Recall of 2 diplomats routine work

Says foreign minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has denied that two Bangladeshi diplomats -- one from Iran and another from Lebanon -- are being recalled on charges of moral degradation and financial irregularities.

"No no...it's routine work. The government rule is to transfer diplomats after they are posted in a place for three years," he told reporters at his office in the foreign ministry yesterday.

The Bangladeshi diplomats in Iran and Lebanon have been there for over three years, he said.

According to a Prothom Alo report published yesterday, AKM Mujibur Rahman Bhuiyan and Abdul Motaleb Sarker, Bangladesh ambassadors to Iran and Lebanon, were asked to return to Dhaka following recommendations by multiple committees to probe allegations of moral degradation and financial irregularities.

To probe into the allegations, Bangladesh ambassador to Germany Imtiaz Ahmed was sent to Iran in March last year, while Bangladesh Ambassador to China M Fazlul Karim was sent to Lebanon in September. Both had submitted their reports, the Bangla daily reported.

Asked further about the allegations, the foreign minister yesterday said, "I will have to check."

The government is very strict about irregularities, he said.

The government had earlier withdrawn a diplomat from Australia following

allegations of irregularities. On Rohingya crisis, he said it would be a major issue for discussion during

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to China early next month. He hoped China, which has significant influence over Myanmar, would put more pressure on Myanmar for creating conducive condition for the return of the Rohingyas.

"We are urging our friendly countries, especially those having influence on Myanmar like China, to create pressure on them [Myanmar] for creating SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



A man herding ducks in Gadarpar Bichhanakandi area of Sylhet's Gowainghat upazila. In the haor areas of the district, many have found duck farming to be a way of self-employment. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

'Drug dealer' killed in 'gunfight' with BGB

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A suspected drug trader was killed in a "gunfight" with the members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) in Teknaf upazila of Cox's Bazar early yesterday.

The identity of the deceased could not be known yet.

Based on the information that a group of smugglers were entering Bangladesh from Myanmar with a big consignment of yaba, a BGB team conducted a drive in Hnila area on the bank of Naf River, said Lt Col Faisal Hasan Khan, BGB commanding officer of Teknaf.

Sensing presence of law enforcers, the "drug traders" opened fire on the BGB team forcing them to retaliate, triggering a "gunfight", claimed the

hit body from the spot, said Pradip Kumar Das, officer-in-charge of

The body was sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital for an autopsy. A case was filed with Teknaf Police Station in this connection.

a locally made firearms were also recovered from the scene, the BGB official said.

ANOTHER SUSTAIN BULLET

A man sustained bullet injuries in what police said was a gunfight in port city's Bayezid area early yesterday.

Md Jasim, 40, was accused in a case filed over attacking a mobile court during an eviction drive in the same area on May 13, said Ataur Rahman Khandokar, officer-in-charge of Bayezid Bostami Police Station.

He is currently receiving treatment at Chattogram Medical College Hospital, the OC added.

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would significantly be hiked in the budget.

A senior ERD official told The Daily Star that there was no possibility of falling in a debt trap within the next not create any pressure. 10 years as per their calculations would have to make big repayments in the next five years as large loans mature.

would not be a big problem for the government as it would be ensuring proper utilisation of foreign loans.

"Foreign loan repayment is not a burden for Bangladesh at this moment. It may put pressure on the economy after five to six years when repayment of big and supplier credit loans will start," said Zahid Hussain, lead economist at World Bank Dhaka office.

Repayment to hit record high

However, he said, if the government uses it properly in a way to contribute to the economy and continue the present economic growth, it would

According to him, the government despite the fact that the government is implementing some infrastructure projects which would not economically viable as their cost overruns and implementation delays According to Zahid, loan repayment would put the economy at risk.

"Implementation delays infrastructure projects will not bring expected returns," he said.

Zahid Hussain sees unnecessary expenditure in the implementation of big projects and the government taking up expensive loans irrespective of where it has been mobilised from. He said loans from the World

International Cooperation Agency were still concessional but the others were really expensive and of short terms compared to those of multilateral lenders. He further said the percentage of

Bank, Asian Development Bank and

level and was still manageable, but in future it would create pressure on the economy due to cost overruns and project implementation delays. If the returns are lower than the implementation costs, it will definitely

expensive credit was still not at a risky

create pressure on the economy and the government will have to reduce allocation for education and health and social welfare to make loan repayments, he noted.

Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of Policy Research Institute, said

Bangladesh will face a debt burden after five to six years when repayment of expensive loan starts. The government should be careful

implemented, he said. "I think expensive projects like the Padma rail link, Karnaphuli tunnel and Dohazari to Cox's Bazar rail line will not be economically viable as there will be no good returns," he said.

in the selection of projects and only

those with good returns should be

"The government will have to make repayments higher than returns." he

According to Mansur, if the export volume and remittance did not increase alongside the GDP growth, the government would have to impose taxes which would have to be borne by the citizens.

Shakib in doubt

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"It looks like a Grade 1 strain," Mahmud informed yesterday. "We are not yet sure whether he can play tomorrow [Tuesday]. It doesn't look serious. Shakib was fine yesterday, but seemed to be feeling it more today."

The team management are also not hurrying into a decision on Shakib as rain is forecast today in Bristol, so the match might be delayed or not take place at all.

"Shakib Al Hasan suffered a left thigh strain while batting during the World Cup match against England. He underwent a precautionary scan today [Monday] in Bristol. We are waiting on a specialist assessment and report," physio Thihan Chandramohan informed through a press release vesterday. Shakib, who scored 121 in the 106-run

defeat on Saturday and received treatment

from Chandramohan early on in his

innings at the Cardiff Wales Stadium, was present during team practice but did not bat or bowl at the Bristol County Ground on Monday, which is not an alarming sign as he has been known to take things easy on the eve of a match. Shakib received treatment from the physio at the end of the eighth over of

the innings on Saturday, and while he hobbled during runs for two or three overs after that, he appeared to bat unfettered till he was out in the 40th over.

Shakib's lowest score in the three matches so far has been 64 against New Zealand. He is still the highest scorer in the World Cup with 260 runs. He has also taken three wickets, so losing him ahead of a crucial encounter could be a major setback. Having lost two of three matches, Bangladesh will be desperate to get a positive result against a lowerranked side to keep their race to the semifinals on track.

9 DBBL ATMs victims of int'l fraud gang

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are believed to be members of an international hacker group -- were of Dutch Bangla Bank include two involved with the heist. Molla Nazrul Islam, special

superintendent of CID's organised crime unit, said the criminals were members of a North Korean hacker group named "Hidden Cobra". He said they had links to the "Lazarus

Group", the infamous gang involved in the 2016 Bangladesh Bank heist.

Nazrul added that they had warned bank authorities recently after getting a tip-off from an international intelligence agency about such a hacker group.

The CID official said three types of crimes happened during the ATM theft: cyber-attack, money heist and money laundering.

According to investigators, the gang chose the Eid period for their heist as bank transactions reach a maximum during this period. After the theft, the June 6.

Detective Branch (DB), Cybercrime unit of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) and CID of police are now jointly investigating the incident.

DB sources said the hacked ATMs in Khilgaon, one in Kakrail, one in Radisson Hotel, one in DIT road in Rampura and two in Nikunja areas.

The investigators are also looking into the involvement of local criminals in this connection.

The investigators have also sought information from the special branch of police on all Ukrainian nationals who had arrived in and left Bangladesh between May 15 and May 30.

steal money from ATMs, but the suspects used a new method this time which law enforcers had not seen before, said

In the new method, a card was inserted in the ATM and the machine's connection with the bank's server got severed, after which the suspects just took money out. The method also left gang was supposed to go to India on no record of the transaction in the bank's server.

> DB sources, quoting an IT expert, said although such kind of heist was new to Bangladesh, it has been seen in other countries where criminals used

Tyupkin, a strain of malware, to empty Tyupkin malware was first discovered

For it to work, one needed to gain

physical access to an ATM and infect it with the Tyupkin malware. Once the machine was infected, it disabled all network connections and even if the administrators detected any suspicious activity, it could not be interrupted.

Police said forensic experts were now working on the latest thefts.

The cybercriminals came to attention Earlier, cloned cards were used to after police arrested six Ukrainian nationals on June 2. They were all placed on three-day remands on June 3.

