

Bangladeshi cabbie

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dropping off the passenger, who had left him with a 30-cent tip on a \$10.70 fare.

"All my life, I tried to be honest," said Osman Chowdhury, adding, "Today is no different."

But the 41-year-old cabbie from Queens did have a message: "I'm proud of what I do that people know New York taxi drivers are honest."

What he did start on Monday evening, when he picked up the woman at a hotel in midtown Manhattan and drove her to an apartment building several blocks away. She gave him \$20 to pay the fare and asked for \$9 back.

Hours later, at about 10:00pm, three other passengers with luggage discovered the woman's suitcase when Chowdhury popped the trunk open for them.

Chowdhury first drove to the building where he had dropped off the woman. But he had no idea in which of the many apartments she might be and didn't want to cause a disruption by knocking on doors.

He took the suitcase to the Manhattan headquarters of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, a drivers' advocacy group to which he belongs. He and the alliance president looked inside and found two display cases with 31 diamond rings inside.

"I saw flashing, and I said, 'Oh my

Ex-BNP lawmaker's

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Dastagir said.

The magistrate told The Daily Star that there had been a six-year court battle between one Md Mohsin and Rajuk over the 12.27-bigha land. He said Mohsin won in High Court but Rajuk received a verdict in its favour when they appealed to the Supreme Court. The magistrate said, "Md Mohsin was fighting the case on behalf of Rangs Group."

The real estate company had established a filling station, a warehouse, a garage and shades for security guards of the estate, the magistrate added.

They demolished all the structures and recovered the land which is worth no less than Tk 400 crore, Rajuk sources said.

The Rajuk team demolished a tinshed market at Gulshan-1 behind the DCC market afterwards.

Earlier, Rajuk recovered one bigha of land at Gulshan in front of the residence of Italian ambassador to Bangladesh. Locals were occupying the land illegally, Rajuk sources said.

Meanwhile, the DCC yesterday demolished all tea stalls beside the walkway of Dhamondi Lake. They also demolished illegal establishments around the Abanai Club playground in Dhamondi. A DCC court also demolished tea stalls near Sudha Sadan, the residence of Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina.

Meanwhile, Zerin Rahman, a resident of Green Road in the capital, alleged that a Rajuk eviction team knocked down a few shops on the ground floor of her house. She claimed her father had built the house and the shops after getting approval from the Rajuk authorities 25 years ago.

She claimed the approval papers are with her brother who is living abroad and that is why she failed to produce them before the magistrate. She claimed her neighbour built another house violating Rajuk regulations but the eviction team left that house alone.

Army has no intention

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said new advisers were appointed on the criteria of honesty, competence and sincerity.

"Now it needs people's support. This opportunity will not come time and again," the army chief said, adding that it "should not happen so."

General Moeen urged all to come forward to make a fresh start in national life with a clean slate. "Let's cooperate with this government so we can steer the nation forward," he said.

In an apparent emotion-choked voice, the army chief said the country was destroyed in last 35 years. He likened the predicament of the country to a derailed train.

"We need a heavy crane to put the train back on the track--and strength of the people is the crane. Once you can put the train on the track, it will move smoothly," he said in metaphorical terms about the imperative of a rescue operation in such situation.

Citing corruption as an example of degeneration of the polity, the general deplored that because of disputes over who will get the "10 percent" kickbacks, a \$ 200m machine-readable passport project could not be implemented.

He said government provides subsidy for fertiliser to help the poor farmers, but, unfortunately, those fertilisers were smuggled out of the country by the vested quarters.

Referring to recent incidents of arson in garment factories that earn 70 percent of country's foreign exchange, General Moeen deplored that this export industry was burnt and destroyed in a planned way. "There is politics behind it," he said, adding, "We even do not try to understand our own well-being."

"We have eaten up the vitals of the country over the years, leaving the country like a skeleton."

About national or voter ID card, General Moeen said some intellectuals said that it will require Tk 1000 crore and five years time. But, he said they have made a calculation that suggests that ID card for the voters is possible within 10-12 months at an estimated cost of Tk

Rice "cautiously optimistic" on N Korea talks

REUTERS, Washington

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said yesterday she is cautiously optimistic that it may be possible to begin carrying out a September 2005 agreement on ending North Korea's nuclear programs.

"I cannot take a penny for being honest," he said, but he reluctantly accepted the money to cover the fares he lost while trying to track her down.

He said it never occurred to him to keep the diamonds.

"I'm not going to take someone else's money or property to make me rich. I don't want it that way," said the soft-spoken cabbie, who was a contractor in Bangladesh until he came to the United States 15 years ago.

He does not own a cab but rents one.

"I enjoy my life. I'm satisfied," said Chowdhury, who is single.

He didn't even mind the meager tip. "I think some people might be broke," he said. "Or they're distracted."

The woman from Dallas asked that her name not be made public.

God! Diamonds!" Chowdhury recalled. "I was shocked. I was trembling."

They also found a small luggage tag with a Texas telephone number they called—the home of the woman's mother in Dallas. Meanwhile, she called the number, too.

The woman, who said she was a jeweller, got back the gems on Monday when she arrived at the alliance office around midnight—increduous at her luck. She offered Chowdhury a reward—a check for \$100.

