

Costly car seized

Customs tracks it down 6 years into illegal import

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs Intelligence seized a Mercedes, which was imported illegally six years ago, in the capital's Dhanmondi yesterday.

"We have found that the registration of the vehicle was obtained through a fake Bill of Entry and the registration was renewed every year," said Moinul Khan, director general of Customs Intelligence and Investigation Directorate.

The car was seized at the home of one Belayet Hossain in Dhanmondi with the help of Rapid Action Battalion. The vehicle is now in the custody of Customs Intelligence, said the official.

When asked how a car got through the port with fake documents, he said this office would investigate whether anyone was guilty of negligence in discharging duties.

A number of agencies, including the Customs House and ports authorities, are responsible for the monitoring there.

If there was indeed any negligence, we would inform our higher authorities of the matter, he added.

The illegally imported car was detected when the Custom Intelligence was investigating a case against its owner for importing fake cosmetics and evading duties.

Officials said Belayet was believed to be abroad for "treatment".

Moinul said Belayet got the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority's registration for the car in his name faking a bill of entry against

which a local oil company had imported a petroleum product.

Using the same number of the original document, an application was placed before the BRTA in April, 2009, and the BRTA issued the registration for the car in July of the same year, according to a customs press statement.

Moinul said his office found that the original document was issued in March 2009, in favour of the oil company.

"It indicates that the car was imported illegally by evading duties and taxes," said Moinul, adding, "Around Tk 3 crore in taxes and duties was dodged."

"We have also examined his [Belayet] tax file where he has not declared the ownership of the vehicle," he said, claiming the price of the car would be Tk 7 crore.

Moinul said his office was keeping an eye on expensive cars on the streets of the capital.

BRTA Secretary Muhammad Showkat Ali said there were rules of examining the authenticity of documents submitted by applicants for vehicles registration.

"But we don't have the scope to cross check [those documents] instantly as we don't have access to the National Board of Revenue's online database," he said.

Showkat said the BRTA usually writes to the NBR once it receives allegation of fake documents.

He, however, could not immediately confirm whether any such step was taken in case of the Mercedes.



The car Customs Intelligence seized from a home in Dhanmondi yesterday for not paying duty during import in 2009. The photo was taken at the Customs Intelligence office in Moghbazar.

PHOTO: STAR

Adrift for 2 months

FROM PAGE 16
That man, Louis Jordan, 37, had an amazing story. He'd been drifting on the 35-foot Pearson sailboat for more than two months since leaving Conway, South Carolina, to fish in the ocean.

Just a few days into his trip, a storm capsized his boat and broke his mast. One of his shoulders was broken, too, so he couldn't fix the boat right away.

Eventually he was able to rig a makeshift mast and sail, but he could make little headway against the currents.

"It took so long," Jordan said. "It moved so slowly."

The boat capsized two more times before he was rescued, according to Jordan.

His father, Frank Jordan, told CNN's Jim Sciutto that he was expecting his son to look different.

"He looked good. Hadn't lost too much weight. He wasn't badly sunburned like I thought he probably would be," he said.

After his food and water ran out, it became an issue of survival.

Collecting fresh water was a nightmare for Jordan. The weather wouldn't cooperate. Records show there were more than a dozen storms off the coast of the Carolinas during the time he was missing. The precipitation came at night during harsh conditions.

"I had tried to collect (rain) water... but every time the waves would splash into the boat," Jordan said. "The waves would put saltwater into my freshwater and it tasted bad."

"Finally the conditions were right. I filled up my water tank, which is 25 gallons. I filled up a bucket."

Then there was the issue of food. The fish weren't cooperating, but after

while Jordan learned they were attracted to his laundry, which he would put out to sea for a rinse.

The fish would swim in and out of his clothes and he could easily scoop them up with a hand net, he said.

Jordan came ashore Thursday evening. CNN affiliate WAVY in Norfolk, Virginia, reported that he was able to walk from the helicopter into Sentara Norfolk General Hospital about 7:30 pm.

Coast Guard officials have said they have found no reason to doubt Jordan's incredible story. They noted that his father contacted them January 29 to report his son and his boat missing.