One of their alleged cohorts is still

on the run and immigration police at airports have been alerted about the matter, police said. According to investigators, the seven

suspects landed in Dhaka together on May 30 and stole money from an ATM booth in middle Badda the very next

In the latest case, it was mentioned that Tk 4.5 lakh was stolen from the Badda ATM booth on May 31.

On June 1, they stole money from

the other booths. During the series of thefts, one of the hackers was detained while he was trying to steal money from the bank's ATM in Taltola of Khilgaon. During the attempted theft, two of the foreigners went to the booth

wearing masks and caps. The security

guard became suspicious and called

locals for help, who were able to catch one of them and hand him over to police. Police raided a hotel in Panthapath based on information provided by the detainee and arrested the six alleged hackers. One member of the gang is

still on the run, said the official. Dutch Bangla Bank Ltd authorities filed a case against the seven Ukrainians and other unnamed people with Khilgaon Police Station under the digital security act on June 2.

Shahidur Rahman Ripon, additional deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police's detective branch (East), said they were yet to interrogate the arrestees as they were now analysing their profiles.

"Hopefully, we will interrogating them from tomorrow," he said.

ACC director

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Talking to journalists, ACC Chairman Iqbal Mahmood yesterday said Basir denied the allegation of taking bribe.

Replying to a question from a reporter, he said the graft watchdog would carry out forensic tests of audio clips of the conversations between Mizan and Basir.

Iqbal also said they would file a case if the incident of bribery was proved to be true.

Basir last month submitted a report to the ACC with a recommendation of filing a case against Mizan. The commission was yet to decide on the report, said ACC sources.

After taking an allegation into consideration, the ACC appoints an enquiry officer for probing it. The officer submits a report with a recommendation either for filing a case against the accused

or relieving the person of the charges. In the event of filing a case, the graft watchdog appoints another official as the investigation officer who submits a charge sheet to the commission for

to a court following approval by the ACC. Talking to The Daily Star on Sunday, DIG Mizan said, "Basir called me in January this year and asked me to submit my salary statement. I submitted the salary

approval. The charge sheet is submitted

statement of my 28-year-long career." He said Basir also asked him to call his personal number as conversations on his official number is recorded. He also claimed to have bought the ACC

director a mobile phone handset and a SIM card. "Around January 10, Basir met me at Ramna Park and demanded Tk 50 lakh. He said he could clear me of all

the charges." Mizan said he gave Basir Tk 25 lakh on January 15 and Tk 15 lakh on

February 25. Asked about the sources of the money, the DIG said he borrowed Tk 10 lakh

from one of his in-laws and the rest of the amount came from his personal savings. "On May 30, he [Basir] went to my wife's shop at Police Plaza and said he had to submit a report accusing me as he was

under pressure from the Anti-Corruption Commission," said Mizan, adding that he had a heated debate with Basir. Under the Penal Code, bribing someone is a punishable offence.

On April 25 last year, the anti-graft watchdog had summoned Mizan after several media reports broke that he had amassed wealth illegally. He was

Bad loans soar

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of Bangladesh Bank's attempt to ease the loan classification rules, including giving borrowers more time to pay off their instalments and relaxing the loan write-off policy. These were allegedly done to have

a lower default-loan figure but the latest data suggests it backfired.

Even though the High Court stayed until June 23 the implementation of the new loan rescheduling policy, defaulters still believe that they would be able to enjoy the benefits, Mansur of PRI said.

"There is no ray of hope of arresting this upward trend of defaulted loans.'

This means the government would have its hands tied while financing the budget for 2019-20, due to be unveiled on Thursday.

"It will be unable to borrow much from banks to manage the deficit financing," said Mansur, also a former economist of the International Monetary Fund.

The move came hot on the heels borrowing heavily through highcost savings instruments instead of low-cost bank loans. In the first 10 months of the

> current fiscal year, the government did not borrow from banks and repaid them. But from May 1, it started borrowing, sending the cashstrapped banks into a state of panic, sources said.

Due to the high amount of defaulted loans, the liquidity crisis at banks continues to worsen. This has also limited their capacity to extend funds to the government, they said.

