

PSI firm, its MD

FROM PAGE 1

agent Inspectorate Bangladesh Ltd. Ahmed, the MD who evaded Tk 10 crore in income taxes, had four accounts with the Standard Chartered Bank, IFIC Bank (Barisal Branch), IFIC Bank (Shantinagar Branch), and the HSCB between 1999-2000 and 2004-05. The Central Intelligence Cell of the NBR found that Ahmed did not show the savings, bank balance and the incomes in his income tax return.

Ahmed also did not cite his real salary, which is very high, in his tax returns.

The NBR investigation found that Ahmed deposited Tk 114 crore in the four accounts from 1999 to 2005.

Ahmed has built a number of houses in recent times. If the government takes legal steps against him to know his source of finances for these houses and how much he is earning from them now, the government can unearth more cases of tax evasion, sources said.

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) is investigating the sources of the deposits in the four accounts of Ahmed, the sources added.

Following its own investigations and reviewing information provided by the BB, the NBR is almost certain that the BSI has been dodging huge

tax. The PSI firm recently claimed to the NBR that it did not evade tax. In its defence, the company said it operates under the double taxation avoidance agreement between the BSI Inspectorate Ltd, Bangladesh and its UK operations. The NBR however finds this contention totally incorrect and baseless.

"The BSI Inspectorate Ltd has a permanent establishment in Bangladesh. The company is incorporated in Bangladesh and its income is taxable as per double taxation avoidance agreement," the NBR explained.

When The Daily Star contacted Sharuddin Ahmed, he defended his bank accounts. "The deposits in these accounts actually belong to (my) company. I just kept them in my (personal) account to get interest. I used this interest to set up schools and colleges."

When he was told that according to the BB laws, one cannot transfer

such funds to their personal account unless it is veiled by the company's board, Ahmed then replied, "If creating scopes for education through setting up schools and colleges are considered as irregularities, I accept the blame."

On his not showing the actual income in the tax returns, Ahmed said, "What I have shown in my return sheet is meant for the Inspectorate Bangladesh Ltd (the Bangladeshi agent of BSI Inspectorate)."

He claimed that as per a decision of the NBR in 1997, the foreign PSI company does not need to submit any return.

The Tk 174 crore income, he claimed, goes to the BSI only and now if the NBR wants it to file returns, it will.

A high official of NBR said, "There was no PSI company or any office back in 1997. The PSI companies started operations in Bangladesh in 2001 by establishing permanent offices in Dhaka. As per rules, all PSI companies should pay income tax."

"...Now this company is spreading all sorts of lies as the present NBR management detected the scam," he added.

Sharuddin lashed out at the NBR saying "it is misusing power and making false claims. There are (two) other PSI companies which have done more business than my company has. Why does the NBR not catch them for tax evasion?"

When The Daily Star asked him if he knew the two other PSI companies -- ITS and Bureau Veritas -- have evaded tax and if they did, what is the sum, Sharuddin said, "I don't know."

Apollo hospital

FROM PAGE 16

hospitals of India's Apollo group.

The hospital will start with 150 beds but will expand to 450 beds.

It will be equipped with most modern technology in healthcare sector and also have a helipad.

The hospital management plans to set up a nursing institute by September this year and a medical college later.

Armoured cars

FROM PAGE 1

The home ministry earlier decided to form an air wing of the Rab that will have choppers for launching operations against criminals. The home ministry has already given nine armoured cars to the Rab and will soon give three more, sources said.

The BNP led coalition government, a year after its assuming the office, launched the much-talked about Operation Clean Heart deploying the armed forces to curb crime. In a bid to set up a permanent strong force to tackle crime, the government later formed the Rab.

The elite force comprising members from the army, air force, police and ansars started its journey on March 26 last year.

The Rab recovered a total of 748 arms including 216 revolvers, 110 pistols, five 9mm SMC, one SMC, eight AK47 rifles, one M16 rifle, 130 locally made guns and 88 pipe guns.

Over 250 people were killed in 'crossfire' with the Rab and other law enforcement agencies and in Rab custody during the last one year that sparked criticism both at home and abroad.

A number of senior ministers, lawmakers and defence experts have expressed surprise to witness sophisticated cars used by the Rab in the Independence Day parade at the National Parade Square on Saturday, sources said.

"What will the Rab men do with the cars that the army uses in wars? Where will the Rab go to fight the criminals?" said a senior minister.

Such armoured cars are not needed for the police force to launch crackdown on social criminals, a defence expert observed.

Use of army vehicles by Rab will rather create panic among people, he said.

Awami League lawmaker Col (rtd) Faruk Khan said the government plans to create panic among people, so that nobody can dare protest the Rab activities.

"There is no such war in the country that the Rab needs to use armoured cars. The government has rather planned to force the people to live in panic," Faruk Khan told The Daily Star.

A retired major general echoed the same view and said the initiative has been taken in order to give the Rab a sort of pre-eminence over other forces.

A senior army official said, "I have seen such vehicles during the last twenty years in my job place. But this is the first time I see such cars with the civil law enforcers."

"I don't know what the use of such cars by the Rab will be," he said.

Dhaka asked

FROM PAGE 1

told the news agency yesterday.

