

Tap *halal* product markets, Khosru asks exporters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury has suggested the business community to enter the big market for halal products worldwide.

"Millions of Muslims are now living in Europe and America and there is a big market for halal products," he said while addressing a roundtable discussion yesterday as chief guest. Halal products are those produced as per Islamic Shariah.

Halal products do not include only food items; there are many other items which Muslims prefer to buy, he said.

The roundtable on 'European Union, Asia and Bangladesh' was also addressed by State Minister for Finance Shah M Abul Hussain MPA and former Bangladesh ambassadors Mohammad Zamir, Mohammad Mohsin and Walur Rahman.

Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILIA) organised the roundtable at its office at Dhanmondi in the city.

The commerce minister said the government is trying hard for duty-free access of Bangladeshi products in developed countries and is getting very positive responses.

Canada has already allowed duty-free and quota-free access of Bangladeshi goods. Exports to that country will increase by more than 300 million dollars within a very short time, he said.

He hoped that Norway, China, Korea and many other countries will also give 'some sort of market access' to Bangladeshi products very soon.

Revenue earning crosses target in first 4 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Revenue earning surpassed the target and posted around 25 per cent growth in the first four months of the current fiscal.

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) sources said a total of Tk 6,772.37 crore was collected as revenue during the July-October period, surpassing the target by Tk 106 crore. The target was fixed at Tk 6,666.61 crore for the period.

During the same period of last fiscal, the collection was Tk 5,429.67 crore.

Revenue collection in October this year grew by 31 per cent over the year. A total of Tk 1,807.33 crore was collected in October this year against last fiscal's Tk 1,380.27 crore in the same month. The target for October this fiscal was Tk 1,745.05 crore.

The government has set a target of Tk 23,750 crore in revenue collection for the current fiscal, up from last fiscal's Tk 20,300.70 crore target.

Licensed arms

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criminals, from across the country in the last 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday.

Forty-four firearms, including five pistols, eight revolvers, five guns, two rifles and 19 shotguns, and 265 rounds of ammunition were also recovered.

In the capital, the troops raided markets and rid footholds of illegal occupants in different areas. They also lent helping hand to police in clearing traffic jams at different parts of the city.

Our Magura correspondent reports the army arrested general secretary of the Magura Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Nazimuddin Ahmed at noon yesterday from a stationary shop at the Chourangi Square in the town and handed him over to the police after nearly two hours of interrogation.

Seven people were also arrested, handed over to police and produced

Lake-grab bid

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the lake area, shouting slogans. They also demanded proper enforcement of the wetland protection act, 2000 and called upon the government to bring the violators to justice, even if it is a ministry.

At the rally, the speakers blamed the Rajuk for not taking proper steps to develop the lake with an integrated approach.

Criticising the Rajuk and the Ministry of Housing and Public Works, the demonstrators alleged that the government failed to meet the people's demand for protection of the lake.

The leaders of the BAPA and different organisations gave an ultimatum to the authorities to evict illegal occupiers shortly and vowed to hold a grand rally after Ramadan in case of the government's failure.

Abu Naser Khan of the BAPA has said that if the authorities fail to protect the lake from the encroachers, the organisation will build a movement against those responsible.

Feroz M Hassan and Munira Afza Naim of Baridhara Society, Golam Sarwar of Biswa Sahitya Kendra, Dr Mahbub Hossain of the Independent University and Advocate Abed Raza of Sylhet Division Development Council, among others, addressed the rally.

Bangladeshi agricultural items can get markets even in China and Korea as they are getting away from agricultural products following massive industrialisation, Khosru said.

He said prospects for further growth of Bangladesh's relations with European countries are very bright. Bangladesh is the biggest beneficiary of various trade facilities provided by the EU.

Shah M Abul Hussain emphasised diversification of exports as ready made garments, the major foreign currency earner, will face 'serious difficulties' after elimination of quota facilities in 2005.

Bangladeshi should also have good knowledge of English language to get employment abroad.

The state minister said arable lands are shrinking in the country due to unplanned housing in rural areas. There should be some rules to stop this. Setting up of cluster villages and model villages can address the problem to some extent, he said.

Former ambassador Mohammad Mohsin said Bangladesh should give more attention to building relations with EU as it is a very dynamic organisation and is getting stronger.

The number of EU member will be 24 soon from existing 15, he noted.

