

Diplomats complain

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official, adding, "As foreigners reside and stay in Gulshan and Baridhara areas, groups are active there to mug them for making quick cash and snatch other valuables."

Swiss Ambassador Dora Rapold, who is also the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, wrote to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the first week of May informing that foreigners and diplomats, especially the women, are being victimised of muggings and other crimes.

There seems to be a pattern to the incidents that expatriates, particularly females, are made target. The fact of the use of firearms and knives in the incidents is extremely worrying and it has led to serious injuries to the victims in some cases," said the letter.

It also gave a list of criminal incidents in which diplomats and citizens of different countries were victimised since January 2009. The list also contained criminal reports provided by different embassies.

Citing an example it says, on January 29 a Spanish woman was attacked while in a rickshaw at Road No. 96 in Gulshan-2. A man came out of a car and grabbed her handbag. She fell to the ground and suffered injury that required medical treatment.

In another incident, the letter mentions that a EU-commission member was robbed at Road No. 104 while riding a rickshaw. Miscreants from a white Toyota Townace came out with a big knife and demanded all belongings.

It further says, another EU-commission member was robbed by five men. The miscreants came from a minivan and took away all the valuables from him.

Chief of Protocol of the foreign ministry Brig Gen Abu Saeed Khan later wrote to the joint secretary (political) of home ministry Md Nurun

Liakat

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where they identified Liakat on May 31.

Although Liakat boarded at the hotel using a fake name, he identified himself as a NSI official before the police at Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd (CUFL) jetty.

Hafiz Uddin, one of the main accused in the case, in his confessional statement said a person named Abu Hossain boarded at the hotel and supervised the offloading of the consignment.

Liakat was given the responsibility to supervise the offloading as former NSI Director (Security) Wing Commander (retd) Sahab Uddin was suspected of being a double agent, said the sources.

Meantime, Sahab Uddin was placed on a fresh four-day remand yesterday.

His counsel advocate Zahirul Islam filed a petition for withdrawing Sahab's confessional statement he made on May 15.

Following his statement the investigators arrested former NSI chiefs Maj Gen (Retd) Rezaqul Haider Chowdhury and Brig Gen (retd) Abdur Rahim and ex-DD Maj (retd) Liakat Hossain.

The defence lawyer in the petition claimed that the statement was obtained by force.

Rezaqul and Liakat are now being quizzed at the taskforce for interrogation (TFI) cell in Dhaka.

HC seeks river

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They also demanded a national committee comprising of experts to solve the international river issues and a regional multilateral committee to ensure natural flow of the rivers.

They said huge areas of river course according to the cadastral survey (CS) record had been shown under names of individuals in the SA and RS records.

The rivers are dying due to unplanned urbanisation, dams, and culverts and industrial waste disposal, said the speakers.

Not only the private organisations but also the government agencies are responsible for destroying the rivers, they said.

They said a natural catastrophe would be triggered across the northern part of the country if the Tipaimukh dam were built, as the regular water-flow during dry season will reduce by up to 80 percent while 25 percent during monsoon.

Among others journalist Syed Abdul Maksud, Executive Director of Institute for Environment and Development Numan Ahammad Khan, Shahnaz Sumi of Nari Pragati Shangha, executive director of Citizen Rights Movement Tushar Rehman, member secretary of Unnayan Dhara Trust Aminur Rasul, member secretary of Jana Udyog Samsul Alam, secretary general of Peace Ifma Hossain, Chairman of Nirapad Foundation Ibnul Sayeed Rana, and chairman of Al Latif Charitable Foundation Nure Alam Ziru Sardar addressed the programme.

PBA also formed human chains, arranged press conference and placed memorandums to DC offices in Chittagong, Comilla, Barisal, Pirojpur, Mymensingh, Netrokona, Narasingdi, Khulna, Satkhira, Jessor, Meherpur, Rajshahi, Gaibandha, Joypurhat, Thakurgaon, Bogra, Naogaon, Sirajganj, Sylhet and Sunamganj.

All MPs

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Asked how much money it will require to purchase vehicles for all lawmakers, Abdul Hamid said they are yet to calculate the amount, but he said no luxury car would be bought.

The Parliament Secretariat Commission approved the proposals for providing lawmakers with offices at the old MPs' hostels on the parliament building premises. Hamid said they would also get offices in their own constituencies in the future.

The meeting decided to launch a terrestrial television channel to broadcast parliamentary proceedings live. "A separate project will be taken up for launching the television channel," Hamid said.

The commission empowered the speaker to limit the office allowances of MPs in parliament as unlimited expenditures in the last parliament have drawn much criticism.

The MPs' offices in parliament include the offices of the speaker, leader of the House, deputy speaker, opposition leader, chief whip and other whips.

The meeting also empowered the speaker to increase benefits of the opposition chief whip.

The meeting approved the Parliament Secretariat's budget of around Tk 60 crore for the next financial year. It decided to increase the overtime bill for Parliament Secretariat officials to Tk 200 from Tk 100.

