

30 German cars to be bought for OIC meet

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government is going to purchase 30 Mercedes Benz or BMW cars at an estimated cost of Tk 24.26 crore without tax for the OIC meet to be held in Dhaka next year.

The Ministry of Public Administration has sent a proposal to the cabinet committee on economic affairs seeking duty waiver on the vehicles, insiders said.

According to the ministry proposal, the cost of each car including registration and import insurance stands at around Tk 80.89 lakh. If duty is imposed on these vehicles, their price will skyrocket by about 597 percent.

Foreign ministry officials said the 45th meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) will be held in Dhaka on May 4-5 next year and at least 220 cars will be required including 70 high quality vehicles for that

purpose.

Besides, 10 coasters, five buses and an adequate number of minibuses will also be needed for the meet.

The foreign ministry said 40 high quality cars and 10 coasters would be collected from the friendly countries duty free as grant.

The public administration ministry said after the conference the vehicles would be used for invited VIP guests in various international conferences.

Of the cars, five would be given to the foreign ministry and the rest might be handed over to the government transport pool.

The public administration ministry said as the cars would be used for state purpose waiving duty on these would be logical.

The ministry added an OIC foreign ministers' meeting was held in Dhaka in 1983 and Toyota Cressida cars were purchased on that occasion.

ASI withdrawn for harassing couple

Police form 2-member committee to probe incident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

An assistant sub-inspector of Cox's Bazar tourist police has been withdrawn from duty for harassing a couple.

According to a written complaint to the Cox's Bazar deputy commissioner, Quaide Azam and his wife were harassed by the ASI while visiting the sea beach on Monday noon.

Raihan Kazemi, senior assistant superintendent of Cox's Bazar tourist police, told The Daily Star that ASI Md Masud was withdrawn from duty after the district administration lodged a complaint against him.

In the complaint, Quaide Azam, of BGB camp area in Cox's Bazar town, wrote that he and his wife sat on a chair at the sea beach around 8:00pm.

Three policemen, including Masud,

approached them and asked for their identities. The couple told them that they were married, but were still threatened and harassed. At one point, the policemen threatened to take them to the police station, Azam added.

Deputy Commissioner of Cox's Bazar Ali Hossain sent Azam's written complaint to Zillur Rahman, superintendent of Cox's Bazar tourist police, for taking necessary steps in this regard.

After getting the complaint, the SP formed a two-member committee, led by Additional Superintendent of the tourist police Khandker Fazle Rabbi, to investigate the incident.

If the allegations are found to be true, departmental and legal actions will be taken against the policemen concerned, said ASP Raihan.

Farmers Bank MD

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the bank and protect the depositors' interests as the bank does not have the capability to run its financial operations.

Some of them have suggested that the BB should take over Farmers Bank and appoint an administrator.

Farmers Bank has made headlines over the last two months after the BB found corruption and irregularities at the bank's three branches. The lender had allegedly indulged in irregularities just within a year of its inception in 2013.

Between September and November 2015, the BB conducted inspection at the bank's branches in the capital's Gulshan, Motijheel and Shyampur, and detected gross violations of the banking rules in disbursing loans of around Tk 400 crore.

Some of its directors, including Alamgir and Mahabubul, were allegedly involved in sanctioning these loans in violation of the credit rules, found the central bank.

Recently, there have been allegations that due to a severe cash crunch, the bank failed to pay back many of the depositors who approached it to encash their fixed-term deposits upon maturity.

Around a couple of weeks back, the bank failed to pay more than Tk 229

crore to Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF) on maturity of its fixed-term deposits.

The BCCTF, a government trust formed to tackle risks and adverse effects of climate change, deposited Tk 508.13 crore with the bank's Gulshan and Motijheel corporate branches in November and December last year under fixed-term deposit schemes.

Five of the deposits amounting to over Tk 229 crore became mature between November 24 and December 7. When the BCCTF contacted Farmers Bank to encash the deposits, the bank made excuses to delay payments.

Seeking anonymity, a BB official told this correspondent, "The bank's managing director [Shameem] has failed to discharge his responsibilities to protect the interests of depositors as well as the funds of the shareholders."

Earlier on November 26, the BB sent a letter to Shameem asking him to explain why he would not be removed from the bank. Following his explanation, a BB standing committee summoned him for a hearing on December 13.

The central bank was not satisfied with his response and removed him from the bank, added the official.