The other speakers sought EU assistance for environment protection, poverty reduction and population control in Bangladesh. They said developed nations have some responsibility to save the planet from ruination due to environmental hazards.

22 die during army drive: AKS report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-two people died during the countryside anticrime drive that started on October 17, mentioned a report of the Ain o Shalish Kendro (ASK) yesterday.

The ASK report was prepared on the basis of various newspaper reports.

The report said, of the 22 dead people, autopsy reports of only five came to light. Four were said to have died due to heavy torture and one of heart failure.

According to the report, unnatural death cases were filed for eight other deaths but no legal actions have been taken regarding the remaining ones.

The report said a sub inspector was suspended for one death incident in Munshiganj but as for the concerned army personnel and law enforcers in other death incidents, no actions were taken.

The drive to nab criminals was jointly launched by the army, police and the BDR.

Nurul Absar

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huge quantity of firearms and ammunition from Fatkhkhari. The army was also looking for Absar.

The army-led joint force yesterday arrested 23 people including general secretary of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal Chittagong Medical College unit Mohammad Shahin.

Shahin was picked up from the college campus and 22 others, mostly passport brokers and extortionists, from Panchlaish regional passport office premises, sources said.

Besides, the army personnel took control of city's Bahaddarhat bus terminal in the morning in an effort to free the terminal from extortionists.



Prime Minister Khaleida Zia addresses a public meeting at Fulgazi Pilot High School ground in Feni yesterday.

PM: A political party

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road and the new administrative Fulgazi upazila.

Khaleida asked all involved in the anti-crime drive to be careful so that innocent people including women were not harassed.

She said people have started getting positive results of the joint operation and sought their cooperation in the government's ongoing programmes for development of the country.

She said huge arms were given illegally to the party leaders and workers by the past government and the arms were now being used against the people.

Khaleida said the government has started joint operation involving the army, BDR, police, Ansar and in some places navy to restore peace, security and stability in the country.

She sought cooperation of the people for nabbing criminals and recovering arms to restore peace, stability and security.

The Prime Minister said the joint operation has created an environment where people can have a sigh of relief and the country proceeds towards stability.

The Prime Minister visited her Sripur village home in Fulgazi upazila.

Earlier, the Prime Minister announced Fulgazi as a new administrative upazila. She laid the foundation of the new upazila to meet the commitment she made to people before election.

She said steps would be taken to repair Feni-Shubapur road and renovate 25 primary schools in this parliamentary constituency.

The prime minister said a computer training institute was being set up here to help the youths get job both at home and abroad while rural electrification programme would be expanded.

She said a particular political party has started campaigning against the country. She urged the people to remain alert against those anti-Bangladesh campaigners and their intrigues. She said that the party would further be isolated from people in future.

Addressing a gathering while inaugurating the new Chhagalnaiya Municipality, she called upon the agencies involved in the anti-crime drive to be careful so that innocent people, particularly women, were not harassed during the operation.

Khaleida formally inaugurated the new municipality at Chhagalnaiya by unveiling a plaque amid loud applause from cheering thousands.

Govt clinically dead: Hasina

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has failed to perform only within a year in office. The army is virtually running the country and we are witnessing a kind of covert martial law," she said.

"Public opinion is now against the government. If the government has the minimum respect for democracy, it should resign immediately and go for mid-term elections," said Hasina. "We don't see any other alternative left for the government."

"I want immediate elections. It's now a public demand and the peo-

ple would press it home in due time," she said. She also stated that her party was ready for elections anytime.

Accusing the government of using the army for persecuting political opponents, she said the real criminals belonging to the ruling coalition are still out of army reach.

"The BNP activists detained during the army drive are being freed," she said and wondered why the "armed activists" of the Jamaat-e-Islami and its student front Islami Chhatra Shibir were not arrested yet.

"What's the mystery that the Jamaat-Shibir hideouts with illegal arms are still well-protected?" she asked and demanded action against ruling party leaders including many ministers for "patronising" crimes.

Asked if she wants the army withdrawn, the former prime minister said it is for the government to decide.

Explaining the present political situation, Hasina was critical about some aspects of the current anti-crime drive, including the deaths of 20 people.

"We must remember that none has been given the license to kill anyone in the name of curbing crime," she said and demanded inquiry into these deaths.

"The government totally ignored the parliament and the opposition while calling out the army. It even did not explain under what legal arrangement the army has been deployed," the opposition leader noted.