A four-member committee was formed at the meeting with the additional secretary of the Parliament Secretariat as its chief to remove anomalies in the organisational structure of the secretariat.

The commission cancelled recruitment of 41 class IV staffs appointed by former speaker Jamiruddin Sircar at the end of his tenure.

Prime Minister and Leader of the House Sheikh Hasina, who is a member of the commission, attended the meeting.

Govt rolls into action

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shouting on the deck of a boat. The DC said, "It is just a show off only to buy time for encroachers so that they themselves can remove the encroached parts of their structures."

BIWTA Senior Deputy Director Golam Kabir said the confusion surfaced because of lack of coordination in making decision.

At around 11:30am, two of the four boats, sputtered towards Pagar mouja to launch the eviction with officials backed up by 20 policemen on board.

As the eviction team approached the industrial estate of Noman Group, its Deputy Managing Director Nur-e-Yasmin Fatima came out and produced two temporary HC stayorders.

Hundreds of labourers gathered along the boundary wall of the Noman Group industry sensing the presence of the eviction team.

Fatima along with one Dipu Kazim said that they also obtained a permanent stay but obtained to receive the copy.

Senior on-duty executive magistrate Abul Bashar Mohamad Ameer Uddin said Noman Group composite textile mills have grabbed 20 feet of the river as per CS records. "But we can do nothing because of the HC stay on eviction," he added.

Noman Group has six composite (dyeing and spinning) mills on its estate of 30 acres of land.

The team then moved to the Merchants Ltd, a dyeing factory, but twenty labourers and one hammer were too inadequate to do anything to the tough RCC construction of the factory that wentenfeet into the river.

A BIWTA tugboat had to struggle hard in pulling down the iron gate of the factory. It then knocked down the upper part of the RCC construction.

The other team, by the time, started knocking down Bengal Indigo at 12:15 and it went on until evening.

BIWTA Deputy Director Saiful Islam said Tongi was declared a river port in October 2004 with a total area of 65 acres including 27 acres on the Gazipur end and the rest in Dhaka.

A joint survey by BIWTA and Dhaka and Gazipur district

finance ministry sources said.

The sources added that the government high-ups told the central bank that they do not want Premier Bank to turn into another Oriental Bank, which during the last four-party alliance government's regime had been turned into a den of irregularities by some people closely linked to the erstwhile government, including Orion Group.

On May 14, the central bank sent a letter to Premier Bank asking it to explain why the consultants' appointment should not be deemed noncompliant to its guidelines, and on

May 17 it appointed one of its general managers as an observer of the private bank.

Earlier there had been another BB observer of Premier Bank, but he was also withdrawn on April 19.

After receiving the BB letter, Premier Bank on Monday rescinded the appointments of its two consultants, and within just a day the central bank withdrew its observer in a rather hurried manner, raising questions in the banking community about the propriety of the move.

The central bank also did not take any immediate measure when the two unfit consultants were appointed in March, rather it withdrew the then BB observer from Premier Bank.

In mid-May, the central bank sought explanation from the private bank about the controversial appointments of the consultants, and appointed its own observer, following advise of government high-ups to keep an eye on the bank's activities.

The central bank is also back with a demotion, and working as an assistant managing director, for which there is no age bar.

Different quarters allege that various types of irregularities have been going on in Premier Bank, the chairman of which is former Awami League lawmaker Dr H B M Iqbal, against whom there are numerous allegations of irregularities, many of which were found to be true by a Bangladesh Bank investigation.

Sources said when Hasina directed Sohel Taj to continue his job, the state minister said he would do so if he is allowed to perform his duties properly.

Following the prime minister's assurance, he agreed to continue in office, the sources added.

Govt to offer tax

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would be increased in the next budget.

The price of low priced cigarettes may be increased by Tk 5-10, they said.

Mobile SIM cards will be cheaper in the next fiscal year as tax on it will be decreased, but mobile phone sets will be costlier. At present there is a fixed tax of Tk 300 on mobile phone sets. The tax may be increased by 7.5-15 percent.

Sources said it would not affect the price of low priced sets much.

The government will lower the tax on SIM card to increase revenue collection by augmenting sale.

At present, there are four import duty slabs - 3 percent, 7 percent, 12 percent and 25 percent. Donors have advised the government to further liberalise the slabs.

However, it has been learnt that it will not be lowered except for the 7 percent slab under which most raw materials are imported. The slab may be brought down to 5 percent to cut duty on raw materials.

If additional manpower is available, such drives may also be conducted in a few other districts and upazila towns.

One killed

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of Pankury Cable Network at Banarsi Housing Project in Rampura, Faruq Hossain, owner of March Money Exchange, and the driver of Faruq's car while the deceased could not be identified immediately.

Locals said a gang of three criminals fired three gunshots that left Mukter injured while he and his friends were gossiping in front of his business centre around 8:30pm.

