

More M-16 rifles out there

ZAYADUL AHSAN

There are at least eight more M-16 assault rifles in the capital in the possession of underworld dons including a former member of the parliament. The criminal gangs are now trying to get organised and collecting modern weapons from the port city.

Some Dhaka-based crime cartels have bought several AK-47s and a couple of M-16s from Chittagong over the past few weeks, police and underworld sources said.

The M-16 that belongs to Tokai Sagar, now on the run, is in the possession of a Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) group.

The 7-Star group led by Subrata Bain alias Shuvro also has one M-16, and so does the son of an AL leader, who is now in jail, underworld sources confirmed.

The gang of Saidur Rahman Newton, the BNP-backed ward commissioner of Mirpur who was later slain early this year, now owns two M-16s.

A former MP, who was a student leader, also has an M-16 with 800 rounds of ammunitions, sources said. The weapon is now hidden at a Nakhapara

residence in the city.

The M-16, which was seized in the city Sunday night, was brought in from an Awami League (AL) leader in Chittagong to be delivered to an underworld don in the city's Mohammadpur area, police investigation revealed.

The assault rifle, purchased for Tk 4.5 lakh, reached the city on an inter-city train on Friday.

Abdur Razzak, a listed criminal of Dhaka, bought the weapon from Fazle Rabbi alias Shufal, son of a customs official in Chittagong. Razzak, Shufal and two of their associates were arrested along with the assault rifle at Uttara.

It was the second such weapon recovered by police. The first one was seized in Chittagong during the last caretaker government.

Shufal, put on remand along with the others, told police that a businessman, Raju, was the original owner and gave the weapon to an AL leader in Chittagong. The AL leader had the weapon in his possession for over a year.

Meanwhile, Raju had been looking for a customer and Shufal, who happened to know Raju, helped Razzak buy the assault rifle.

Police sources said Shufal and Razzak were in Dhaka looking for a pro

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PHOTO: STAR

Marooned people await relief with bowls and other utensils in the submerged Kamrangir Char area on the outskirts of the city yesterday.

Govt withdraws graft charges against ex-speaker

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The government has withdrawn the charges against former speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali in a corruption case filed during the Awami League rule.

The case against him and two others of two NGOs was filed in March 1997 by the district anti-corruption office.

It was alleged that they had defalcated Tk 5, 39,000 given to two NGOs in 1995 for the welfare of destitute women. The money was allocated on the recommendation of the former speaker.

Special Judge ATM Fazle Kabir exempted Razzak Ali from the charges following a prayer by public prosecutor Advocate Shahidul Alam on August 3. The PP submitted to the court necessary documents stating the government's intention not to press the charges against the former speaker.

Chargsheet in the case was submitted in July last year and hearing of the case will begin on September 1 with the framing of charges.

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\$1b monorail deal at final stage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has almost finalised a \$1 billion monorail project to ease traffic congestion and facilitate commuting in the capital city.

An international firm has already submitted a proposal to install a monorail system on built, own and transfer (BOT) basis. Minister for Communications Nazmul Huda said yesterday. He was talking to members of the Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) at his Secretariat office.

The project, expected to be complete within the next three years, will primarily cover the densely populated and high traffic areas. The monorail system will be initially laid out between Gulistan and Sadarghat, and along the Airport Road. The network will then be gradually expanded.

The process to finalise the project is now at its final stage, the minister said. At the same time, the government has also concentrated on modernisation of road network and traffic management. Scrutiny of proposals, submitted by several international firms, has already started. The communication ministry is also working on several proposals for cable car and sky train.

Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and several other countries are keen to invest in the communication sector, especially in the capital.

In this regard, he referred to his meeting with Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who was in Dhaka

last month on an official visit.

"The Thai government is interested to help Bangladesh develop its traffic system," Huda said. "It has already agreed to help build flyovers in some key areas of the city so that inter-district transports cannot create traffic jams."

The government has taken several measures to tackle air pollution in the capital and other major cities of the country, he said.

Ban on two-stroke wheelers in the city from September 1 is the first step in this direction, he added. "Initially, there will be shortage in the public transport system but we have made arrangements for alternative vehicles."

Some 2,500 CNG-run three-wheelers already ply the city roads and Uttara Motors Limited "has been given permission to import more", he said. "However, the number of CNG-run three-wheelers in the city will not exceed 10,000."

Also, taxicab operators have also got the nod to import more vehicles to their fleets, he said. "The government already has plans to withdraw a restriction on taxicab import."

The Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) has also decided to launch its own taxicab service, he informed. "A joint venture deal has been struck with

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Policemen led raid, say DU hall guards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Security guards of the Shamsunnahar Hall and general students have told the judicial probe committee that policemen attacked the female students of the hall on July 24 night.

However, the non-student leaders of the Jatiyatatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and police officers said otherwise.