Accusing the government of undermining the army's image for its political ends, she said the government was trying to shift its failure and misrule to the army.

Miss Bangladesh contest 2003 in New York on Jan 20

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Miss Bangladesh competition 2003 will be held in New York on January 20.

This is the first time Bangladeshi contestants across the globe will be participating in a beauty contest in the United States of America (USA).

This was announced at a press conference at a city hotel yesterday by GM Khan Lipton, chief executive director of Miss Bangladesh USA and Entertainment Inc. Entertainment Inc. is the organiser of the event.

"The competition is to become an annual event and the winners will eventually participate in the prestigious Miss Universe and Miss World pageants" said Lipton.

He said the aim of the competition is to provide young Bangladeshi women with an opportunity to display their talents, to heighten their self-esteem and to enhance the image of the Bangladeshi community.

He added that the contest would provide a rewarding experience for all the participants.

The competitors have to be smart, beautiful, talented and within the age group of 18 to 25 years with a height of at least 5'4", Lipton added.

Eminent and respected members of the Bangladeshi, American and international communities will judge the competitors, he said.

He informed that organisation is to bear the expenses of the participants passing the primary

Newton murder Arrested 5 placed on remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Five persons, arrested in connection with the killing of DCC Ward Commissioner Newton, were placed on a two-day remand yesterday.

Detective Branch (DB) of police produced Mizanur Rahman alias Kala Mizan, Mizanur Rahman, Masud Iqbal, Mohammad Azam and Tofazzal Hossain before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM's) Court, Dhaka at 4 pm yesterday with a prayer for a seven-day remand.

In the prayer, the Investigation Officer (IO) of the case said that he gathered some important information about the involvement of the arrested during the investigation into the murder. So, they should be remanded to gather more information from them, the IO said.

After hearing, Magistrate Mamun Al-Rashid placed them on a two-day remand.

Saidur Rahman Newton, Commissioner of ward no. 8, was gunned down by a gang of miscreants in the city's Dhanmondi area on May 10.

Later, a murder case was filed with Dhanmondi police station accusing nine people same day.

"We believe that the constitution is above everything. The constitutional provisions must be maintained during the army operation. None is above the constitution and the law. The army will also have to go by the law."

To another question about her statement on 'existence of terrorist network' in Bangladesh, Hasina said her information was based on the national and international context and what Bangladeshi newspapers reported.

She showed a report in the daily Prothom Alo on March 9, 1999, that quoted IOJ leader Fazlul Huq Amin at a public meeting at Paltan Maidan as saying "We are Pro-Osama and pro-Taliban; we will go to power in 2000."

Defending her statement, Hasina said speaking against the government does not mean speaking against the country.

Responding to a question about gas export, the former prime minister reiterated that gas could be exported only after ensuring a reserve for 50 years' domestic requirement. OCAB President Parveen F Chowdhury chaired the briefing session while its General Secretary Mokhesur Rahman Chowdhury gave the vote of thanks.

Larma

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Brojakishor Tripuran and Gafur Ahmad Talukder.

They warned of a tougher movement if the peace accord is not implemented.

Later, 200 JSS central committee representatives and 80 observers attended a closed-door council meeting.

Pregnancy-related complication 27,900 women die a year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 27,900 women die from pregnancy-related complication each year, noted the speakers at a workshop in the city yesterday.

The South-South Centre, Bangladesh organised the workshop to sensitise people on the present situation of maternal mortality and morbidity and develop a strategy for reduction of maternal mortality in the country.

The major causes of maternal mortality are postpartum haemorrhage, eclampsia, and induced abortion, said Dr. Halida Hanum in her keynote paper.

She said about 70 per cent of women suffer from nutritional deficiency anaemia during pregnancy and nearly 87 per cent do not have assistance from a trained attendant. Both the rural and urban women hardly receive any post-natal care from a medically competent person, she

added.

Not only maternal mortality, the women also suffer from maternal morbidity and live with continual discomfort without seeking remedy. "Since it is related to their private organs, the women do not feel like talking about it," Dr Halida noted.

However, she said, maternal mortality rate has reduced to 3.92 per thousand live births in 2000 from 5.4 in 1986.

The speakers recommended strengthening coordination between the government and health professionals to reduce the maternal mortality.

