, Uir Char, Tedi Gate, Sonamia Market and Kadamtoli Road fled their homes.

SP Shafiqul Islam told UNB that the joint raid would continue to nab the actual culprits.

Office secretary of Adamjee Jute Mills CBA Sakhawat Hossain alleged that police had arrested innocent people and workers.

Gazi Azam, publicity secretary of pro-government thana Samik Dal, said the terrorists drove out innocent workers when they tried to join their duty.

Earlier on Saturday night, the two rival factions exchanged several hundred rounds of gunfire and exploded crackers creating panic among the local people.

## Simi suicide

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he prayed for judicial inquiry into the matter, he alleged.

Simi, 21, a final year student of Narayanganj Institute of Fine Arts, committed suicide on December 23 last year after being 'harassed' by local hoodlums.

She left a note holding five youths Khalil, Doel, Ripon, Mofazzal, Enayet and the SI of police responsible for her death.

Later, police arrested SI Abul Basher on December 29 last year following a directive from the Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury. He was arrested on charge of negligence of his duties that allegedly led to the suicide of Simi in Khilgaon area of the city on December 23 last year. The five other accused have been absconding since the incident.

Meanwhile, IO of the case submitted a charge sheet of the case against six people including SI Abul Basher on February 11.

The absconding hoodlums are now threatening Simi's family members to withdraw the case filed against them or to face dire consequences. Simi's family sources alleged.

# Air China crash

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Byung-Jik told the national assembly the Air China jet crashed while trying to land.

"Due to strong head winds blowing it off course, it had to fly in the opposite direction and crashed while turning around," he said.

Rescuers fought up two paths that in places were almost vertical or knee deep in mud to get to the crash scene at the top of Shineeo mountain. Some survivors were carried down on the backs of policemen or soldiers.

It was Asia's worst aviation disaster since a Singapore Airlines Boeing 747 crashed on October 30, 2000 after attempting to take off from a closed runway at Taipei airport, killing 78 of the 179 people on board.

Busan, South Korea's second largest city, will be one of the venues for the football World Cup finals, which start in less than 50 days.

The Air China jet slammed into the 400-metre high Shineeo mountain in Kimhae, flattening hundreds of trees and spreading flaming wreckage across a wide area.

Fires in the wreckage took four hours to put out, witnesses said as hundreds of local residents watched on while rescue workers carried smouldering bodies away from the site.

A nearby apartment block would have been in its path had the jet continued on its course towards the airport five miles away. The airport was immediately closed because of the accident and bad weather. No casualties on the ground were reported.

Shin Mi-Ja, a fire department official at the government administration ministry, said the plane had been turning to make a second attempt to land.

Excerpts of the final conversation between the Air China pilot Wu Xinlu and the Kimhae control tower indicated that the crash was unex-

pected. But at least one passenger made calls with a mobile phone to warn people on the ground that the jet was going to crash, media reports said.

Rescue officials believe the tail of the jet hit the ground first as most of the survivors were in the front section, Yonhap news agency reported.

The plane was carrying 135 South Koreans, 18 Chinese, one Uzbek woman and 11 crew. State media in China said the pilot, Wu, and another crewmember were among those who survived.

South Korean government accident investigators were quickly at the scene and the black box flight data recorder was recovered, officials said.

Survivors and witnesses told of the crash and the ensuing devastation.

Suh Jin-Shik, a 46-year-old ethnic Korean from China, said he was flying to Busan to become a salesman. "I was awoken by a huge explosion and found I was hanging from a tree," he told reporters from his hospital bed.

Park Yong-Min, one of the first residents at the scene, told YTN television: "Pieces of the plane were spread across the crash site. Flames and smoke were pouring out of the wreckage."

South Korea's President Kim Dae-Jung and his Chinese counterpart Jiang Zemin immediately offered condolences to the families of the victims and ordered speedy help for the survivors.

In Beijing, an Air China official said this was the company's first fatal crash since it was set up in 1988.

Jonathon Dong, public relations director for Boeing Co. in China, said the company was fully prepared to help in the crash investigation with Air China and the South Korean authorities.

## Booty

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payment of Tk seven lakh. But the 'deal' did not materialise due to Sunday's incident.

Of the rest four bundles, two were sold by police and two were shown 'seized'.

