

# 1.21 cr 'forged' Indian rupees seized

RAFIUL ISLAM

Customs officials could not believe their eyes when they were handling merely a packet of blanket.

As they started making inventory of luggage at the Lost and Found section of the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport for an auction, they found millions of Indian rupees in the packet that remained unclaimed for around four months.

"A bundle of Indian rupees suddenly slipped out of the packet as we were receiving the blanket with other goods," Assistant Commissioner Shahiduzzaman Sarkar told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We were surprised and started looking for what was inside," he added.

The customs officials opened the packets in presence of other agencies working at the airport and found the Indian rupees, he said, adding, the recovery led them to search other goods as well.

After searching all the goods, the officials found Rs 1.21 crore in total from two blankets, a carton and a leather bag.

With the latest seizure, the customs seized 10 crore of foreign currency, including 5 crore Indian rupees, at the airport in last three months.

Shahiduzzaman said they learned that the currencies inside the blankets were smuggled into the country from Pakistan via Dubai on a flight of Fly Dubai in mid-August this year.

The carriers might have left the currencies abandoned due to strict vigilance at that time, he observed. Another customs official told The Daily Star that they took some rupees to several banks, which have identified those as original as all security indications are available on the notes.

However, a number of experts who deal with Indian currencies claim those are fake, said the official asking not to be named.

According to customs officials, like the previous instances, destination of the smuggled rupees is India.

Smuggling of fake currency into India through different bordering areas is a major concern for that country. In a recent meeting with the Bangladesh counterparts, the Indian law-enforcement agencies requested them to take necessary action to prevent such smuggling.

## VANDALISM CASE

# Shamsher Mobin, 11 others indicted

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Former BNP vice-chairman Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury and 11 other BNP men have been indicted in a case filed for obstructing the work of the police and vandalising vehicles during a daylong hartal called by the opposition BNP in June 2010.

Shamsher, who has recently resigned from the BNP, and nine others, now on bail, pleaded not guilty and demanded justice after Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Lutfor Rahman Shishir yesterday read out the charges to them.

The other accused are Mostafa Ahmed, Babul Sardar, Md Yahiya, Sultan Mahmud, Motiur Rahman, Akon Musa Kalimullah, Tofayel Ahmed, Md Khokon, Md Kamal and two former BNP Dhaka City Corporation ward councillors Abul Kalam Azad and Abdul Alim Naki.

Of the 12 accused, Tofayel and Musa remained absconding and charges were framed against them in absentia.

The court also issued arrest warrants for them and fixed March 1 next year to start the trial of the case.

The case was lodged against them with Gulshan Police Station after vehicles had been damaged and policemen prevented from discharging their duties in front of Wireless Gate in the capital's Mahakhali area on June 27, 2010.

During the incident, Shamsher assaulted a police constable who was seriously injured, according to the case statement.

Police arrested Shamsher, Babul, Yahiya, Mostafa, Sultan, Motiur and Musa from the spot. Later, they were remanded for one-day for their alleged involvement in the incident.

Police pressed charges against Shamsher and 11 others on April 30 last year.



A dredger machine, also known as Boma Machine, is burning on the bank of the Pyain river at Jaflong in Sylhet. The local administration conducted a drive at the once-popular tourist site yesterday and destroyed all the illegal machines used for extracting stones from the riverbed.

## PYAIN RIVER Drive against illegal stone extraction

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A mobile court in Gowainghat upazila of Sylhet destroyed five dredgers, locally known as Boma machines, and other machines used for extracting stone illegally and seized fuel and extracted stone from the bank of the Pyain river on Tuesday.

The authorities took the action after The Daily Star published a report headlined "Jaflong Ravaged" on December 7.

Led by Ashraf Ahmed Rasel, assistant commissioner (Land) of Gowainghat upazila, the mobile court went to the spot around 5:00pm.

Mustafizur Rahman, assistant director of the Department of Environment in Sylhet, Jahangir Hosain Sardar, officer-in-charge of Gowainghat Police Station, and Border Guard Bangladesh members accompanied the mobile court.

