

Take a car, turn a blind eye

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Tk 50 lakh and 3.5 crore and are meant solely for project officials.

THE LIST IS LONG
At present, at least 70 project cars are being used by, among other big fishes, five ministers, four secretaries, two advisers of the PM and seven top PMO officials, according to the car distribution list obtained by The Daily Star.
This newspaper could not contact all these 70 men and women owing to logistics and time constraints. But over the past two weeks, these correspondents spoke to at least 15 drivers who confirmed that these vehicles are now being used by those on the list. Another 10 cars and their current "owners" were identified through visiting their homes and the secretariat.

In 2012, the LGED also bought three luxury vehicles (SUVs) for approximately Tk 11 crore with funds from the Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP), although car purchases with the PEDP fund are illegal. The Anti-Corruption Commission is investigating the purchase.

LGRD Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam, State Minister Moshir Rahman Ranga and prime minister's Political Adviser HT Imam are using these three luxury vehicles -- Dhaka Metro Gha 13-6110, Dhaka Metro Gha 13-6114 and Dhaka Metro Gha 13-6113, the list and the sources confirm.

The PEDP is tasked with improving school infrastructures by constructing or upgrading class rooms and labs, teachers and students' hostels, water and sanitation facilities and playground to facilitate admission of more students. At the moment, the highest number of vehicles being illegally used were bought under this project.

Ashraf is using a second SUV (Dhaka Metro Gha 11-3779) from another LGED project.

In addition, he has got a car from the government's transport pool in his capacity as a minister, which is also the case for many of those on the list.

The vehicle HT Imam is using was previously used by ABM Tajul Islam, former state minister for Liberation War Affairs Ministry.

During the last AL government tenure, Tajul took two project cars but he returned those. He is now using another project car (Dhaka Metro Gha 13-7469).

The SUV that Ranga has now taken hold of was previously used by his predecessor Jahangir Kabir Nanak.

GIVE AND TAKE?
A section of LGED officials provide this privilege to ministers and top government officials to get their "blessings" in getting development projects approved, often at inflated cost, said the sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Those who always get project cars as "gifts" are the LGRD minister, its state minister, secretary, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on this ministry, primary and mass education secretary, chairman of the House committee on this ministry and top bosses of the planning commission.

The LGED "serves" them because

they are vital in planning, initiating and awarding development projects.

Not that the LGED always gives the project cars willingly. There is the pressure factor as well.

When, for example, a minister or a secretary or a top PMO official needs a car for personal use, he takes his pick from among the flashy SUVs. And when people with power make a demand, it has to be met, the sources said.

A wing of the local government and rural development ministry, the LGED plans and implements rural and urban development projects. On average, it implements about 90 projects worth about Tk 5,000 crore a year.

Allegations of misuse of taxpayers' money by the department officials are rife.

In July last year, a study by the Transparency International, Bangladesh found contractors have to pay up to 30 percent in commission to lawmakers, politicians and government officials to secure an LGED project.

It also said political influence, interference by ministries and lack of proper monitoring, evaluation, audit and transparency are the main reasons behind irregularities and corruption in the LGED.

According to the study, since the establishment of the LGED in 1992, as many as 1,772 audit objections involving Tk 1,369 crore remained unresolved till fiscal 2011-2012.

On institutional corruption, it says the chief engineer abuses power to control promotion, postings, transfer and other activities. Besides, LGED officials use official cars for private purposes, and even take money by showing fake bills for vehicle repairs.

'IT'S CORRUPTION'

Former cabinet secretary Ali Imam Majumder said it was outright illegal that ministers and other influential persons were using project cars.

"All the ministers and high officials get cars [from the government]. If they use projects cars in addition to their official cars, it is undoubtedly corruption," he said.

Asked why this practice has been going on for so long, he said, "There is a sense of impunity everywhere and no one is held accountable for wrongdoing. This encourages people to indulge in corruption."

TIB Chairperson Sultana Kamal agrees.

"There should be a policy for using government vehicles," she said, adding that abuse of power is also corruption.

THE DENIAL

Contacted, LGED Assistant Engineer Atiar Rahman denied that he took two project cars. He also dismissed the allegation that he gave one project car to his ex-wife.

"I'm using one car," he told this newspaper on Monday.