But while sharing the money from sale of two bundles, a heated exchange of words started between the OC and the two others, leading to a scuffle. The incident took place at about noon, creating an embarrassing situation for others the thana.

When contacted last night, DMP Commissioner Abdul Quyum Chowdhury said they would take a decision regarding the incident after an investigation. The Deputy Commissioner of DMP (South) will probe the matter.

Asked about any immediate action against the three police officials, the commissioner said he could go not go for any action without an investigation.

## Powell

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Syria's official press hit out at the United States.

"Colin Powell's tour can achieve many things if Washington abandons its biased policy in favour of Israel and insists on the implementation of international resolutions" concerning the Israeli-Arab conflict, the ruling party daily Al-Baath said.

"To save the region, the US administration must make efforts to end the Israeli occupation of Arab territory and renounce its one-sided policy which has only ended in destructions," it added.

The English-language Syria Times said, "The US administration has not even concealed the unlimited support for the Israeli genocidal operations against the defenceless people of Palestine."

The main purpose of Powell's visit to the region has been to find a way out of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but he added Beirut and Damascus to his itinerary in a bid to prevent south Lebanon turning into a second front.

After his meeting with Assad he visited the US embassy in Damascus to talk to staff before returning to Israel.

## Gujarat CM

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The Supreme Court yesterday admitted a petition seeking the appointment of a team to investigate the violence in Gujarat, according to the Press Trust of India news agency.

Malika Sarabhai, a dancer and social worker, filed the petition after Hindu nationalist disrupted a meeting she had called last week to discuss the rehabilitation of riot victims.

At the same meeting, police beat up a dozen journalists as they tried to cover vandalism by workers of the youth wing of Vajpayee's party.

## Alamgir

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officials and employees to join the anti-government movement led from the "Janatar Mancha" in the city in 1996.

He was arrested at ZIA on return from Singapore on March 15 under Section 54 of the CrPC.

Later, the District Magistrate's Court, Dhaka gave one month's detention to Alamgir under the Special Powers Act (SPA), 1974.

The High Court on March 30 issued a rule on the government asking it to show cause within two weeks why the detention of Alamgir under the SPA should not be declared to have been made without lawful authority.

The court issued the rule upon a writ petition filed by the victim's brother Borhanuddin Khan Jahangir challenging the legality of the detention order.

Meanwhile, on April 8, after 24 days of the arrest of Alamgir under Section 54 of the CrPC, a sedition case was filed against him with the CMM's Court, Dhaka. And the following day, he was shown arrested in the sedition case.

# Graft controversy

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minister, strongly suggests an attempt to conduct economic irregularities in the process of concluding the contract," the letter went on.

However, a reply from the shipping secretary dated February 20 said the minister had proposed the meeting "with the Danish JV (joint venture) representatives if and when they visit Dhaka to negotiate a better deal for the BIWTC".

Meanwhile, the Danish claim of 'serious intention of corruption' aired by Under-secretary of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Peter Lysholt Hansen has touched off a diplomatic storm and caused embarrassment to the government.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman told the BBC yesterday that the Danish under-secretary had violated the diplomatic etiquette by bringing corruption charges against a minister of Bangladesh. He said that the government would probe the allegation.

Sources said Prime Minister Khaleda Zia called in Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain, a retired lieutenant colonel, immediately after a press conference he had convened yesterday. After the Danes brought graft charges against the minister last Thursday, the foreign ministry summoned the Danish ambassador and protested the remarks of the under-secretary. "We think the remark of the Danish under-secretary was devoid of courtesy," a foreign ministry official said at the press conference yesterday.

The Danish envoy told the foreign ministry that Thursday's press briefing was convened on the outcome of the consultation meeting and the charges were prodded out by journalists, not made deliberately.

Earlier, the Danish ambassador in a letter to the finance minister mentioned that the shipping minister in a meeting with the Danish embassy on February 6 this year had said that the finance ministry imposed the 'whole process' upon the shipping ministry.

"It was clearly stated by the minister that MOS (the Ministry of Shipping) has no sense of ownership towards the planned activity, that the activity was forced upon MOS by the Ministry of Finance, that the modality of implementation should be changed and that the feasibility of the undertaking was considered highly questionable," the Danish ambassador said in the letter.