Speaking as chief guest, Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain said that Bangladesh has successfully brought down maternal mortality rate to 3 per thousand live births in 2001.

The minister also said under the National Maternal Health Strategy, selected Family Welfare Assistants (FWAs) and Female Health Assistants

(FHAs) will be trained to make them Skilled Birth Attendants (SBAs). UNFPA representative Dr Suneeta Mukharjee said the UNFPA Bangladesh will help establish a Fistula Centre at Dhaka Medical College Hospital to treat the patients with injuries caused at the time of delivery.

Chaired by Md. Fazlur Rahman, Director General, Directorate of Family Planning, the workshop was moderated by Mahbubul Alam, Editor of the Independent.

Jalaluddin Ahmed, Director, South-South Centre, Dr Timothee Gandah, Executive Director, Partners in population and Development, Dr Jahir Uddin Ahmed, Director, MCH, Dr. Ahmed Al-Sabir, Director, Research NIPORT, and Dr Josephine Moyo, Director, Corporate Development and Information Sharing, also spoke on the occasion.

Qureshi placed on 5 days' remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Nazrul Islam Qureshi, production director of Impress Telefilm Limited (Channel-I), arrested on charge of smuggling foreign currency, was placed on five days' remand yesterday.

Utara police produced Qureshi before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court, Dhaka at 6:00 pm yesterday with a prayer for seven days' remand.

In the prayer police said Qureshi sheltered Kala Faruk, a notorious criminal, for seven months. Moreover, Qureshi was involved in sending 'terrorists' abroad by identifying them as men of the news media.

He (Qureshi) should be remanded for collection of more information about his involvement in sending Kala Faruk abroad, police said.

Police also recovered 3,00 US dollars from Qureshi and 1600 US Dollars from Kala Faruk, which were not endorsed in their passports.

After hearing, Magistrate Shafiq Anwar placed him on five days' remand for interrogation.

Qureshi was arrested from Zia International Airport yesterday as he tried to smuggle Kala Faruk out of the country by including the criminal in the cultural troupe led by him. The troupe was to fly to Sweden in a British Airways flight.

A case was filed with Uttara thana accusing Qureshi and Kala Faruk.

Ramadan

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including religious affairs secretary Khawaja Abdur Rahman and Director General of the Islamic Foundation Syed Ashraf Ali.

The meeting examined information from various sources across the country, but no news of moon sighting was received.

Meanwhile, prices of essentials have gone up at different markets in the city with the Ramadan in the offing. City dwellers expressed their dissatisfaction over the price hike.

Although, at a recent meeting, businessmen assured the government that price of essentials will remain steady, widespread apprehension among people regarding further price hike during the Ramadan was reported.

Public reps

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army drive.

Among the arrested MPs are Sheikh Fazul Karim Selim and Talukder Abdul Khaleque of the AL, health minister and state minister for relief and rehabilitation of the previous government respectively, and ousted AL leader Hemayetullah Awrang.

Of the 14 ward commissioners arrested so far, four each belong to the Dhaka and Chittagong City Corporations. The DCC commissioners, all affiliated to the BNP, are Ismail Hossain Benu, Anwaruzzaman, Motahar Hossain Jahangir and Shahidul Islam while the CCC commissioners, all affiliated to the AL, are Mohammad Hossain Hiron, Nurul Haq, Mohammad Aslam and Giasuddin.

The army also arrested Khulna City Corporation ward commissioners SM Nurul Islam (AL) and Anisur Rahman Biswas (BNP), Rajshahi City Corporation ward commissioners Rezaunnabi al-Mamun and Abdul Hamid Sarkar Tekon (AL), Sylhet City Corporation ward commissioner Jagadish Das (AL) and Barisal City Corporation ward commissioner Kabiruddin Hannu (Jatiya Party).

Among the municipality chairmen arrested are AL leader Hasibul Hasan Lablu of Faridpur, AKM Nazrul Islam of Nabiganj, Mohammad Ali of Fakirhat and Mainuddin Mandal of Chapainawabganj.

Criminal Faruq dies

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Speculations run rife that police tortured Faruq during interrogation and later shot him in the leg and left him to bleed to death.

"The wound was not serious at all and Faruq even talked to doctors at the Pongu hospital," the OC said.

The criminal was taken to the hospital at 12:40am and was declared dead at about 1:10am, he added.

Police said on-duty doctors reported cardiac arrest as the reason for Faruq's death.