For the love of nature

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Next, he planted different fruit trees and flowers, and environmentally friendly tree species on the banks of the Gomoti River, in Dharmosagor Park, at Comilla Central Eidgah and in the Lalmai Pahar area.

Then one day Zamil observed water birds alternately hunting and resting over local water bodies. He wondered what he could do to provide safe and secure resting sites for migratory species. "I decided to make some rafts of banana stalks and float them in Dharmosagor for the birds," he says, "Surrounded by water in the rafts the birds could find a secure spot to take rest, without being disturbed."

Zamil laments that bird numbers are in decline year after year, as he has observed due to food scarcity, a lack of

safe breeding sites and the loss of mature trees and favoured habitat. The banana rafts were one way in which he sought to improve the situation; though fish farmers often destroy his improvised sanctuaries.

"Once I was sitting in my restaurant when two young boys arrived, referred by a friend of mine," continues Zamil, whose reputation for caring for nature was by this time spreading. "They came from Lalmai Pahar area and had with them a strange, wild animal they hoped to sell, but found nobody to buy it."

The animal was an elusive pangolin, a protected native species of scaly anteater. "I bought the animal for just Tk. 100 and released it in Lalmai Pahar. Then I felt responsibility to work for animals too." It was the first of many animals he has rescued.



With the Rangpur city polls only a day away, posters of mayor and councillor candidates have flooded the city. Around four lakh voters will exercise their franchise to elect their representatives. The photo was taken in the city's Jumma Para yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Crucial for all, but reasons different

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Experts and voters said the AL finds itself in a win-win situation. If the party wins the mayoral polls, it would claim that it has gained popularity. If it goes otherwise, it would say that a fair election is possible under the incumbent government.

For Jatiya Party, the election is a challenging one as Rangpur is a stronghold of the party. A win in the mayoral polls would give the party an upper hand over other parties in regaining its position in Rangpur division. It would also enable the party to gain bargaining power with the probable alliance partners ahead of the next national polls.

The BNP, however, sees the mayoral election as a good opportunity for it to appear as an alternative to Jatiya Party as its ally Jamaat-e-Islami has a strong support base in the city corporation area.

"The mayoral polls are a test for the Jatiya Party's existence. If the party loses here, its existence would be under threat. On the other hand, the Awami League and BNP have nothing to lose," Tuhin Wadud, writer, researcher and also a teacher at Begum Rokeya University, told The Daily Star.

He said the AL wants to capitalise on

the government's development activities and also show that people are in favour of development.

Jatiya Party was never defeated in any elections in Rangpur city after the fall of the then Ershad government in 1990. Jhontu won the non-partisan mayoral polls in 2012 with blessings from the AL.

Local Jatiya Party leaders said Mustafa has a clean image and is popular among the voters. In the last mayoral polls, he bagged 77,000 votes as an independent candidate.

"A win for plough [electoral symbol of Jatiya Party] would mean that the government has won. If the boat [electoral symbol of Awami League] sinks, it would not indicate a defeat for the Awami League. Rather, it would be a defeat for Jhantu," said Mashiur Rahman Ranga, state minister for LGRD and also a Jatiya Party lawmaker from Rangpur.

He hoped his party candidate would win by a margin of at least one lakh votes.

Voters envisaged that the main battle would take place between Mustafa and Jhantu.

Md Akbar Hossain, president of the

Rangpur chapter of Sujun, a civil society platform, said Jhantu's position is not good this year as he did not behave well with people after becoming mayor.

"People are resentful of his behaviour. He didn't carry out any development activities in 18 new wards out of a total 33. He will bag some votes as he is contesting the polls under a party banner."

Akbar said there is a good possibility Mustafa would do well in the polls as he has been campaigning since his defeat in the last election, maintaining a good relation with the voters.

About the BNP candidate, he said the party's vote would increase this time as its ally Jamaat has a good support base in the city corporation area.

Talking to The Daily Star, AL Presidium Member Abdur Razzak said, "The position of our mayor candidate is good although some people are claiming that the Jatiya Party nominee is in a good position. The prime minister picked the party candidate based on the report of a field survey. Many are saying that we would give the mayor post to Jatiya Party as a gift. It's not true. We are contesting the election and our central leaders are devising the strategy to win it."

Where is the newly born boy?

Hospital hands over a girl to parents 'who had a boy'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

New parents were handed over a female child on Monday, eight days after the couple had a boy at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

Hospital sources said Papiya Akter, 22, wife of Monwar Hossain, was admitted to the Labour Ward of the hospital on December 10. She gave birth to their first child that very evening.