"I strongly believe that abandoning the project will mean the loss of an opportunity to bolster cooperation and may even contribute to the creation of an unnecessary bad blood between the two countries with long-term unsavoury implications," Chai Xi cautioned in the letter written.

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BNP picks

FROM PAGE 16

SAMIA Kibria in the January 27 grenade blast at a public meeting of the party in Habiganj that also killed three others.

Mubin was elected lawmaker thrice from the constituency as a Jatiya Party candidate. He later joined the BNP, fought against Kibria in the 2001 parliamentary polls and was defeated by 13,000 votes.

The last date for filing nominations is today, scrutiny will be held tomorrow and the last date for withdrawal of nomination is 7 April.

Meanwhile, the main opposition AL has not yet taken any decision about its participation or boycott of the by-election. It may announce an agitation programme in the district to protest the 'farical' election, party insiders said.

District BNP leaders and activists are yet to recover from the jolt it suffered as investigators found party men's involvement in the January 27 incident.

AL Presidium member and former minister Dewan Farid Gazi, MP from Habiganj-1 constituency, told The Daily Star, "We have already boycotted the so-called elections. There is no scope of our joining the election since the probe and trial of the killers of Kibria are yet to be settled."

"For this the Rab will be equipped with sophisticated arms, vehicles, bomb detonators and intelligence materials," the state minister said on Saturday at a programme marking the first anniversary of the Rab.

Rab officials said they will start using the armoured cars in their operations following the home ministry directions.

"These cars will protect our members from bullets and small explosions. We'll use them when we launch operations against notorious criminals," said a senior Rab official wishing anonymity.

Talking to The Daily Star, former army chief Lt General (rtd) Mahbubur Rahman said equipping Rab with armoured cars and choppers will immensely strengthen the force. "When the elite force will start using the cars, it will create panic among criminals and they will not dare fight with the Rab members," he said.

Restaurants

FROM PAGE 16

"I bought the chickens for Tk 100 and would sell those to restaurants at Tk 20 to 25 each. I usually make a profit of at least Tk 600 a day," Azad told reporters at the police station.

After interrogation, police took him to Mirpur and Pallabi to help identify the restaurants, but found those closed.

"Owners and employees have fled the area after closing the restaurants. I think they somehow managed to get the news of the arrest, and shut the restaurants to evade capture," Entezar said.

According to Azad's statement, a section of poultry farms and depot employees do not dispose of the dead hens, but instead preserve those for sale.

"No dead chickens are thrown away," Azad told reporters adding, "Restaurant owners encourage us to supply them dead chickens. How would we continue the business, if they don't buy?"

Azad, who hailed from Pallabi, will be produced before a court today with a remand petition.

The dead chicken, meanwhile, were sent to government laboratory for test.

Five months back, Mirpur police arrested three people with 35 dead chickens when they were going to supply those to local restaurants. "Cases have been filed against them under Special Powers Act and the three are behind bars now," the OC said.

"I don't know what the use of such cars by the Rab will be," he said.

Building image

FROM PAGE 16

The team at the meeting had come down hard on the Ministry of Information and its different wings such as Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television and state-run news agency BSS for miserably failing to counter the opposition propaganda. They also criticised the PM's Press Wing and labelled it as the "most ineffective" wing at the PMO.

PMO sources said they also placed a proposal for formation of the cell to be headed by SQ Chowdhury with PM's Political Secretary M Harris Chowdhury being the second-in-command. The proposed cell will have more than one adviser and one director general and also have two directors.

Highly placed sources at the PMO said the ministry had reportedly refused to be associated with the cell since it was formed by a section of rightwing people who are controversial and hold no place in the mainstream media.

CMC had been assured that steps were underway for the payment of mobilisation advance and accordingly CMC had given the requisite bankguarantee, the letter pointed out.

It said before the mobilisation advance was actually paid to CMC, the Bangladesh government back-tracked on the project. As a result the BMRE project could not be undertaken.

The letter said the BMRE of Karnaphuli Paper Mills could be a highly profitable enterprise, able to meet the country's requirement of paper to a great extent, retaining its workers and possibly even generating additional employment.

The move was underway for the payment of mobilisation advance and accordingly CMC had given the requisite bankguarantee, the letter pointed out.

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Three Rab

FROM PAGE 16

produced the three before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court at 3:00pm, submitting a forwarding report saying the three should be confined until completion of the investigation since they gave important information during their three days' remand.

Their defence lawyers, submitting bail petitions saying their clients were implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy to harass them, prayed for granting their bail.

After hearing both sides, the magistrate rejected the bail petitions and ordered the three sent to the Dhaka Central Jail.

In the case filed with Mirpur Police Station, it was alleged that Sergeant Atiq and five others went to the house of Ratan Ali, complainant of the case, at 32, Courtbari in Mirpur at about 12:20pm on March 23. Identifying themselves as Rab-4 members, they stole Tk 7.8 lakh that Ali had in an almirah after threatening to kill him in a crossfire. Of the six, five managed to escape by two CNG-run three-wheelers waiting outside for them, but Sergeant Atiq was nabbed by the locals.

Later, following leads obtained from Atiq, a joint team of police and Rab arrested Wali and Rafiq. They recovered Tk 2,45,500 from Wali and Tk 10,000 from Rafiq.

Ratan Ali filed a case with Mirpur Police Station