



WITH TODAY'S ISSUE



REMITTANCE DOWN

Shrinking outflow of manpower takes a toll on earnings

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ASSAD SWORN IN

West, Arabs to pay high price for supporting terror, says the Syria president

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Take a car, turn a blind eye

LGED's vehicle of corruption goes on smoothly; those who should stop it take a ride on it

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE with MARTIN SWAPAN PANDEY

The Local Government Engineering Department or LGED is a wonderful place for corruption, irregularity and abuse of power.

Take Atiar Rahman. He is an assistant engineer there and is only entitled to transport between his home and office. But he has taken two cars from two projects. And guess what! One of them is being used by his wife and the other by his ex-wife, whom Atiar divorced five years ago.

This is only the tip of the ice-

berg. Examples of how the LGED is misusing project cars abound. But it is also a place of give and take.

Rehana Yasmin, for instance, does not even work there. A deputy secretary at the LGRD ministry, she has got hold of a project car and is using it even when she is on a two-month leave, sources have said.

Over the years, the LGED has adopted an innovative way of buying favours of big shots in the government. Its officials give out their project cars for personal use of a section of ministers, secretaries, prime minister's advisers and other PMO officials. In return, the LGED gets its projects approved by

various ministries and also gets undue favours during audits, among other paybacks.

The department also pays for fuel and maintenance cost and overtime salaries of the drivers, actually hired for the projects. The LGED has to count about Tk 2 lakh for all this every day or about Tk 7.3 crore a year, the sources added.

Project cars are bought with government and foreign funds for specific projects implemented by the LGED, which is under the LGRD ministry. Each of these vehicles usually costs between

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CAR OF SHAME

At least 70 project cars under illegal possession

Each car costs between Tk 50 lakh and Tk 3.5 crore

Fuel, maintenance (about Tk 7.3cr a year) too free

Ministers, PM's advisers, secys, PMO staff use those cars



The LGRD state minister uses this flashy sport utility vehicle, *top*, which was bought with money from a project that was not allowed to buy cars. The LGRD and the law ministers use the expensive cars, *bottom*, which too belong to government projects.



PHOTO: STAR

JS QUORUM CRISIS TIB findings 'baseless'

Says chief whip

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The recent TIB findings regarding the quorum crisis in the first session of the current parliament were "baseless and motivated", Chief Whip ASM Feroz claimed yesterday.

Most of the other findings of the study, including the assertion that the Jatiya Party could not play its due role as the main opposition in parliament, is also unfounded, he told a press conference at the Parliament Members Club.

He was responding to the study by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), which was made public on July 7.

The study by the anti-graft watchdog

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BASIC Bank: Blatantly looted

Central bank's probe into 3 branches finds gross anomalies in loan approvals; report sent to ACC

BB FINDINGS



Loans meant for purchase of ships were withdrawn in cash and through pay orders by individuals

Loan money was transferred to suspected accounts through 40 pay orders at Shantinagar branch

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

The central bank has sent a report on the financial scam at BASIC Bank to the Anti-Corruption Commission, detailing how borrowers embezzled money from the state lender through fake companies and suspected accounts.

Bangladesh Bank sent the report to the anti-graft body on Tuesday, after concluding a special inspection into the scam in the first week of this month.

The central bank first inspected BASIC Bank's Gulshan, Shantinagar and Dilkusha branches in 2012 and found evidence of serious anomalies in approving loans.

Dilkusha branch, for example, doled out Tk 683 crore in loans to 16 borrowers, all of whom took the money through illegal means.

One borrower, Asif Iqbal, proprietor of Reliance Shipping Lines, opened a current account with the branch on December 4, 2011. Nahid Enterprise was the identifier.

But both the companies are fake, said the BB report.

The board approved another loan of Tk 16 crore in 2012. The borrower withdrew the money in the name of purchasing ships through four pay orders. The money ended up in the accounts of other banks.

Through one pay order, Gazi Auto Bricks got Tk 1.5 crore. Five individuals named Shakil, Aziz, Erfan, Opu and Bipu withdrew the amount from the account.

In another incident, Md Rashedul Hasan, managing director of Simex Ltd, opened a current account with the same branch in December 2010.

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MIRPUR CUSTODIAL DEATH

Cop 'detained'

His second 'closure' on similar allegation in months holds little relief for family

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday "detained" Sub-Inspector Jahidur Rahman Khan who allegedly tortured garment-waste trader Mahbubur Rahman Sujan to death on Sunday.

They made the "detention" after the autopsy report mentioned that Sujan had died of torture, said Salahuddin Khan, officer-in-charge of Mirpur Police Station.

Jahid was picked up at Rupnagar of Mirpur in the capital, police sources claimed.

Mirpur police also detained their source Nasim after going through the CCTV footage at the police station.

Both of the detainees are reportedly inside the Mirpur Police Station lockup. Jahid's closure for the second time this year and "detention" does not relieve the victims' families of the feeling of insecurity.

"This closure and detention mean nothing ... when my son is lost,"

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SI Jahid



Palestinians sleep in the yard of a UN school in the northern Gaza Strip town of Beit Lahiya early yesterday after evacuating their houses near the border with Israel. *Inset*, A Palestinian man walks past the house of senior Hamas official Mahmud al-Zahar after it was destroyed by an overnight Israeli air strike.

PHOTO: AFP



Israel steps up Gaza offensive

Naval salvo kills 4 Palestinian boys on beach as death toll from bombardment hits 220; ground invasion fear grows

AGENCIES

Israel intensified its bombardment of Gaza yesterday, killing four children on a beach in an apparent naval salvo and launching deadly air strikes, as regional leaders sought to end the killing.

Israel urged the evacuation of several districts in the Gaza Strip where more than 100,000 people live, threatening ground operations to try to stem the rocket attacks.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed on Tuesday to step up the military campaign after Hamas dismissed an Egyptian ceasefire proposal, firing scores of rockets over the border despite the army holding its fire for six hours.

Yesterday, his security cabinet authorised the call-up of another 8,000 reservists, media reports said, joining 43,000 reserve troops who have already been mobilised.

Israeli experts predicted overland raids in the Gaza Strip to destroy command bunkers and tunnels that have allowed the outgunned Palestinians to withstand air and naval barrages and keep the rockets flying.

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