Frank Jordan addressed the skepticism about his son's appearance, saying the boat stayed afloat and upright most of the time. His son spent most of his days in the cabin, out of the sun.

Frank Jordan said it was obvious when the Jordans met at the hospital Friday morning that his normally low-key and private son had been through an ordeal.

"I know he went through what he went through," Frank Jordan said.

Jordan is an unemployed truck driver who lived on his boat at a marina in Conway. He had free rent and free food in the river, he said. But when it became difficult to catch dinner, he took off for the ocean in hopes he would land some bigger fish.

Frank Jordan told CNN's Wolf Blitzer on Thursday that he had worried about his son, who is an inexperienced sailor, but he held hope because his son had a good boat. And he had the strength to make it.

"He's got a very strong constitution and (is strong) not only physically, but spiritually," Frank Jordan said. "And he told

me on the phone that he was praying the whole time, so I believe that sustained him a great deal."

Rescue swimmer Kyle McCollum was the first to care for Jordan on the flight back to land.

"You would expect sunburns, severe sunburn, blisters maybe... a bunch of medical issues that could possibly be wrong with him," he said. "But for him to be in his current state was pretty amazing."

Grenz was also surprised by Jordan's condition, physically and mentally. The rescued sailor knew almost exactly what day it was, remarkable for someone who had been on the water for more than 60 days.

Jordan was dehydrated and said he was hungry.

"We took him to a rescue boat," the container ship captain said. "He was given water and pea soup to gain some power again."

Derrell Morris, a neighbor at the Bucksport Plantation Marina & RV Resort called Jordan a nice guy who loved his 47-year-old boat, named "Angel."

Morris said: "It was immaculate, it was gorgeous, beautifully painted. I mean it looked like a brand new sailboat."

Morris told CNN affiliate WPDE that one day in January he was going to the store and Jordan asked him to bring back some coffee creamer. But when he returned to the marina, Jordan had slipped away.

"There was no shore line, no nose; it was like he was never there," Morris told the station.

After he disappeared others who also lived there held a candlelight ceremony.

The marina's manager, Jeff Weeks, told WPDE that Jordan is expected to be back at Bucksport next week.

Three suspects

FROM PAGE 1
The Detective Branch of police collected the photographs and the video clips from people and the Bangla Academy authorities that installed CCTV cameras on and around the book fair premises.

Avijit, a Bangladesh-born US citizen, and his wife Rafida Ahmed Bonya were hacked by unknown assailants on the Dhaka University campus while returning from the book fair on February 26.

Bonya, also a blogger and writer, was badly injured but Avijit died from his wounds, triggering outrage at home and abroad.

On March 2, Shafiur Rahman Farabi, who had issued repeated death threats to Avijit, was arrested by the Rab in the capital's Jatrabari. Farabi is known for his vitriolic campaigns against progressive and free-thinking bloggers in the social media and blogosphere.

Apart from this arrest, the detectives failed to make any progress in the investigation. They could not catch any other suspect, much to disappointment of Avijit's family and friends.

Investigators now claim the identification of the three suspects might lead to more arrests and eventually help resolve the murder case.

Barely a month after Avijit's killing, Oyasiquir Babu, 27 was hacked to death in the capital's Tejgaon Industrial area on March 30.

The two youths arrested for Oyasiquir murder are now on remand and being interrogated by detectives.

Investigators suspect that separate "sleeping cells" were behind the killing of Avijit and Oyasiquir. But they have no idea who recruited and trained the members.

Not hilsa

FROM PAGE 16
The traders are now using the wholesale fish market to sell watermelons amid strict monitoring by the local administration and law enforcement agencies, said Bacchu Talukdar, a trader, while talking to our Barisal correspondent.

Besides, it was also not the season for the fish, he added.

Meanwhile, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Sayedul Hoque yesterday said it had become difficult to protect jatka (young hilsas) even after employing all the force of the government.

He was addressing a view exchange programme at Chandpur District Shilpakala Academy on the occasion of National Jatka Protection Week that began on April 1, adds our correspondent from Chandpur.