However, the shipping secretary in his letter denied this allegation saying, "The observation that MOS has no sense of ownership towards the planned rehabilitation of Ro-Ro ferries is not real."

"The exclusion of Embassy officials in the proposed meeting never thought of, though norms and practices, in our view, does not preclude direct contact between a buyer and a supplier. It appears that your Excellency has misunderstood the spirit of the discussions and communications Hon'ble Minister for Shipping had with the esteemed Embassy officials. The only objective Hon'ble Minister was pursuing was to obtain a better bargain and overall minimisation of the cost to the BIWTC," the shipping secretary wrote.

Regarding the complaints of using a businessman for the shipping minister, the shipping secretary said, "Desirability or appropriateness of the visit of a private individual to the esteemed Embassy has been, in our view, unguardedly misplaced. I understand the gentleman had nothing to do with the rehabilitation contract of Ro-Ro ferries. He visited the Embassy for a courtesy call and Hon'ble Minister introduced him so that he was well received in the Embassy."

"In this connection I would like to draw your attention to the fact that one Col. Mujib contacted and met Hon'ble Minister for Shipping and other officials on your behalf to discuss issues relating to rehabilitation of Ro-Ro ferries. We found nothing unusual about it.

"We believe that visits of private individuals would deter neither the Royal Danish Embassy nor the Ministry of Shipping in upholding their respective national interests," the letter added.

**How all this brewed up** Denmark and Bangladesh concluded an agreement in October 2000 for rehabilitation of 10 ferries and nine landing stations on the Aricha route on the basis of a sector programme document prepared by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in May 2000.

An amount of DKK 113.80 million was earmarked for ferry and landing rehabilitation according to the shipping ministry officials.

Danish ambassador Niels Severin Munk in his letter said the commencement of the rehabilitation of the ferries at the Aricha crossing under the Transport Sector Programme Support (TSPS) has been in the process for more than two years.

"During the Annual Sector Review (ASR) in November 2001 extensive meetings were held between Bangladesh Inland water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) and the ASR team with a special focus on agreeing on which basis the contract negotiations with the potential Danish shipyard Joint Venture (JV) could commence."

Munk also mentioned that an agreement on the strategy for the negotiations was achieved on November 13 last year.

In November 2000, a tender was floated inviting bids from pre-qualified Danish shipyards for rehabilitation work of 10 Ro-Ro ferries and nine landing stations. But the tender was cancelled, as the bids received did not live up to the expectations.

Later, bids were invited for rehabilitation of four ferries out of the planned 10 from three pre-qualified Danish shipyards in

August last year. One of the bidders later withdrew, while the rest two formed a joint venture (JV).

"This again led to the cancellation of the tender as no competition could be obtained," says the shipping secretary's letter.

In this context, during Annual Sector Review in November 2001 three possible options were agreed upon for rehabilitation of the four Ro-Ro ferries.

The options are a negotiated contract with Danish JV, rehabilitation to be carried by Bangladeshi shipyards under a project management model and floating of an international tender to woo bids from pre-qualified shipyards in South East Asian region.

It was agreed that to avoid any delay it would be suitable to negotiate a contact with the Danish JV, according to the shipping secretary's letter to the Danish envoy. However, the shipping secretary in the letter said, "The alternate options would be considered in case negotiations are not successful."

The proposed negotiation with the Danish JV was done in Copenhagen from January 9-15 this year and two representative of the BIWTC attended the negotiation process. Prior to the departure of the BIWTC officials, the shipping secretary, the BIWTC and the Danish embassy held a meeting.

At the meeting, said the Danish ambassador in his letter to the finance minister, they (the Danes) handed over a copy of a confidential note on the issue to the secretary and "all details as to how the negotiations would take place were explained and discussed."

The Danish embassy at the meeting stressed that the representatives of the BIWTC should have a mandate for approval of a contract amount in line with the confidential note.

The negotiation with the Danish JV was concluded in mid-January with a negotiated draft.

As the BIWTC representatives were not given any mandate to approve the contract, the Danish embassy asked the shipping ministry to inform it by January 29 this year whether the deal was agreeable.

On their return from Copenhagen, the two BIWTC representatives reported the negotiation result to the shipping ministry and the ministry found the results 'not up to its expectations'.

