

Tricks not so secret

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demanded Tk 35,000 as "speed money" for every consignment in addition to the bribe for concealing the actual weight of goods in the release documents, said the C&F agent proprietor.

"We informed senior customs officials but no remedy has been found till now," he added.

"Rather, the rate of bribery [per consignment] has been increased from Tk 1 lakh to Tk 1.5 lakh after the complaints. As a result, some corrupt C&F agents are taking advantage and hiding the actual weight [of goods] to evade duty.

"We don't know why the customs authorities did not take action against those officials and C&F agents, even after getting proof of the allegations. Those involved are still working in the U-baggage section without any official action taken against them."

Sheikh Salahuddin, an importer, said in an official complaint sent to the Customs House on December 15 last year: "In the last one year, 2,500 consignments were released from the port under U-baggage rules hiding actual information in the release documents.

"Joint Commissioner Mahbub Hasan has taken Tk 1.5 lakh per consignment to hide the actual invoices and the bribe was transacted through his office assistant Md Daud."

To help verify the allegation, the importer also provided a total of 250 bill of lading numbers with his complaint.

The Daily Star managed to collect documents on four consignments from those against the 250 bill of lading numbers in the official complaint; irregularities were found in three of them.

Although a total of 5,300kg of goods were shown in the three master bills of lading -- SACQ0129844, SACQ0129627, SACQ0129613 -- only 2,500kg of goods were shown in the release documents.

So, more than 2,800kg of goods in these three consignments were released by the C&F agent Spread Link without any customs duty being paid.

The consignments came from Saudi Arabia and the documents showed old refrigerators, charger lights, fans, blankets, and washing machines as their contents.

Regarding these allegations, Customs Commissioner Fakhruddin told The Daily Star recently, "Surveillance has been stepped up on existing consignments which are awaiting release from the port yard following the allegations and we found forgeries in all these."

"However," he said, "it can't be said without investigating that the same forgery happened in consignments previously released from the port."

He added, "We have set up two inquiry committees to look into whether there were any similar irregularities in those consignments. After the investigation, we will take action against them."

Contacted in mid-December, Joint Commissioner Mahbub Hasan said there was no scope for customs duty on goods to be given lower than that specified in the documents. "I have no idea how it happened," he added.

He also denied the allegation of bribery.

WHAT EXPATS, C&F AGENTS SAY

Abu Tayab, one of the four expatriates under whose names the consignments were shipped to Bangladesh, had lost his job because of the pandemic and was broke towards the end of 2020.

In these circumstances, through a friend named Shafi Ullah, he was offered a ticket by officials of a Jeddah-based

courier agency who said they would be shipping goods in his name and asked for his passport to do this. He accepted the deal.

While he took the free ticket home, he has no idea what unaccompanied baggage was and what its rules entailed.

Abu Tayab said Shafi himself cut a similar deal but he was also shipping some of his own items in addition to the courier's goods, and they flew to Bangladesh together.

Shafi Ullah could not be contacted but his brother Himel told this correspondent that Shafi never brought any goods though Chattogram Port and he returned to Saudi Arabia at the end of December.

The consignment under Abu Tayab's name was released by C&F agent Nahar Trading Company Limited from the port.

Asked about the allegation of commercial goods in his consignments being released under expatriates' names, Ahsanullah Talukder Rintu, proprietor of the C&F agent, said, "Some importers may use passports of expatriates to bring in commercial goods.

"In this case, we have nothing to do. We deliver the goods to those to whom the courier agent abroad asks us to do."

Rintu, however, denied allegations of irregularities in the customs documents and bribing customs officials.

"If such irregularities occur, shipping agents and freight forwarding agents must be involved. Such irregularities are not possible without the involvement of officials of the other two C&F agents," he said.

Proprietor of the C&F agent Amin Brothers, Mohammad Fazlu, told The Daily Star, "It is true that for every consignment of U-baggage, a bribe has to be paid in the name of speed money."

However, he claimed that before releasing the goods, customs officials had checked all the consignments and they had no scope to release products by showing a lower weight in the documents.

When this correspondent further asked him about the alleged irregularities, he said he would explain later but did not answer despite repeated phone calls afterwards.

This correspondent attempted to contact the proprietor of Spread Link, Md Amirul, and an office assistant of the Customs House, Md Daud, but they did not respond to repeated calls.

FAULTS IN THE SYSTEM

To release imported goods from the port, a letter of credit (LC), paperwork of the imported goods and other documents including details of the exporter are required.

However, these documents are not required in the case of U-baggage, as these goods are mainly for expatriates' use.

Customs sources said it is not possible to identify the irregularities by looking at the documents due to expatriates submitting the house BL and bill of entry separately when they take delivery of the goods.

Using this opportunity, C&F agents are releasing additional goods with the help of the customs officials concerned.

Customs sources said such irregularities can be detected if the authorities make it mandatory to specify the expatriates' names and the quantity of goods when they submit both the IGM (Import General Manifest) and the Bill of Entry in the Customs server.

Country sees

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It said the tally of infections has surged to 534,407 as 454 new cases were confirmed in the last 24 hours.

A total of 12,075 samples were tested at 204 authorised laboratories across the country during the time.