The minister expressed his apprehension that hilsa would face extinction if jatka (young hilsas) netting continued.

Cabin crew

FROM PAGE 16
An assistant revenue officer.

It also seized gold ornaments, weighing around 80 grams, from his luggage, he said.

Hailing from Dhaka, Aslam has been in the aviation sector for 17 years, according to Saiful.

Umme Nahida Akter, an assistant director of Customs Intelligence, said the value of the gold is estimated at Tk 25 lakh.

Top WHO official in Thailand denies maid slavery claims

AFP, Bangkok

The World Health Organization's top official in Thailand yesterday denied beating his Ethiopian domestic helper and treating her like a modern day slave.

The 25-year-old unnamed maid filed a complaint with police last month accusing Dr Yonas Tegegn, the WHO's representative in Thailand, and his wife of abusing her and forcing her to work without pay for nearly two years.

Police on Wednesday said they would investigate the allegations and question the couple, who are also Ethiopian nationals.

In a statement released yesterday, Tegegn denied the claims.

"These accusations made against me and my family are baseless. We deny any wrongdoing," he said in a statement emailed to AFP.

Tegegn added that he hoped both the media and Thailand's legal system would "give us a fair chance to clear our name".

The unnamed maid's lawyer Surapong Kongchantuk from the Lawyers Council of Thailand told AFP earlier in the week that she had worked for the family between July 2013 and

March this year.

He alleged that she had not received a proper salary during that time, had to sleep in a room with the family's dog, was physically abused and was only fed rice.

He said the maid escaped her employers when she was rescued by passers-by after a suicide attempt and is being helped by a local NGO to pursue a case against her employers.

In the statement Tegegn said the maid began working with the family in June 2013 until March 8.

"After that date she was scheduled to return to her home country Ethiopia," the statement said.

Tegegn added that "at all times we have treated her (the maid) as a member of our family, with all dignity, respect and consideration".

A WHO official in Bangkok said the organisation was "aware of the allegations in the media about a private matter between Dr Yonas and his former employee".

"WHO is taking this allegations very seriously, and we are reviewing them according to WHO internal procedures," the spokesman said.

Arrest but go by the law

FROM PAGE 16
"But what do we eventually see? There are many examples that show an alarming rise in tyrannical behaviours of the law enforcement agencies. As a result, the protectors turn predators in many cases. This is very unfortunate. We don't want see the state playing this role."

Rights activist Sultana Kamal said the ongoing violence was affecting not only the victims and their families but the state as well, and it was impossible to predict how long the country might need to recover from the losses.

The tendency among people to take the law into their own hands increased during the violence and people are losing their confidence in the rule of law and the judiciary, she said, adding that in many cases, law enforcers resorted to extrajudicial ways to prevent violence.

Moklesur Rahman, additional inspector general of police (administration and operations), tried to justify

his force's actions by saying that they always follow the relevant laws in discharging their duties.

When police work to prevent violence, they are accused of working for the government, and if they stop working, they are labelled as working of criminals' side, he said.

Criminology and Police Science department of Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University of Tangail organised the seminar titled "Recent Political Violence in Bangladesh and Impact on the Arson Victims" at the Jatiya Press Club.

Associate Prof Azizur Rahman, who presented one of the two keynote papers, of the department said crimes by the government and by the opposition rise simultaneously in violent situations.

"In our country, when crimes like petrol bomb attacks and vandalisms increased, the incidents of crossfire or shootout also rose," he said.

Obama 'confident' of deal

FROM PAGE 16
"We defied the odds," Schultz said. "I do think there's a lot of work to be done, but we are confident that we can get those details in place."

Iran's President, Hassan Rouhani, has vowed it will abide by the terms of the preliminary nuclear agreement it signed with six world powers, so long as they do too.

He said the deal marked a step towards changing Iran's relationship with the world: "Today is a day that will remain in the historic memory of the Iranian nation."

"Some think that we must either fight the world or surrender to world powers. We say it is neither of those, there is a third way. We can have cooperation with the world."