"In the banking sector, political influence should be immediately stopped," Mansur said urging the central bank to crack down on large corporate groups who have piled up end to such culture," Azizul added. defaulted loans.

earliest to recover the loans.

that more than 52 percent of the banks were in liquidity crisis.

Of late, the government has been defaulted loans were with eight state-run banks. As of this March, the eight banks had Tk 58,667 crore defaulted loans, up by 9.69 percent from the previous three months. Forty private banks had defaulted loans of Tk 49,950 crore, up by 31 percent from the previous quarter. Banks are now forced to disburse

> loans to some quarters due to political influence, said AB Mirza Azizul Islam, a former adviser to a caretaker government.

situation. Besides, private bank directors often sanction loans due to nepotism or personal relationships

in escalating the loan-default

with clients. "The central bank must put an Arfan Ali, managing director of He said the actions taken by the Bank Asia, said many businesspeople government should be revised at the were unwilling to repay loans believing that they would not get The Bangladesh Bank data shows fresh credit in the near future as

Salehuddin Ahmed, former governor of Bangladesh Bank, said the latest figure of defaulted loans would create chaos for the government's plans to be unveiled on Thursday. The escalating defaulted loans

would choke private investment, an important component for economic growth, and limit the government's capacity to subsidise various sectors, he said. Bangladesh Bank should move

"This has played a major role away from giving special facilities to defaulters on an ad-hoc basis as the practice encouraged them to perpetrate financial crimes, he added. Md Serajul Islam, spokesperson and

an executive director of Bangladesh Bank, said some banks have failed to recover loans after rescheduling defaulted loans in recent months. This had an adverse effect.

Lenders have also adopted a cautious policy in disbursing fresh loans, due to which the percentage of defaulted loans look bigger, he claimed.

Tigers to battle SL as well as weather FROM PAGE 1 a place for Sabbir Rahman to replace

The two defeats have also brought on

a lot of discussions and suggestions of changes to an eleven that has so far been unchanged in the first three matches. Changes are in the offing today, but as Mashrafe said, there may not be many in order to avoid the risk

of destabilising the team. With the way as the straight boundaries at pitches staying under cover for most of the last three days, it does open up spinners difficult. However, if Shakib the possibility of pacer Rubel Hossain coming in. He could replace either number seven batsman Mosaddek Hossain or off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz. It may be Mehedi making

Bristol are short, thus making lives of

match is shortened, there may also be

-- also Bangladesh's frontline spinner -- is unavailable, then Mehedi will likely play as the sole spinner. Depending on how much the

playing eleven, Bangladesh would be hoping that the weather allows them to showcase as much of their superiority over Sri Lanka as possible.

Tigers' six-hitting capabilities. Aside from tinkering with the

Mohammad Mithun to bolster the

quizzed for about seven and a half hours over the allegation.

included in the GDP. Such measures will also contribute to reducing wage discrimination against women and facilitate women's engagement in formal work," she said.

BGB official. Later, police recovered a bullet-Teknaf Police Station.

A total of 50,000 yaba pills and

INJURY

Include unpaid work FROM PAGE 1 the wrong and the injustice that have

continued for decades. We urge the

government to take concrete actions

to recognise unpaid reproductive and

productive yet unaccounted work of women, which includes household work and work in agriculture activities. "Research shows that their workload and time in non-SNA [System of National Account] activities are on average three times

more than men," Shaheen said. Citing the findings of a study --"Women's Unaccounted Work and Contribution to the Economy" -commissioned by MJF, Shaheen said that the estimated value of women's unpaid non-SNA (household) work, if monetised, would be equivalent to 76.8 to 87.2 percent of the GDP (FY

More importantly, if women's

unpaid work was to be monetised

2014-2015).

it would amount to 2.5 or 2.9 times higher than the income received from paid services, the study revealed. "Recognition of women's unaccounted work in the GDP is necessary to achieve SDG 5.4 and 5.4.1 indicators and meet commitments given by the Government of Bangladesh

Shaheen also referred to the Oxfam report launched at the recent DAVOS meeting which had calculated women's unpaid work globally at 10 trillion US dollars annually.

"MJF stands ready to collaborate

at different international forums," she

with the government to calculate the SNA so that women's unpaid work is