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1,646 more held, 20 arms seized

UNB, Dhaka

The joint forces arrested 1,646 people on various charges across the country during the last 24 hours, ending at 6:00am yesterday.

They also seized 20 firearms and 35 bullets, said an official release.

Of the detainees, 156 were held by army personnel while the remaining 1,490 by Rab and police.

Besides, police and Rab members seized 23 motorcycles for having no valid documents.

Rab raided Bangi Motor area in the city on Wednesday night and arrested an extortionist named Nabi Solaiman. The elite force also seized a revolver from his possession.

In Savar, Rab picked up five people from a night coach and seized 500gm of heroin and 23 bottles of phenylid smuggled from India.

In Jessor, the joined forces arrested 25 people, including listed criminal Selim Reza.

Rab arrested four people in different places of Sylhet district on Wednesday night and seized two firearms.

In Gaibandha, the joint forces rounded up 11 people, including drug peddlers.

In Patuakhali, Rab held Angaria UP Chairman Golam Muradha who was wanted in criminal cases and two others accused in a rape case.

In Jhalakathi, police arrested eight people including land grabber Matabbar Mridha. Mridha was sent to prison with a 30-day detention under the Special Powers Act yesterday.

The joint forces held two men in Sherpur, who are wanted in double murder case. An UP member was also arrested for hoarding fertiliser.

Fake insulin

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The same court raided a branch of the National Pharma at Kamalapur and held two of its staff Khandakar Nizamuddin and Rafiq and fined them Tk 4 lakh.

The branch was also sealed off.

The court issued arrest warrants against the owner Dr Mosharaf Hossain and his son Md Mostan Hossain, who used to run the factory.

The police filed a case under section 25 (C) of Special Power Acts-1974 against all of them.

Raids on Mymensingh clinics

More than 50 people, including doctors, owners, technicians and staffs, were detained by the joint forces yesterday during raids on over 100 clinics and nursing homes in the town.

The forces also closed down over 50 clinics, nursing homes and pathology labs as they failed to produce necessary documents.

Led by a magistrate, the army, Rab (Rapid Action Battalion) and police carried out the raids at Charpara, Mashkanda, Sheora, Dupakhola mouza, Baghmara Kalibari Road and Patgudam Bridge area.

Nearly Tk 1 lakh was realised as fines during the drive. Owners of many clinics closed their establishments to avoid arrest.

First Class Magistrate Rokksana Tarannum and Dr Anwarul Islam Chowdhury of local civil surgeon office told the reporters that they have found fake doctors and technicians and non-trained nurses along with unhygienic atmosphere in those clinics, nursing homes and pathology labs.

He said a "historic decision" has been taken by the council of advisers in approving the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) to separate the judiciary from the executive.

Fakhruddin said the government will undertake quick decisions in power sector as well as on Chittagong seaport-two of the major sectors where the foreign donors have long been pressing for development measures under the reform recipe.

He also said the present government has already taken steps in accelerating economic activities without wasting time to make up for the losses already incurred.

"We are aware of the expectation of the people--We need to operationalise governance. We work as a team (indicating the council of advisers)," the CA told them.

Various government agencies, including intelligence agencies, are also looking into the listed politicians' past financial records to see if they have become rich in a very short time. Charge sheets against them would be framed on the basis of these investigations.

Yesterday, Law Adviser Mainul Hosein told reporters, the government would catch those politicians who did not have any businesses before, but looted the country under the patronisation of politicians.

He also said the charges against the listed politicians would be made public during their trial.

General Moeen said the present government has separated the judiciary from the executive in seven days and is trying to reform the Election Commission. He said the reforms will be brought in the Election Commission so that corrupt politicians cannot do politics.

Criticising the mindset of the politicians, the general said the time has come to stop the politics capitalising on money. The nation needs a competent political leadership so Bangladesh could achieve development and progress like Malaysia and Singapore.

He held the meeting that 90 percent people support the present caretaker government and the government should now move the country in right direction with the strength of this support.

Aug 17 blast

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two arrestees were directly involved in the blasts in the Rajuk Bhaban area and they need to be quizzed to gather vital clues to the blasts and whereabouts of their accomplices.

Metropolitan Magistrate Shafiq Anwar granted the remand sought by the IO for interrogating the arrestees.

Mufti Abdul Hannan, operations commander of another banned Islamist outfit Harkatul Jihad Bangladesh chapter, and six others including JMB military commander Ataur Rahman Sunny were also shown arrested in this case.

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CG plans

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sovereignty and national interest in negotiations or agreements with foreign countries.

"Every country wants to protect its own interest and we will protect ours...We'll make sure that our interests are not jeopardised," he said when correspondents sought his comment on a general perception that some foreign countries are trying to press this interim government to sign agreements on certain areas such as power and seaport.

He said he was not aware of any proposal for modernisation of Chittagong Port and that the shipping ministry might be in a better position to shed light on that matter.

Asked if Bangladesh would seek US technical support in its effort to fight corruption, Chowdhury said the foreign ministry did not yet receive any specific proposal from the line ministries.

Chowdhury also mentioned that the two cornerstones of Bangladesh's foreign policy are to protect sovereignty and enhance cooperation with foreign countries for increasing trade and investment.

The adviser referred to his meetings with foreign diplomats stationed in Dhaka and said they gave assurance of continued cooperation and assistance for the economic progress and development of Bangladesh.

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