But on the same day The Daily Star spoke with multiple LGED sources who confirmed that Atiar took two cars (Dhaka Metro Ga 21-1429 and SAS 65-4456) for personal use.

Asked if using project cars was illegal, Moshir Rahman Ranga, state minister for the LGRD ministry,

advised this newspaper to speak to LGRD Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam, who looks after the LGED.

On why he is himself using a project car, he said, "I don't know if my car is a project vehicle, I got it from the ministry."

Asked about his government-provided vehicle, Ranga said, "I can't say at this moment whether I got any government vehicle. I have to talk to my personal secretary in this regard."

This newspaper called the LGRD minister several times yesterday, but he did not pick up the phone. Neither did he respond to a text message requesting his comment.

Wahidur Rahman, chief engineer of the LGED who is responsible for all the projects, also did not pick up calls or respond to SMS.

POST IS POWER

A comparison of the current car distribution list with the one before the January 5 election shows that those who failed to retain a position in the cabinet or the posts that the LGED always "honours" have also failed to retain the project cars. They had to return the project cars, which are now being used by those who replaced them.

Former LGRD secretary Abu Alam Shahid Khan lost his SUV (Dhaka Metro Gha 13-2884) after the January 5 election. It is now in the possession of the current Secretary, Monzur Hossain.

Abul Hasnat Abdullah, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the LGRD ministry, has also taken a project car (Dhaka Metro Gha 13-2883) for personal use.

House Deputy Leader Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury is using the car (Dhaka Metro Gha 13-1850) previously used by Rahmat Ali, former chairman of the standing committee on the LGRD ministry.

Officials of the Prime Minister's Office are using seven project vehicles. They include PM's special assistants Abdus Sobhan Golap, Mahbubul Hoque Shakil, Ferdous Ahmed Khan, PM's Assistant Personal Secretary Saifuzzaman Shikhor and PM's Senior Medical Officer Dr Syeda Suraiya Akbar.

Ambassador-at-large Mohammad Ziauddin, who has been appointed Bangladesh's ambassador to the US, is also using a project car (Dhaka Metro Gha 11-8045).

Also on this list are PM's Economic Affairs Adviser Moshir Rahman (Dhaka Metro Gha 13-1861), Expatriates' Welfare Minister Khandker Mosharraf Hossain (Dhaka Metro Gha 13-0295), Law Minister Anisul Haq (Dhaka Metro Gha 13-7750) and State Minister for Public Administration Ismat Ara Sadeq (Dhaka Metro Gha 13-6252).

Former commerce minister Faruk Khan, former primary and mass education minister Afsarul Ameen, former state minister Mannujan Sufian, former whip Mirza Azam, former press secretary to the PM Abul Kalam Azad and AL Joint General Secretary Mahabubul Alam Hanif returned the project cars immediately before and after the January 5 election.

security and disaster relief operations, added the release.

"Our surveillance capability in the Bay will be boosted several times more than the present strength with the commissioning of the new helicopters," said a senior air force official on condition of anonymity.

The international arbitral tribunal in a landmark judgment on July 8 upheld Bangladesh's claim of 200 nautical miles exclusive economic zone and its territorial rights in the Bay.

The court awarded Bangladesh 19,467 sq km area out of the disputed 25,602 sq km with India.