A few influential people had been illegally lifting stone with dredgers from the bed of the Pyain river for long, posing a threat to the environment and a tea estate nearby, said Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa), Sylhet chapter.

PHOTO: SHEKH NASIR

## 2 more MPs say sorry

FROM PAGE 16

lawmakers cannot join electoral activities and use helicopters for campaigning.

The EC on December 6 issued show-cause notices on the MPs, asking them to explain their actions within three days.

"The two MPs in their letters to the commission said they were sorry for their actions. The lawmakers added that they would be cautious about electoral rules in future," Sirazul Islam, secretary of the EC Secretariat, told The Daily Star.

Talking to this correspondent, Malek said he informed the EC through the letter that he went to Dhamrai UNO's office to discuss a programme on Victory Day. "I was not involved in the submission of the mayor hopeful's nomination paper."

Shawkat claimed that he used the helicopter for carrying out party activities. "I offered my apology if I flouted the electoral rules.

"As a lawmaker, I formulate laws. So I should be respectful to laws. I would follow the electoral rules in future," he told The Daily Star.

On Tuesday, AL lawmaker from Natore-2 Saiful Islam Shimul in a letter to the EC apologised for violating electoral rules.

MP DISCUSSES NOMINATIONS  
Speaking at a meeting with grassroots leaders, AL MP from Pirojpur-1 AKMA Awal yesterday asked party men to pick one councillor candidate in each wards of Swarupkathi municipality.

Around two dozens of councillor aspirants along with AL mayor hopeful Golam Kabir were present at the four-hour meeting held at Nechrabad upazila auditorium, said meeting sources.

The MP asked AL men to make sure that additional candidates withdraw their nominations before December 13, the last date for withdrawal.

Talking to this newspaper, Awal denied discussing electoral issues with

the party men in the meeting. "The district Awami League will hold its council meeting on December 11. I had the meeting with my party men to discuss the preparations for the council."

### EC SEEKS PARTIES' HELP

The EC yesterday sought cooperation from 20 political parties, who are taking part in the municipality polls, so that their leaders, activists and mayor aspirants follow electoral rules.

The commission made the request in copies of a letter sent to the parties. The letter cited some important provisions of the electoral code of conduct, said EC sources.

Candidates in 234 municipalities across the country yesterday officially started campaigning. As per electoral laws, candidates can launch campaign just three weeks ahead of the voting day.

Meanwhile, the EC yesterday imposed a ban on campaigning with party electoral symbols until December 14, Secretary Sirazul Islam of the EC secretariat told reporters at his office.

Mayor aspirants from political parties already know their symbols, but the symbols for independents will be allocated on December 14. The commission made the decision so that the party nominees could not gain an advantage over the independents, he added.

## Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 16

The two countries would have to work together to deal with the issues, the ministers said, adding that the environment of the world heritage site, the Sundarbans, was on the verge of ruination and concerted efforts were needed to save it.

Prakash said he would discuss with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of West Bengal about initiatives to protect the Sundarbans, said a press release.

## Quit race or face action

FROM PAGE 1

Briefing reporters later on at the party president's Dhanmondi office, AL joint general secretary Hanif said, "If they refuse to withdraw candidacy by the stipulated time, the party will start taking organisational actions against them."

The last date of withdrawal of candidacy is December 13.

The AL took the rigid stance as the party leadership failed to dissuade 50 rebel candidates from withdrawing their candidacies, according to party sources.

The leaders at the meeting explained the current situation to the party chief and she then asked them to take action against them in line with the party constitution for breaching party discipline.

BNP-JAMAAT JOINT PARTICIPATION UNLIKELY

There is no possibility of reaching an understanding between the BNP and the Jamaat-e-Islami, a key component in the BNP-led 20-party alliance, over joint participation in the December 30 municipality polls, sources said.

Central leaders of BNP informed this to the party's organising secretaries at a meeting at Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office last night.

BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, however, instructed the organising secretaries to talk with local Jamaat leaders to reach a consensus over selecting a single candidate where BNP candidate's nomination papers were declared void, meeting sources said.

Returning Officers have rejected nomination applications of 12 BNP mayoral candidates on different grounds.

Top leaders of the 20-party alliance on November 26 decided to participate in the municipality polls with a single candidate under the banner of the alliance.

"We wanted to lend support to Jamaat-backed candidates in eight to ten municipalities. But they didn't give us any list yet. We have heard that they demanded the alliance's support to 40 of their mayoral candidates," said Mohammad Shajahan, joint secretary general of BNP, who was present at the meeting.

At the meeting, Fakhrul handed over the list of the party's mayoral candidates to the organising secretaries and instructed them to tame the party's rebel mayoral aspirants in around 25 municipalities.

## 6.9 magnitude quake hits off Indonesia

AFP, Jakarta

A 6.9 magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of Indonesia yesterday sparking panic, officials said, adding that there was no threat of a tsunami and no indication of any damage or casualties.

## Cushion against

FROM PAGE 1

make sure that there is no grievance among locals who have sacrificed their land. We know we won't be able to eradicate their pain, but we will try our best to mitigate their sorrow," said Shafiqul Islam, project director of the Padma Bridge project.

"We will hire experts to give them [locals] training. For example, if a person needs to be given welding training, he or she would be given that, and if another wants to be a technician, he will be given that training too," he said.

Shafiqul said 97 percent of acquisition had so far been completed while 70 percent of the displaced people had been rehabilitated in four rehabilitation sites on both sides of the river.

Around 3,000 people on both sides of the river have been displaced by the land acquisition, officials said.

According to locals and the project officials, the residents along the Padma river banks and the adjoining areas have been receiving development benefits since the Padma Bridge construction began. The construction of the bridge has helped people make money through various business activities.

The price of land in a certain area of the bridge location has shot up many folds. House rent in the area has increased, paving the way for locals to earn a bit more. A large number of people from different areas of the country are converging to the Padma Bridge site in search of work.

People are building houses to rent them to the employees-workers of the bridge. Real-estate developers have put up signboards of housing plots and apartments on the way to Mawa.

People are also buying land on both sides of the river in a bid to start new businesses once the 6.15km-long bridge, connecting Mawa of Munshiganj and Janjira of Shariatpur, is built.

The Padma Bridge will bring benefit to millions of people especially of the southern region, boost the country's economy and speed up communication.

Many evicted have switched to

## Two brothers

FROM PAGE 16

of Chakaria upazila around 2:00am yesterday.

Yesterday morning, she came to know that the bullet-hit bodies of her two sons were taken to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital.

Quoting locals of Himchhari, Abdul Hakim, a member of Eidgaon Union Parishad, told The Daily Star that the locals heard several gunshots in Himchhari area around 3:00am yesterday.

"Hearing from the locals, I went to the spot around 8:00am, found the bullet-hit bodies of two unidentified youths and informed police," he said.

Police recovered the bodies and sent those to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsies, said Sub-Inspector Minhaz Mahmud Bhuyian, in-charge of Eidgaon police post.

## Major progress

FROM PAGE 16

and long-time observers agreed following the release of the draft that a deal could be reached.

"Our sense is that almost everything we need for an ambitious, equitable agreement is still in play," Jennifer Morgan, global director of the climate programme at the World Resources Institute, told reporters.

"But there is clearly an immense amount of work to be done in the coming hours."

However some campaigning groups said they were concerned that world powers, in their rush for an agreement, may settle for a weak accord that does not do enough to curb greenhouse gases.

"It's a mix of the good, the bad and the ugly, but we've got three days to force the worst stuff out and get a decent deal. It's crunch time now," said Kaisa Kosonen, a climate policy expert with Greenpeace.

Taking effect in 2020, the Paris agreement would seek to cut greenhouse gas emissions deeply enough to curb global warming to less than two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-Industrial Revolution levels.

In a victory for dozens of nations most vulnerable to rising sea levels and fierce storms, a more ambitious cap of 1.5C was also kept as an option in the draft accord released yesterday.