The child was identified as male and was tagged, said Laxmi Narayan Majumder, deputy director of MMCH. The child was then kept in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the hospital's Neonatal Ward due to respiratory complications, she added.

Papiya had been told before that she had a boy and the paperwork at the

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Lot to do in just one month

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The November 23 deal concerns the repatriation of the Rohingyas who crossed into Bangladesh since last year's violence.

The repatriation of the Rohingyas who entered Bangladesh earlier will be considered separately on the conclusion of the present arrangement.

Yesterday's ToR mandates the JWG to undertake all necessary measures to start the safe and voluntary return, resettlement and reintegration process of displaced Myanmar residents as envisaged in the "Arrangement on Return of Displaced Persons from Rakhine State" signed by Bangladesh Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali and Myanmar Union Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe in Naypyitaw last month.

The JWG will also develop physical arrangement for return, which would include mechanism of verification, time schedule, transport and logistic arrangements, reception procedures, communication etc to commence the repatriation process, said a Foreign Ministry press release.

"That's a lot of work to do in one

month," a Bangladesh official who attended the meeting told The Daily Star.

The JWG shall involve assistance of the UNHCR and other mandated UN agencies and interested international partners in various stages of repatriation, said the ToR, signed by Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque and Permanent Secretary of Myanmar Ministry of Foreign Affairs U Myint Thu.

Led by the foreign secretaries, the JWG is composed of 15 members from each country.

The members can undertake spot visit to see for themselves the repatriation situation and settlement in both countries.

Talking to this newspaper, foreign ministry officials said the JWG would meet in Myanmar's capital at the soonest to make important decisions like formation of various technical committees.

The ToR was finalised at a meeting between officials of the two countries at the State Guesthouse Padma. The nine-member Myanmar delegation was led by its permanent secretary of foreign ministry.

Representatives from relevant ministries and agencies of both countries were also present.

At the meeting, the Myanmar side verbally agreed to allow the media to take up tour to see the repatriation process and the condition of the repatriated people, said a senior foreign ministry official.

"Myanmar agreed to allow the media due to persuasion by the Bangladesh side," the official added, asking not to be named.

Meanwhile, the UNHCR estimates that the average arrival of Rohingyas has dropped from 745 a day in November to 100 per day so far this month, reports UNB.

"As the refugee emergency in Bangladesh enters its fourth month, people are continuing to arrive from Myanmar. However, the pace of the influx has now slowed," UNHCR spokesperson Andrej Mahelic told a press briefing in Geneva yesterday.

Two-thirds of the new arrivals in the last one week said they came from Buthidaung in northern Rakhine, according to UNB.

Turkey seeks permanent solution to Rohingya crisis

UNB, Dhaka

Visiting Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim yesterday told BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia that their country had been working for a permanent solution to the Rohingya crisis as it thought Myanmar nationals who fled persecution in Rakhine state should be sent back to their homeland.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir came up with the remarks after a meeting between Binali Yildirim and Khaleda at Hotel Pan Pacific Sonargaon in the city.

"The Turkish prime minister said they think the displaced Rohingyas must be repatriated to their homeland, and a permanent solution to the crisis is very crucial. They [Turkey] have been maintaining contacts with different countries and global agencies to this

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Gaibandha MP

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Masum told our Gaibandha correspondent.

Mostofa suffered serious head injuries in the road crash on Dhaka-Tangail Highway at Delduar on November 18. The microbus he was travelling in collided head-on with a bus heading towards Bogra when both the drivers were trying to overtake other vehicles.

The collision also left three others in his car injured. The MP was first taken to nearby Jamurki Health Complex and then to Tangail General Hospital. Finally, he was shifted to the CMH.

The AL leader left behind a son, two daughters, a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death, reports BSS.

President M Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock at his death. The

premier paid her last tributes to Mostofa at the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad. She talked to his wife, son and other family members and consoled them.

He was laid to eternal rest at his family graveyard in Chandipur village under Sundarganj of the district.

Earlier, his third namaj-e-janaza was held at the playground of Chandipur High School after Maghrib prayers.

His second janaza was held at Central Eidgah in the district town in the afternoon.

Thousands of people from all walks of life, including political, social and cultural personalities, joined the janazas and paid their last tributes to the deceased leader.

Golam Mostofa was elected MP in a by-election on March 22 this year after his predecessor Manzurul Islam Liton, MP, was shot dead.