REGISTRATION NO.	DESIGNATION	USER'S NAME	PROJECTS
MKA 113	Joint Chief (Education)	Shamim Ahmed	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Bha 02-1185	Member (Planning Commission)	Mannan Hawlader	Couldn't be known
Dhaka Metro Ga 13-1431	Joint Secretary	Ansar Ali	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Ga 13-3703	Joint Secretary (Finance)	Tahmina Begum	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Ga 13-7567	Senior Assistant Chief (Primary & Mass education)	Jalal Ahmed	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Ga 13-9165	Prime Minister's Office	MD Shakil	Couldn't be known
Dhaka Metro Ga 15-4818	Deputy Secretary (Municipality)	Khalilur Rahman	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Ga 17-4822	Member (Agriculture)	Uzzal Bikash Dutta	Couldn't be known
Dhaka Metro Ga 21-7097	Joint Secretary	Hosney Ara	PMT
Dhaka Metro Ga 21-7098	Joint Secretary	Shamima Nargis	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-0388	Deputy Chief (Planning Commission)	Saiduzzaman	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-1258	Deputy Secretary (Audit)	Fazlur Rahman Bhuyan	RIIP-2
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-1661	Joint Chief (Planning Commission)	Eanyet Hossain	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-1662	Joint Secretary (Evaluation)	Abul Kasem	CRDP
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-1797	Accountant	Aysha Khanam	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-2205	Senior Assistant Secretary (Development 2)	Jashim Haider	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-2413	Deputy Secretary (Admin)	Jahid Hossain	Couldn't be known
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-2530	Joint Chief (Planning Commission)	Anwar Hossain	IRIDP
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-2537	Deputy Secretary (Union)	Kamrunnahar	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-2539	Deputy Secretary (Audit)	Mostofa Kamal	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-2881	Member (Agriculture)	Uzzal Bikash Dutta	SSW-GBIC
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-3072	Joint Secretary (Law)	Porimal Kumar Dev	SSW-JBIC
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-3073	Senior Assistant Secretary (Audit)	Sabur Hossain	PMT
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-3414	Senior Assistant Secretary (Admin)	Sawkot Ali	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-3774	PS to Secretary (LGRD)	Farukuzzaman	Couldn't be known
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-3775	Deputy Secretary (Zila Parishad)	Jubaida Nasrin	UNRGDP
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-3779	Minister (LGRD)	Syed Ashrafur Islam	XEN-Dhaka
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-3829	Additional Secretary	Shah Kamal	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-3882	Senior Assistant Secretary (Development)	Mohammad Hossain	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-3926	Deputy Chief (Primary & Mass Education)	Imtiaz Mahmud	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-4002	Joint Secretary (Audit)	Shahabuddin	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-4009	PMO	PMO	Couldn't be known
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-4013	Joint Secretary (Development)	Souren	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-4015	Joint Secretary (Admin)	Syed Afroza Begum	UGIIP-2
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-4016	Senior Assistant Secretary (Municipality)	Ali Akbor	Couldn't be known
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-4405	Mayor (Gopalganj)		Couldn't be known
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-4862	Special Assistant to PM	Mahbubul Hoque Shakil	Couldn't be known
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-5362	Special Assistant to PM	Ferdous Ahmed Khan	SSWRDSP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-6162	Deputy Chief	Abdur Rouf	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-6294	Additional Secretary (Education)	SM Ashrafur Islam	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-6510	Divisional Chief (Planning)	Rokeya Akter	ROSC
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-8045	Ambassador-at-Large	Mohammad Ziauddin	XEN-Dhaka
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-8046	Special Assistant to PM	Abdus Sobhan Golap	XEN-Dhaka
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-8423	Secretary (Primary & Mass Education)	Akter Hossain	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-8856	Secretary (Planning Commission)	Shariful Islam	XEN-Dhaka
Dhaka Metro Gha 13-0294	Secretary (Liberation War Affairs)	AKH Masud Siddeque	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 13-0295	Minister (Expatriates' Welfare & Overseas Employment)	Khandker Mosharraf Hossain	ROSC
Dhaka Metro Gha 13-1850	Deputy Leader of the House	Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 13-1861	Economic Advisor to PM	Moshir Rahman	XEN-Dhaka
Dhaka Metro Gha 13-1862	Additional Secretary	AM Mozammel Haque	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 13-1893	Additional Secretary	Ashok Madhob Roy	CRDP
Dhaka Metro Gha 13-1894	Assistant Private Secretary to PM	Saifuzzaman Shikhor	XEN-Dhaka
Dhaka Metro Gha 13-2883	Chairman, Standing Committee on LGRD Ministry	Abul Hasnat Abdullah	Couldn't be known
Dhaka Metro Gha 13-2884	Secretary (Local Government Division)	Monzur Hossain	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 13-4159	Chairman, Standing Committee on Primary & Mass Education Ministry	Motahar Hossain	Couldn't be known
Dhaka Metro Gha 13-6110	Minister (LGRD)	Syed Ashrafur Islam	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 13-6113	Political Advisor to PM	HT Imam	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 13-6114	State Minister for LGRD	Mosir Rahman Ranga	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Gha 13-6252	State Minister for Public Administration	Ismot Ara Sadique	XEN-Dhaka
Dhaka Metro Gha 13-6499	Couldn't be known	MD Selim	Couldn't be known
Dhaka Metro Gha 13-7156	Deputy Secretary (LGRD)	Rehana Yesmin	UGIIP-2
Dhaka Metro Gha 13-7469	Former State Minister for Liberation War Affairs	Tajul Islam	Couldn't be known
Dhaka Metro Gha 13-7619	Senior Assistant Chief (Local Govt Division)	Didarul Alam	Couldn't be known
Dhaka Metro Gha 13-7750	Law Minister	Anisul Huq	Couldn't be known
Dhaka Metro Gha 13-7978	Senior Assistant Secretary (City Corporation)	Saroj Kumar Nath	PEDP-3
Dhaka Metro Tha 13-1070	Additional Secretary	Ashok Madhob Roy	SSWRDSP-3
Dhaka Metro Tha 13-1002	Assistant Engineer, LGED	Sheikh Nazrul Islam	Couldn't be known
Dhaka Metro Ga 21-1429	Assistant Engineer, LGED	Atiar Rahman	Couldn't be known
SAS 65-4456	Assistant Engineer, LGED	Atiar Rahman	Couldn't be known
Dhaka Metro Gha 11-8144	Sr Medical Officer to PM	Syeda Suraiya Akbar	SSWRDSP-3

