

Rab database in process to curb crimes in hotels

FAIZUL KHAN TANIM

Elite anticrime force Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) is making a database of around 70 residential hotels of the city to stop anti-social activities in these hotels.

The database will include information about the hotels, the owners and the employees. The Rab headquarters will preserve all the information including biodata of the hotel staff which will be verified by the police.

These hotels are often used as shelter for criminals, sources said, adding that the Detective Branch (DB) of police arrested a number of absconding criminals from city hotels in July and earlier this month.

Sources said the DB men arrested Kamrul Hasan Shipon, an alleged member of a notorious robbers' gang, from a hotel in Kakrail area recently. The policemen seized one foreign-made revolver from his possession.

In July, Rab arrested two extortionists from another hotel. Sources said a Rab-3 team raided the hotel at Malibagh Chowdhurypara and nabbed Shihab Siddiq and Alamgir when they were going out of the hotel after taking money from its manager.

Police and Rab sources said they have been collecting information about these hotels since April last year. They started collecting infor-

mation after two policemen were killed during a raid on a hotel in Malibagh area to arrest criminals.

A number of hotels in Gulshan and Banani are ideal hideouts of criminals, locals alleged.

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"I often see people moving in and out of these hotels. From their movements, conversations and behaviour, one can easily guess that all of them are not good people. Plenty of sex workers also move around

these hotels frequently," said a local. When asked, President of Bangladesh Hotel and Guesthouse Owners' Association Sadique Ahsan said he does not know about the Rab move. But he said such drives to check crime should be welcomed.

Of the around 300 residential hotels and guesthouses in the city, only 47 are members of the association. Mostly foreigners reside in these hotels, said Sadique.

"We have specific guidelines to run guesthouses and hotels. We strictly abide by the laws and that is why we are very selective about giving membership of our association," he said.

"None of our member hotels has been accused of any anti-social activities. If they (Rab) want information about these hotels, we will cooperate with them," he added.

A top Rab official said, "We have information about each and every phone/fax shops and massage parlours. We are making the list and database of the hotels with locations and maps. Twelve officials are working in each ward."

"But a big problem is that Rab is comprised of personnel from six different forces. The officials are transferred frequently. Sometimes the work is delayed when an official does not keep the records or passes them to other official before his transfer."



These residential hotels at Maghbazar, accused of providing shelter to criminals are listed in the Rab database.

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"It is a sorry way to enter the Guinness Book of World Records"

--Jean Romnicinaiu

Chargé d' Affaires, French Embassy in Dhaka
Told the press at Jatiya Press Club commenting on the August 17 serial bomb blasts across the country, on August 25.

Source: The Daily Star

"Why aren't the Jamaat leaders who plotted the series of bomb blasts on August 17 in the country being arrested"



--Sheikh Hasina

Leader of the Opposition and Awami League President
Told at a discussion on 'Bangabandhu and Bangladeshi' blaming Jammat-e-Islami for the unprecedented bomb blasts, on August 25.

Source: The Daily Star

"Vital clues to the blasts will come out if Nizami (Jamaat Ameer) is grilled"

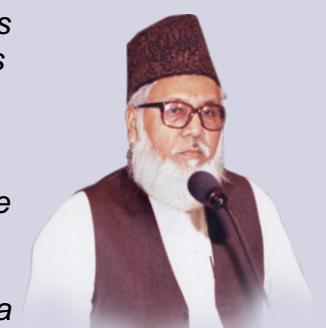


--Moulana Fariduddin Masud

Former Director, Islamic Foundation
Told newsmen accusing Jammat-e-Islami Ameer and Industries Minister Motiur Rahman Nizami of involvement in the countrywide explosions after being arrested, on August 23.

Source: The Daily Star

"They are the patrons of the serial blasts as they don't want good relations between Bangladesh and China. That's why the incident occurred when Prime Minister Khaleda Zia was on a visit to Beijing"



--Motiur Rahman Nizami

Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islam
Told a press conference blaming two foreign intelligence agencies -- Israeli Mossad and Indian RAW -- for the bomb blasts, on August 20.

Source: The Daily Star

"Political speech and investigation are not same"

--Mufti Fazlul Haq Amini

Chairman of a fraction of Islami Oikya Jote
Told a press conference blaming Awami League for the bomb attacks, on August 25.

Source: Prothom Alo

Gulistan underpass becomes unusable for pedestrians

IMRUL HASAN

Pedestrians shy away from using the Gulistan underpass due to lack of security, insufficient light and inadequate fresh air inside.