Later on, at a meeting between the ministry and Danish embassy it became clear that the shipping ministry could not accept the negotiated contract without knowing the details of the JV's sub-contract with a Bangladeshi shipyard, said the Danish envoy's letter.

"However, the Ministry of Shipping decided to accept the offer of the Danish JV provided they select their counterparts in Bangladesh from three pre-qualified shipyards through competitive bids and communicate the results of the bids to the Bangladesh government for information only," the shipping secretary wrote in his letter.

"The Royal Danish Embassy in a letter dated 29 January suggested some amendments to those conditions, but those were, in MOS's view, not compatible with its requirements," mentioned the shipping secretary in the letter.

He also mentioned that the rehabilitation of each old ferries by the Danish JV would cost about Tk 16 crore, while the BIWTC bought two new Ro-Ro ferries from China at a cost of about Tk 17.4 crore.

"The price differential thus appeared to be staggering," the shipping secretary wrote.

The shipping secretary also said, "It may be recalled that the annual sector review agreement noted that 'the rehabilitation project in economic terms would be very attractive for the Bangladesh government, but that it on financial terms would not be optimal for the BIWTC if the entire rehabilitation cost shall be refunded under a relending arrangement'. The BIWTC being a commercial organisation needs to be cushioned against debt overload."

As the two sides failed to reach an agreement, the Danish ambassador said in his letter, "Under these circumstances, it is not possible for the Government of Denmark to carry out the planned development activity. I regret to inform you that the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has terminated the contract negotiations with the Danish shipyard JV and that no further consideration will be given to opt for alternative implementation methods."

## Graft cases

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done it to fulfill his political ambition, it was alleged.

Mohammad Akhteruzzaman, officer of the Bureau of Anti-corruption, filed the case with Cantonment thana against Altaf Hossain Chowdhury on October 15, 1998.

In the second case, the accused was charged with misappropriating Tk. 1,27,570 from public funds providing televisions and dish antenna to the people of his own village in 1994.

Miohammad Akhter Hamid Bhuiyan, officer of the Bureau of Anti-corruption filed the case with Cantonment thana against Altaf Hossain Chowdhury on October 15, 1998.

In another case, the accused was charged with misappropriating Tk 51,701 for his wife's treatment in Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre in Singapore in March, 1995.

Mohammad Akhteruzzaman, officer of the Anti-corruption Bureau, filed the case against the former Air Chief on October 15, 1998.

## Lightning kills 3 in Mymensingh

UNB, Mymensingh

Three people were killed and two others injured when a thunderbolt struck them at their house in Fulbaria upazila here yesterday morning.

Police and witnesses said Jalaluddin, 45, his son Ibrahim, 15, and close relative Ripon, 15, were killed as the lightning hit them at about 8 am.

Jala's wife Maleka and another person suffered critical burn injuries in the tragic incident.

They were admitted to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

## Two rescued

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She discussed this with a relative, who contacted the abductors and paid them Tk 28,000 on April 4. The gang then asked him to pay the rest at another place fixed by them.

On information from the victim's family on Saturday, a DB team led by AC Abdul Aziz was formed for his rescue. When the family went to hand over rest of the ransom money at about 1pm on Sunday at a place near a super market at Gulshan, the DB team arrested five alleged kidnappers -- Mokbul, Suman, Siraj, Shahidul and Minad. Acting on their confessional statement, the team rescued Rokan.

The abductors had kept Rokan confined at various places in Banani, Mirpu and Kalachandpur areas and tortured him. A case was filed with Badda police in this connection.

Besides, a team led by AC of DB SM Akhteruzzaman rescued Azad from a slum at Shahinbagh yesterday afternoon.

Sources said he was kidnapped by an armed man -- Md Nurul Islam alias Ovi -- from Teigaon area at about 9 am on the day. A ransom of Tk two lakh was demanded from his family for his release.

Acting on a tip-off, the DB team searched the slum, rescued the victim and arrested Ovi. A case was filed with Teigaon thana.

## Youth with knife

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an incident by a lunatic jail inmate." Declining to disclose the name of the youth, the jailer said, "He (the youth) was not carrying any knife--but something resembling a knife."