Rouhani is also expected to face opposition from conservative critics at

home, although clerics praised the agreement at Friday prayers.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned that it posed a grave danger to the region, in particular his own country.

He said any comprehensive accord, due before 30 June, had to include a "clear and unambiguous Iranian recognition of Israel's right to exist".

Under Thursday's terms, Iran must slash its stockpile of enriched uranium that could be used in a nuclear weapon and cut by more than two-thirds the number of centrifuges that could be used to make more.

In return, UN sanctions and separate measures imposed unilaterally by the US and EU will be gradually suspended as the global nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, confirms Iranian compliance.

Hearing

FROM PAGE 16
Kamaruzzaman for instructions on his petition seeking a review of the SC verdict upholding the death penalty, said his lawyer Shishir Manir.

The lawyer said their client still believes he is innocent.

Kamaruzzaman, senior assistant secretary general of Jamaat-e-Islami, said he was not involved in any crimes, including the Sohagpur massacre, for which he was awarded death penalty, Shishir said.

He said Kamaruzzaman asked them to mention before the Appellate Division that the tribunal, during the trial, had curtailed the cross-examination of the investigation officer of the case.

Kamaruzzaman expressed his hope to speak to the counsels again after the SC disposes of his review petition, Shishir added.

Four other lawyers who met the Jamaat leader are Ehsan Abdullah Siddiq, Moshui Alam, Motiur Rahman Akand and Muzahedul Islam Shahan.

International Crimes Tribunal-2 sentenced the Jamaat leader to death on May 9, 2013 for committing crimes against humanity during the 1971 Liberation War.

Kamaruzzaman submitted his appeal to the apex court on June 6 the same year, challenging the judgment. The SC upheld it on November 3, last year.

He filed the review petition on March 5.

2 workers run over and killed

FROM PAGE 16
not to be named.

"Right after the bus hit the pothole, it suddenly turned right, straight towards the labourers who were sitting beside a pillar," he added.

Another security guard of the CNG station said, "All the vehicles slow down whenever they are close to the pothole. But the bus that crashed into the pillar did not seem to notice the pothole."

The pillar erected the flyover is in the middle of two roads leading into two different directions. Each road is several feet away from the pillar.

After the accident, the trio were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared the siblings dead around 10:30am, said hospital sources.

Talking with The Daily Star at DMCH, injured Manjurul said they have been working at the flyover project since it started in early 2013.

They worked as day-labourers to dig earth at Tk 400 a day. Yesterday they started around 8:00am and after two hours of work took a break, Manjurul said.

The Daily Star in an earlier report found that the streets and traffic in Malibagh, Moghbazar, Eskaton and Satrasta have become a nightmare for many since the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) started constructing the 8.25km Moghbazar-Mouchak flyover in February 2013.

Construction work in Eskaton and Moghbazar areas has narrowed the streets to single lanes which are dotted with potholes.

Visiting the spot yesterday afternoon, this correspondent found a pair

of flip-flop along with a blood-drenched gamchha (a locally made towel) beside a pool of blood.

Ramna police also said reckless driving was among the reasons for the accident.

"The driver lost control over the wheel and ran over the labourers. We have detained the driver and also seized the bus," said Moshuiur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Ramna Police Station.

Asked about the pothole, locals said the road was dug seven to eight months ago to pump out water for construction purposes.

Later it was carpeted with earth and concrete materials but was not properly tarred. Due to rain in the last couple of days, the earth wore away and made the pothole bigger, they said.

Although the road belongs to the South City Corporation, the LGED has taken it over since the launch of the project, a fact corroborated by Nazmul Alam, director of Moghbazar-Mouchak flyover project.

Also an executive engineer of LGED, Nazmul denied the fact that the pothole was created due to the construction purpose of the flyover.

But he affirmed that they have been carpeting the potholes on the roads in the project area and not all the roads have been covered yet.

Nazmul corroborated another fact that whenever a construction work starts on roads, diversion routes need to be created to avoid traffic jam and accidents, which was not followed in the case of the Moghbazar-Mouchak flyover project.

He said although this rule is followed in rural areas, it is not possible in urban settings.