

Dhaka dares Danes to prove graft

Copenhagen stands by charges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has asked Copenhagen to prove the graft charges it brought against Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, while talking to newsmen yesterday, asked the Royal Danish Embassy to justify the charges.

The foreign minister talked to the press following a lengthy meeting with the prime minister and the finance minister at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday afternoon.

Foreign ministry sources said the foreign minister, the foreign secretary and top ministry officials also met yesterday. The meeting drafted a letter to be sent to the Danish government immediately asking it to prove the charges.

On the other hand, in an interview with the BBC Radio yesterday Danish foreign ministry Under-secretary Peter Lysholt Hansen said this was the first attempt by any Bangladeshi official to resort to any sort of corruption in Danish-assisted projects.

He said they stand by the graft charges against the shipping minister.

Hansen on Saturday brought the corruption charges against the minister at a press briefing.

The Danish claim of 'serious intention of corruption' has whipped up a diplomatic storm and put the government into an embarrassing situation.

"The Danish statement is devoid of diplomatic norms. They cannot say anything based on apprehension. What is the basis of their statement?" the foreign minister asked.

"We will proceed in line with the diplomatic norms and the Vienna convention," he told the newsmen on the government's next step.

Hansen told the BBC that he hoped the government would act on this matter since it pledged to fight corruption.

The Danish under-secretary also said their cooperation with the shipping ministry is over and issued a vague warning when he said, "I hope Denmark will not have to take such a step in other areas of cooperation (with Bangladesh)."

As the prime minister had closed-door talks with her top aides, specula-

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PHOTO: AFP

Israeli soldiers look on as Palestinian Red Crescent medics remove a body from the West Bank's Jenin refugee camp yesterday. Palestinians have charged that hundreds of people have been killed in the camp, including many civilians, while Israel said that dozens died, most of them gunmen during recent fierce fighting there.

Miss-adventure!

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Her grandma rebuked her for not being attentive in her studies. And off she went with two other friends on a Tom Sawyer adventure that ended in police custody yesterday.

Nahar Mou, 11, a class five student, got some bashing from her grandma for neglecting her studies. And so, she planned a slip from home. Mou got her two classmates Eva and Jinia as partners in adventure, who thought it a great idea to escape from the pressure for studies.

Yesterday, Jinia took Tk 500 from her mother 'to pay for her school exams and other fees'. Like any other day, the trio came out of their houses all dressed up. And nobody had a hint that they tugged away casual wear inside their schoolbags.

The three friends went straight to the Kamalapur Railway Station in the city, changed their clothes inside a bathroom, and then bought tickets for Sylhet.

But luck was against them, or rather favoured them, as on-duty railway police men smelled something fishy in three small girls waiting alone for a train trip. After interrogation, police found out the truth and took them to custody.

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Crimes continue to bug business

ADB forecasts dip in GDP to 4-4.5 pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In its latest quarterly economic update, the Asian Development Bank has said that the ruling and opposition parties must work out their differences for the country to carry on with the "much needed critical reforms".

Moreover, it says the law and order continues to be a concern, as

"crime rates remain high in the capital and some other parts of the country".

The ADB's Quarterly Economic Update for March 2002 also forecasts that the GDP growth in the 2002 fiscal is likely to come down to 4 to 4.5 per cent from 5.2 per cent in the 2001 fiscal.

"Political will is most important for removing the domestic weakness,"

said Toru Shibuichi, resident representative of the ADB, while formally releasing the report at a press conference in the city.

The report forecasts that unfavourable external environment, the economic fallout of September 11 as well as weak external and domestic demands are likely to drive down the country's GDP growth during the

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On-arrival visas restricted

30 from 8 countries held up at ZIA for five hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has restricted on-arrival visas on April 10 that was so far open to encourage investors, sources said.

Some 30 investors and businessmen from eight different countries were held up for five hours at the Zia International Airport on Monday for arriving without a visa. They were ultimately issued visas on intervention

of the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers Association (BGMEA).

The immigration authorities yesterday also refused visa to five such visitors from Saudi Arabia who flew in here by Gulf Air, according to business sources. However, the immigration authorities denied such incident when contacted.

According to home ministry sources, the restriction

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Vajpayee had tagged transit with trade issue: Envoy

STAR REPORT

The High Commission of India in Dhaka has claimed that Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee while assuring Bangladesh of duty-free access to 25-category items had tagged the issues of border trade and transit with it.

The high commission said Vajpayee had mentioned of an early meeting of a 'Joint Experts Group', which would examine the duty-free access of goods along with the

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Dhaka agrees to help rebuild Afghan army and police

Substantial funds needed, says foreign secy

M ANWARUL HAQ

Bangladesh has agreed to extend professional expertise to rebuild the national army and police force in the war-torn Afghanistan.

Dhaka has articulated its assurance in this regard at the recently held meeting on the Reconstruction of Afghanistan in Geneva early this month.

However, it will require 'substantial funds' either from the UN Trust

Fund or other western nations for its full-scale involvement in rebuilding the Afghan army and police.

Bangladesh has agreed to send trainers to Kabul "on agreed terms of funding and command", Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury, who attended the special meeting on Afghanistan, told The Daily Star Monday.

Sending Bangladesh army and police officials with necessary expertise all the way to Afghanistan,

however, would require substantial international contribution, he said.

Bangladesh, the foreign secretary said, has expressed its desire to offer immediately its existing training facilities and a specific number of seats in its military and police academies for training potential Afghan Army and police officers.

The prospective size of the new Afghan Army is yet to be determined, but sources said it could be

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Mujibnagar Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the historic Mujibnagar Day. This day in 1971, Bangladesh's first government in exile was formed at Amrakanon in Baidyanathola of Meherpur district.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman headed the government as the president and supreme commander of the armed forces. Syed Nazrul Islam was made acting president of the revolutionary government in the absence of the

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