Asked how a "lunatic" prisoner was allowed to stay with other mates, the jailer said he was under treatment at the jail hospital.

When asked how he came out of the jail hospital at 11 pm, the jailer said, "This has got nothing to do with the incident."

However, a high official of the Directorate of Prisons said the youth was an accused in a murder case. He was brought to Dhaka Central Jail on Sunday and kept in Cell No. 14 at the jail hospital.

When a jail official went to the cell at night and unlocked the door, the youth suddenly ran out.

Jail guards chased him and at one stage caught him in Old Cell 20, the official said.

Two jail guards were suspended yesterday, he added.

But the authorities were tightlipped when asked about how the youth entered Alamgir's cell.

High officials of home ministry visited the jail yesterday but none met Mohiuddin, the sources said.

Mohiuddin was arrested on March 15 under Section 54 of the CrPC. A sedition case was filed against him on April 8.

The High Court instructed the jail authorities to give Mahiuddin 'division' in jail. But he has not yet been given the status, the sources said.

But the jailer claimed that Mahiuddin has been given all the facilities provided in a Division Cell.

## Hasina

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nation with potential.

She said Bangladesh had become a model of poverty alleviation and for that the G-8 group invited her to narrate the success in the Summit. "Where did this image go in last six months of the rule by the BNP-Jamaat government?"

Hasina called upon the people to take a fresh vow in the new year to bring back the lost image and hoped Bangladesh would again stand with its head high in the international arena.

Recalling last year's bomb blast at Ramna Batamul, Hasina paid rich tributes to the memory of those killed in the incident. She alleged that to tarnish the image of her government, successive bomb blasts were carried out during her five years' rule.

The discussion, presided over by Alamgir Kumkum, was also addressed by Justice KM Sobhan, Adv Tarana Halim, film actress Kabari Sanwar, film actor Farook and novelist Syed Shamsul Huq. It was followed by a cultural function.

## KCC polls

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(ward no-19), Nazrul Haq and Iqbal Hossain Gausul Azam (ward no-20), Nazir Uddin, Shahajan Howlader and Abu Saleh (ward no-21), Tariqul Islam and Mahabub Kaisar (ward no-22), Hasibul Haq Babla (ward no-23), Shamsur Rahman (ward no-24), Hannan and Moniruzzaman Mamun (ward no-27), Shirajul Islam Ali Ahmed (ward no-28), Gazi Morshed (ward no-25), Glad Uddin Boni (ward no-29) and Aman Ullah (ward no-30).

Women candidates who received notices included Fatema Chowdhury (ward no-1), Jebunnessa and Purnima Hossain (ward no-8), Kohinur Begum (ward no-8) and Majeda Khatun and Kohinur (ward no-9).

# NICVD lacks devices

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last year for a valve and a oxygenator, both of which were approved by the PMO two months later. Like the rest of the 460 patients in waiting, they are yet to be operated upon because of device dearth. "Most of the patients on the waiting list needed emergency valve replacements. But fear many of them might have died by now, or their condition deteriorated beyond the stage of operation," said one cardiac surgeon at the hospital who has examined many of the patients on the waiting list.

He continued, "In some cases, delay in valve replacement can be fatal. After a certain period of time we cannot operate on patients because their conditions turn too bad for opening the heart."

Meantime, The Daily Star has come to know that the government recently allocated Tk 2 crore for purchase of certain medical items including valves and oxygenators.

The NICVD has requisitioned one hundred valves and an equal number of oxygenators. The Central Medical Store Depot (CMSD), a wing of the health direc-

torate, imports them.

But sources in the NICVD alleged that despite informing the CMSD well in advance, the authorities concerned ignored the call and took no initiatives to arrange fresh supply of valves and oxygenators.

An official of the CMSD however said that the purchase committee delayed in approving the purchase list that included several other items like medicines and other medical devices.

"We are in the process of purchasing the items and hope to get the shipment of fresh stock shortly," said a CMSD official.

When contacted, Director of the CMSD Brigadier General Abul Kalam Azad refused to give any details.

He was phoned several times last week for his comments. This correspondent also went to meet him at his office twice, but on both occasions he was not available. He was also requested to give his comments to The Daily Star by fax.

According to sources, it would take at least another two months before fresh stocks of valves and oxygenators would be available.

# Danish charges