Govt orders purchase

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purchase decision, but could not say anything about the price of the choppers.

The government has planned modernisation of the armed forces with sophisticated equipment to secure its new maritime area and explore natural resources there. It has already bought two maritime patrol aircraft and two choppers for Bangladesh Navy.

The defence ministry has recently signed a contract with Italian company Finmeccanica-AgustaWestland for buying the two helicopters.

The AW139 intermediate twin-

engine choppers will be supplied by the end of next year. It would be the country's first dedicated maritime SAR helicopter fleet, said the company in a release on Monday.

As per the contract, the Italian firm would provide comprehensive support and training to air force officials for operating the copters.

With the inclusion of the two choppers, the BAF will be able to carry out all-weather SAR operations in a maritime environment and will benefit from the high role versatility of the helicopters to conduct other utility missions in support of maritime

security and disaster relief operations, added the release.

"Our surveillance capability in the Bay will be boosted several times more than the present strength with the commissioning of the new helicopters," said a senior air force official on condition of anonymity.

The international arbitral tribunal in a landmark judgment on July 8 upheld Bangladesh's claim of 200 nautical miles exclusive economic zone and its territorial rights in the Bay.

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HELLO! SINGER CALL CENTER

Google takes top hacker

FROM PAGE 1
so-called zero-day vulnerabilities. This is the term given to problems with software that had not previously been identified, meaning hackers have the chance to exploit a bug fully before it is patched - fixed - by developers.

"You should be able to use the web without fear that a criminal or state-sponsored actor is exploiting software bugs to infect your computer, steal secrets or monitor your communications," Mr Evans continued.

"Yet in sophisticated attacks, we see the use of 'zero-day' vulnerabilities to target, for example, human rights activists or to conduct industrial espionage. This needs to stop.

"We think more can be done to tackle this problem."

Part of that effort requires bringing on the types of people that were previously the object of technology firms' ire.

Mr Hotz - known as geohot online - was taken to court by Sony after he hacked the PlayStation 3 so it could play pirated games.

The case was settled out of court, with Mr Hotz agreeing to not target Sony products in future.

MEET THE BUG HUNTERS

You've found it. A way in. A gap in the fence; a chink in the armour. The needle in the...

stack of needles.

But now what? Do you do the good thing? Tell the owner you've rumbled their security, help them fix it and get a well-meant pat on the back?

Or do you take your new weapon out into the wild and sell it to the bad guys for thousands upon thousands of pounds?

Read more: Big bucks paid to keep ahead of hackers

Google also felt the sharp end of Mr Hotz's hacking ability - he was able to hack the firm's Chrome operating system.

In contrast to the Sony lawsuit, Mr Hotz was awarded a \$150,000 (£88,000) prize as part of a competition arranged by manufacturer HP.

"I think what we've seen in the past 18-24 months is a change in attitude from a lot of companies on how to handle vulnerabilities in their applications," said security expert Brian Honan, who noted that Mr Hotz had also worked for Facebook.

"We've seen Google be very proactive in this, but other companies like Facebook and Microsoft all have 'bug bounty' programmes whereby you can report a bug and be financially compensated."

Mr Honan did not think that Google calling out other firms on security would backfire.