The first inquest carried out by Sub-inspector Shafiqul Islam of the Tejoan Police Station at about 4:05pm at the Pongu hospital said the body bore marks of bruises in both hands, abdomen and back.

A white tape was stuck to his left hand and a wound was found in left knee. Both his feet were badly bruised and there were injury marks in his right thigh.

The body was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday morning. But doctors at the forensic department refused to carry out post-mortem without the presence of a magistrate since the victim died in police custody. Later, Metropolitan Magistrate Faruq Rahman went to the DMCH morgue and carried out the inquest report.

The content of the inquest report could not be known. The magistrate took the report with him after showing it to the forensic doctors.

The body was kept at the DMCH morgue under police guard. No relatives of the victim went to the hospital till 7:00pm yesterday.

Kala Faruq was arrested at Zia International Airport as he was trying to fly to Sweden under fake identity of Haji Abdur Rashid. He was taken to the Airport Police Station and later, was handed over to the Uttara Police Station. From there, he was taken to the Kafur Police Station.

Police also arrested Nazrul Islam Koreshi, production director of Channel-I, as he tried to smuggle Faruq out of the airport as a member of a cultural team that was flying to Sweden on a British Airways flight.

Faruq, the 38-year-old criminal, was a class eight dropout. Later, he became a driver of another underworld don, Liaquat.

Later, he became close to DCC ward commissioner Sarwar of Tejoan. Faruq was an accused in the murder of BCL leader and vice-president of the Polytechnic Institute Riyadh.

Faruq joined the Jatiya Party (Ershad) before the October general elections as an 'industrialist' and contested from Choudhagram on its ticket.

The victim was accused in more than 19 cases including those of murders and robberies, police said.

AL MPs

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October 23 and submitted a memorandum following the arrest of party leaders Sheikh Fazul Karim Selim MP, a former minister and Saber Hossain Chowdhury, a former deputy minister, by army under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPc).

The memorandum said the recent raids on houses of some lawmakers without warrants or specific charges are unprecedented. After arrest, Selim and Saber were taken to unknown destinations and asked 'irrelevant and irritating questions by unidentified people', it said.

Later, while giving his reaction to the press, the Speaker declined to comment on the arrest of Sheikh Fazul Karim Selim, but said anybody could be arrested under Section 54 of the CrPc.

"Any citizen can also catch anybody on suspicion and hand over the suspected person to law enforcing agency," he told a group of reporters at his chamber when the newsmen sought his comment on arrests by army without warrant.

After submission of the memorandum, two more lawmakers were arrested one of them independent and the other belonging to AL on October 25 and November 1 respectively. Photo of an arrested lawmaker with his hands tied behind and eyes blindfolded, published in national dailies, further enraged the lawmakers who found such treatment as insulting and violation of human rights.

On October 28, two AL lawmakers walked out of a parliamentary committee meeting as its BNP members refused to adopt a resolution condemning army action against MPs, which the AL dubbed as 'infringement on privileges and prestige' of legislators.

AL sources hinted that in the coming parliament session, the party would seek an explanation from the government about the current armed operation and legal coverage of such action.

Some 18 custodial deaths since beginning of the drive on October 17 is another matter of grave concern to AL and the party wants to raise the issue in the parliament, the sources added.

Gasoline levy

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The current process of tax collection for road maintenance is not effective, the delegation said.

The LGRD minister referred the proposal of tax on gasoline to the finance minister.

The delegation also proposed demarcation of highways, feeder roads and the local government ministry-constructed rural roads for smooth maintenance.

Bhuiyan said his ministry is working on demarcation of its roads and will complete the task soon.

The delegation led by WB Country Director Frederick T Temple, meeting sources said, expressed concern over maintenance of roads and highways and underscored an effective way of maintenance.

Bangladesh is expanding its road network in phases with foreign and domestic funds, but there is a serious lack of maintenance, the delegation told Bhuiyan.

The delegation also suggested preparation for a master plan of the capital and other big cities to build a planned urban settlement and wanted to know from the LGRD minister if the government has any plan to channel funds into it.

In reply, Bhuiyan said the government does not need to mobilise funds to prepare a master plan, as the country has engineering departments in all cities and towns to prepare a master plan.

The country needs to prepare a master plan even for the thana-level because of unplanned urbanisation that hampers construction of roads and other infrastructures