Most of the shop owners in the city's biggest underpass keep goods on the floor, blocking the narrow walkway for the pedestrians.

The mismanagement forces the pedestrians to cross the busy road over the underpass, instead of using the underground passage.

"I have to take this underpass to go to my office. I face these problems every day," said Russell Ahmed who works in a private office in Motijheel.

When asked, Md Abdul Hossain, proprietor of Kashem Electronics in the Gulistan underpass market, said, "We are compelled to keep our goods on the passage because there is no store room inside the underpass."

Female pedestrians said the underpass lacks adequate security arrangements. "While I pass through the underpass I feel insecure. So I don't



Pedestrians avoid using the underpass as the walkway is narrowed with encroachment.

use it unless it is urgent," said a female pedestrian in front of the entrance of the underpass.

She alleged a section of salespersons also try to tease or touch the female pedestrians.

However, Mohammad Anwar Hossain, general secretary of Bangabandhu Square Underpass Market Shop-owners Association, brushed aside the allegation and claimed that the underpass is totally safe for pedestrians.

He said mugging and anti-social activities took place due to lack of security before deploying private security personnel from Group-4.

The air-cooler in the underpass is now out of order. Sources said the air-cooler went out of order a week ago but the authorities did not take any step to repair it. Four big fans have been installed as alternative but these are insufficient.

Anwar said the air-cooler will be repaired soon.

A member of the shop-owners association said hawkers in front of the entrance create trouble for the pede-

trians entering the underpass.

He said water soaks into the underpass from a road-divider where trees have been planted. The association informed the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) about the problem but it has not yet taken any step to solve the problem.

However, officials of DCC denied the allegation.

Commissioners of ward number 56 and 36 blame each other for the mismanagement as the underpass is located between the two wards.

"I have no responsibility to take care of this underpass. You can contact officials of ward number 36 for details," said Chowdhury Alam, commissioner of ward number 56.

When contacted, DCC Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka said, "We would look into the problems. Its security arrangements would be improved soon."

The Gulistan underpass was constructed in 1997 at a cost of Tk 3.43 crore. The market inside underpass has 104 shops, mostly of electronics.

First-ever airplane restaurant in city in three months

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

The country's first-ever airplane restaurant will be opened in Dhaka inside the shell of the F-28 aircraft that crashed near Sylhet airport earlier this year.

The restaurant is the brain-child of Captain Mostafa Alolad, a Bangladeshi expatriate pilot in London, who owns two such restaurants in the UK.

"I always dreamed of doing something for my country. And this is a small initiative to fulfill my dream. I believe this restaurant will attract tourists," said Captain Mostafa.

Captain Mostafa is hopeful about launching the restaurant by the next three months. It will

have the capacity of serving 100 people at a time.

"There are many people in the country who have never got a chance to get into an airplane. They will be able to enjoy the real in-flight hospitality while visiting the restaurant," said Captain Mostafa.

Mostafa joins hands with local food shop Western Grill to establish the restaurant at an estimated cost of Tk 1 crore. They have already purchased the shell of the aircraft from Biman Bangladesh Airlines at Tk 11 lakh through tender.

They have planned to bring the plane to Dhaka and set it up near Ashulia. "We have bought 3 bighas of land and will start

work to turn it into a virtual airport," said Mostafa.

They are also looking for an alternative and convenient place for the city dwellers to establish the unique kind of restaurant.

"If we get a piece of land near the airport or in Tejgaon, we will prefer that and we are hopeful to get it," said Wahidur Rahman, chairman, Western Grill.

The atmosphere around the restaurant will be similar to that of an airport. One has to reach the restaurant through a runway.

This runway will take the

guests into a terminal building with a 3,000 square feet reception area where the guests would enjoy music and can take light food.

And then the guests will enter the restaurant where waiters dressed up as cabin crew serve them with European, Chinese and Indian food.

Mostafa said they will dismantle the plane, now lying in Sylhet, into three parts and will reassemble them after bringing to Dhaka.

"We will refurbish the aircraft. Even its cockpit will be a realistic one," Mostafa said.

Besides taking food, the guests will be able to visit every corner of the aircraft along with trained guides. There will be a children's corner too.

STAR PHOTO



The damaged nose (right top) and roof (right bottom) of this aircraft will be repaired to house a restaurant. Captain Mostafa owns two such restaurants in the UK (far right).