"We have never been this close to a climate change agreement," Thoriq Ibrahim, Maldives Environment Minister and chair of the Alliance of Small Island States, said in response to the latest draft.

"It's now up to us ministers to show the leadership needed to make hard decisions that put the interests of people and the planet ahead of short-sighted politics."

One of the biggest potential deal-breakers remains money.

Rich countries promised six years ago in Copenhagen to muster \$100

new jobs. However, those who solely depended on farming are still jobless.

"I was not sure what to do after our land was acquired by the government. I bought a rickshaw, as a lot of people are coming in to see the construction of the bridge every day," said Mohammad Shahjahan.

Like Shahjahan, many youths have switched to new jobs, like repairing mobile phones.

Once the bridge is in operation in 2018, it will also end employment of hundreds more people now engaged in various types of income generating activities on both sides of the Padma river.

"We had 23 decimal of land where we used to cultivate rice and potatoes. But now we only have a house as the government has given us five decimal of land at the rehabilitation site where I along with my four-member family live. I have been spending the money that I got from the government," said Hasan Hawlader, 75.

"I am searching for new jobs as I am worried about my family. The money the government gave will be finished soon," he said.

Like Hasan, hundreds of people are worried about their families.

Besides, they alleged that the authorities did not hire them for work at the construction site; rather the Chinese companies working on this project hired workers from different parts of the country.

Contacted, economist Prof Farid Uddin Ahmed and sociologist Prof Sadaka Halim at Dhaka University told The Daily Star that the authorities should arrange alternative jobs for the displaced people.

Otherwise, the poor would be even poorer here, they said.

FROM PAGE 16

some families hostage, using them as "human shields" after storming the complex at sundown on Tuesday, slowing down the military's clearance operation.

"The fighting started around 6:00 pm (Tuesday) and intensified over the night," 30-year-old university student Iztullah, who lives inside the complex, told AFP.

"Soldiers were calling on Taliban attackers to let women and children go but attackers declined. We could hear children screaming during the fighting."

The militants had managed to breach the first gate of the high-security complex and took up position in an old school building, engaging security forces in pitched firefights.

The Taliban posted a picture on their website of the militants it said were involved in the brazen attack. It shows 10 young men sporting trimmed beards, Kalashnikovs and identical military uniforms.

The face of one of them is obscured with blue ink for unknown reasons.

"The martyrdom seekers... entered Kandahar airbase undetected... and began thunderous attacks," the post said.

It claimed that the assailants reported via telephone that some 80 Afghan and foreign forces had been killed and 13 armoured carriers destroyed.

billion (92 billion euros) a year from 2020 to help developing nations make the costly shift to clean energy, and to cope with the impact of global warming.

But how the pledged funds will be raised still remains unclear -- and developing countries are pushing for a promise that the amount will be ramped up in future.

Meanwhile, rich nations are insisting that developing giants work harder to tackle their greenhouse gases, noting that much of the world's emissions come from their fast-growing economies.

Most nations submitted to the UN before Paris their voluntary plans to curb greenhouse gas emissions from 2020, which was widely hailed as an important platform for success.

But scientists say, that even if the cuts were fulfilled, they would still put Earth on track for warming of at least 2.7C.

One of the remaining battle fronts in Paris is a debate over when and how often to review those national plans, so that they could be "scaled up" with pledges for deeper emissions cuts.

Some developing nations insist they should not be pressured into deeper cuts, insisting that responsibility rests with rich nations that have burnt the most fossil fuels since the Industrial Revolution.

In a dramatic and timely example of the world's fate if rampant coal burning goes unchecked, choking smog has descended on the Chinese capital of Beijing and surrounding cities this week.

A red alert, ordering factories to close and recommending children stay at home, was raised in Beijing for the first time on Monday, followed by 27 other cities on Tuesday.

China is the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, primarily because of its reliance on coal to provide cheap energy for its 1.3 billion people as they go through a remarkable economic transformation.