Injured Mukter was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for treatment.

Local sources said the criminals escaped the scene firing blank shots after the gun attack. Some criminals have been threatening Mukter with dire consequences for the last few months if he does not hand over the cable business to them, source said.

The ministry will also hold meetings with representatives from private electronic and print media, various professional bodies and involve Islamic Foundation in the campaign.

"The government has decided to launch a massive campaign across the country to make people aware of the daylight saving time (DST) scheme that will come into effect on June 19 midnight with setting the clock an hour ahead," said State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Shamsul Haque Tuku.

The cabinet led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Monday approved the ministry's decision on DST so that people can have an extra hour of daylight. The scheme is expected to help ease the power

initially, the decision will remain effective for four months, "Tuku said, adding that if the scheme is proved successful it will be practised every year.

"We shall sit with a cross-section of people to end all confusion about it," he told reporters.

Under the DST, offices and businesses will open and close an hour earlier than usual.

Like 70 other countries including the UK, US, Japan, France and Taiwan, Bangladesh decided to introduce DST to make the best use of daylight and save power.

Pintu instigated

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perpetrators.

The defence also argued that it is not clear on which basis allegation Pintu was arrested.

COURT PROCEEDINGS SUSPEND

Metropolitan Magistrate Mominal Hassan had to suspend the court proceedings for around 10 minutes and left the courtroom as there was a pandemonium due to the defence's 'unhealthy' competition on who will be the first to make submission.

CID sources say Pintu's above-mentioned involvement came to light during questioning of arrested BDR mutineers and in the witness' accounts.

The investigation officer, CID's Senior Assistant Superintendent Abdul Kader Akand, said Pintu has been sent to the Taskforce for Interrogation (TFI) cell where he will be kept during his remand period.

As the lawyers later promised not to indulge in such behaviour, the magistrate took his seat again and allowed Pintu to defend himself as per his earlier appeal to the court.

Pintu argued that if he was involved in the gun attack, he added.

Meanwhile, Badda police recovered the bullet-hit body of a youth from a lake at South Anandanagar in Badda around 8:00pm.

Police said two bullets hit in the head of the body, which was sent to DMC Morgue for autopsy.

Gulshan police said a gang of three muggers in a private car intercepted a rickshaw carrying Faruq and the driver of his car in Gulshan-2, and tried to snatch valuables from them.

The local criminals might be involved in the gun attack, they added.

Police recovered the car used by the gang and a pistol from the spot.

As Faruq and the driver resisted the criminals, the gang fired bullets, leaving them injured.

Hearing screaming of the victims and gunshots, locals and patrol police rushed to the spot but the criminals managed to flee the scene.

Police recovered the car used by the gang and a pistol from the spot.

Taj changes

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ministers at the PM's official residence Jamuna last night.

"If I feel better, I shall attend office tomorrow (today)," Sohel Taj, son of the country's first premier Tajuddin Ahmed and the youngest member in the cabinet, told The Daily Star.

He tendered his resignation to the premier on Monday out of frustration over not being able to perform his duties properly at the ministry. But the prime minister did not accept his resignation and asked him to go on leave from June 6 to 23.

As Sohel Taj stood firm on his decision, Syed Hasina asked LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashraf Islam to convince him. But the minister failed to make him change his mind, said sources.

Although Bangladesh was not covered by the survey, the findings of the barometer in many ways reflect the situation in the country, especially impact of corruption on the poor and the powerless, role of the private sector as the supply side of corruption, said Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB).

Petty bribery was found to be on the rise in Venezuela, Ghana, Indonesia, Cambodia, Bolivia, Senegal, Russia and Kenya, compounding the already difficult situation of low-income households, as jobs and income dwindle in the economic downturn, the TIB barometer said.

"These results show a public sobered by a financial crisis precipitated by weak regulations and a lack of corporate accountability," said Transparency International Chair, Huguette Labelle.

"But we also see that the public is willing to actively support clean business. What is needed now is bold action by companies to continue strengthening their policies and practices, and to report more transparently on finances and interactions with government."

The business-related findings of the barometer, 68 percent of respondents saw political parties as corrupt, and 29 percent saw them as the single most corrupt institution in their country. The civil service and parliament trailed political parties, perceived by 63 and 60 percent of respondents respectively as being corrupt.

Echoing the findings of past editions of the barometer, 68 percent of respondents saw political parties as corrupt, and 29 percent saw them as the single most corrupt institution in their country. The civil service and parliament trailed political parties, perceived by 63 and 60 percent of respondents respectively as being corrupt.

Only three in 10 respondents believed their government's efforts to fight corruption were effective, although opinion in Sub-Saharan Africa was notably more positive than in other regions.

Fewer than one in four who paid a bribe in the past year lodged a formal complaint, demonstrating serious deficits in the perceived legitimacy and effectiveness of institutions and channels for controlling corruption.

During the immediate past BNP-Jama