Meanwhile, the FIR filed against 18 students and former provost of the hall Prof. Sultan Shafi accusing them of ransacking room No. 235 and looting valuables was, in fact, filed around 10:45 on the night of July 23, sources said.

Four security guards who were on-duty at the hall during the police swoop said that policemen stormed into the hall breaking open the main entrance at about 12:00 midnight. However, they would not say how many policemen went inside the hall.

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More Indian wheat found in silos

food godowns in Pabna and promised stern action against all those involved in the mischief once the food ministry-formed investigation committee submits its report on August 14.

The probe committee headed by a joint secretary, Md. Yakub Ali, yesterday collected five sacks of wheat samples from the 37 godowns under Muladuli Central Supply Depot (CSD) and one godown of BADC in Pabna for carrying out four different chemical tests to ascertain their quality, grade and origin (homegrown or imported). The tests would be conducted in Dhaka.

After visiting the 37 godowns under Muladuli CSD in Pabna, Yakub Ali said, "Press reports have been a little exaggerated." He declined to elaborate, but hoped that the committee would be able to

submit its report to the ministry by August 14.

Earlier, the probe body visited Mymensingh. It would move to Bogra from Pabna tomorrow and then proceed to Sathkhira to investigate the alleged wheat procurement scam there.

Talking to the local press in Pabna yesterday, the food minister said, "We will find out whether or not the imported wheat meant for use as poultry feed has been procured."

Asked about the ruling BNP men's involvement in the wheat scandal, Noman said, "People belonging to all political parties are there in the food trade. So, it is not important whether people of a certain party are involved in wrongdoing or not. Rather, we will try to

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HC declares Khokan's detention illegal

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday declared the detention of Awami League leader Mohammad Syeed alias Khokan illegal and ordered his immediate release "unless he is charged under any other case".

A division bench comprising Justice MA Aziz and Justice Mohammad Momtazuddin Ahmed delivered the verdict upon hearing a writ petition challenging the detention order.

Syed Khokan, a contestant in the last general election and son of former mayor of Dhaka Mohammad Hanif, was arrested by the Detective Branch of Police on June 29. He was initially detained for 30 days on July 1, but later the detention was extended for 90 days.

The writ petition was filed on July 6 when a division bench comprising Justice Mohammad Hamidul Hoque and Justice Nazmura Ara Sultan issued a rule asking the government to explain in two weeks why the

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Govt borrowing breaks revised FY02 barrier

SHAHRIAR KARIM

Borrowing from the banking system has overshot the FY02 target by 85.71 per cent despite the government's promise to keep it as low as possible.

The latest figures released by the Bangladesh Bank put government borrowing till June 30 at Tk 3,123.62, way beyond a target of Tk 1,682 crore, revised by the incumbent administration for FY02 while outlining the FY03 budget.

Till June 30, 2002 the government borrowed Tk 1,878.41 crore from the central bank and Tk 1,245.21 crore from different schedule banks, according to the Bangladesh Bank figures.

The borrowed amount is 7.55 per cent higher than that in the previous fiscal.

The government resorted to huge bank borrowing in the last fiscal despite trimming the size of the annual development programme (ADP) and reasonable revenue collection.

In the revised budget, the government slashed Tk 3,000 crore off the original ADP outlay of Tk 19,000 crore. Moreover, according to sources, implementation rate of the ADP for the FY02 remained below 70 per cent, which means less spending.

On the other hand, revenue collection from the NBR source stood at Tk 20,261.13 crore in the FY02, only 2.26 per cent short of the Tk 20,730 crore target.

In this context, questions have been raised as to what induced such a

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80 more down with dengue in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than 80 people were admitted to city hospitals and clinics with dengue yesterday.

Most patients were diagnosed with less than 30,000 platelets in the blood -- the count said to be dangerous, said sources.

"The number of dengue tests is increasing every day. The number of confirmatory tests is also staggering," said Prof. Zahidul Hasan, a microbiologist at the Lab Aid Diagnostic Centre.

The Medinova Diagnostic has carried out 70 tests for dengue over the last five days, with 50 per cent positive.

The Popular Diagnostic tested 12 blood samples yesterday, with seven positive.

Prof. Ruhul Amin, a leading child

specialist and head of the respiratory unit of Dhaka Shishu Hospital, said, "In dengue infection, the platelet count suddenly decreases especially when it comes to a child...it's quite dramatic... but the count less than 30,000 is not dangerous. Even if the platelet count continues to go down, there is nothing to worry about if the patient is diagnosed early on with the fluid loss in control."

The platelet count is just a primary clue to dengue infection, and what the patients have to do to confirm dengue infection is undergo blood sample tests, he said.

The Comfort Nursing Home diagnosed 19 out of 23 blood sam

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