Of the total sample tests in those 24 hours, 3.76 percent tested positive, while 14.73 percent cases were detected from the total tests conducted so far, the release read.

Among the total infections, 89.62 percent patients have recovered, while 1.51 percent died so far since the first Covid-19 positive cases were reported in the country on March 8.

Among the seven deaths, six are male and one is female the press release read, adding that one is in his 40s, one in his 50s while five are above 60 years.

According to the division-wise data, three deaths took place in the Dhaka division, and rests are in other divisions.

Among the total 8,094 fatalities, 4,507 deaths occurred in the Dhaka division, 1,488 in Chattogram division, 461 in Rajshahi division, 549 in Khulna division, 243 in Barishal division, 301 in Sylhet division, 356 in Rangpur division, and 189 in Mymensingh division, according to the press release.

A total of 3,627,413 samples have so far been tested since the detection of the first Covid-19 cases in the country.

No serious

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"I volunteered to take the vaccine, hoping to dispel the misconception about vaccination," she told The Daily Star.

The government conducted the two-day piloting of the vaccine before launching the mass inoculation on February 7.

Officials said none of the 567 people, who volunteered to take the shots, have shown any adverse impacts so far. They would be observed for seven days.

Shamsul Haque, member secretary of the vaccination committee at the health directorate, said, "We were afraid that someone would suffer a severe allergic shock about 15-30 minutes after taking the shot. But there was no such case."

This correspondent talked to a dozen people, who got the shot, and excepting a few, who had a temperature, everyone said they were fine.

Ahmed Lutful Moben, associate professor of medicine, said he was not feeling any adverse effects and had been performing his usual hospital duties.

"After taking the vaccine, I worked at the hospital and drove home. I inoculated about 100 of my colleagues the next day. I am fine," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

The pain where the needle was pushed is "ignorable", he added.

The five hospitals where the two-day piloting took place were Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), Kurmitola General Hospital, Kuwait Bangladesh Friendship Hospital, and Mugda Medical College Hospital.

Officials at the hospitals said a few of the vaccine recipients had mild fever. Doctor Moben said, "It is quite normal. It means the vaccine is developing immunity in the body."

Prof Mamun Al Mahtab Swapnil and his wife Associate Prof Nuzhat Chowdhury both took the shots at the BSMMU on Thursday.

Prof Swapnil told this correspondent that he and his wife felt no adverse effect whatsoever.

"Since taking the shots, my wife and I have been seeing patients and went to talk-shows. Some of my colleagues at the hospital also told me that they were absolutely fine," he said.

Frontline health workers, several politicians, government officials, and civil society members, have taken the job on the second day of the piloting.

"We are lucky to have the vaccine early. Many countries are still struggling to get the shots. We should not miss the opportunity," Prof Swapnil said.

Cops bust

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an air gun, and weapon-making equipment, which were hidden behind pigeon cages.

"We have come to know that the factory was run by one Md Nizam Khan. On Thursday night, he fired a shot targeting another man following an altercation with him over the recent Chattogram City Corporation elections. The bullet did not hit the target.

Officer-in-Charge Mohammed Mohsin of Double Mooring Police Station said, "From the design of the firearms and weapon-making equipment, it is evident that Nizam is a fierce criminal."

"Nizam is on the run and police were trying to arrest him," said the OC.

The law enforcers arrested his wife Meherunnesha Mukta, 39, for her alleged links with running the factory, said police.

Rare Botticelli

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Mundi," attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, set the world record in 2017 for an Old Master or any work of art.

Bidders on the phone and online participated in Thursday's auction. The identity of the buyer was not disclosed.

Fresh clashes

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deployed thousands of extra police and paramilitaries in Delhi and around the camps since then. One small camp has been closed, as have many roads around the protest sites.

Some local groups have said the farmers should leave. Farmer leaders have insisted their action will go on.

"When we don't have any land left, when we are unable to cultivate any crops, we are going to die anyway," said Bhagwan Singh, a 53-year-old farmer at Singhu.

"At least if we die here protesting, we will be martyrs. We will fight and die for the rights of the people of this country."

1,776 more arrive with

FROM PAGE 12
"Rohingyas are motivating each other to come here. Those who came to Bhasan Char are satisfied with the facilities they have gotten, and this is inspiring the others to come too," the PD said.

Rafikullah, 50, said his cousin had come in an earlier batch and told him about the good facilities here.

"Now we have come here. I think our long-standing sufferings will come to an end," he said.

Parvin Aktar said she came to Bhasan Char for the safety and security of her children.

"My kids will get access to education and a good social life. In the Cox's Bazar camp, there was no security for the children," she said.

A mother of three, Yasmin Aktar said she is going voluntarily and to get finally leave behind the life in the camps.

"A section of the Rohingyas tortured others in the camps. They would torture people for money by locking them in the toilets or whipping them," she said while speaking of the sufferings they had to endure.

"When the sun would set, it would be dreadful for the women in the camps. We would not be able to move around. Women are highly unsafe in the camps," she added.

After their arrival at Bhasan Char, they were taken to an empty warehouse where they offering prayers of gratitude for their safe journey to the island. They were then shifted to their homes.

The first batch, with 1,642 Rohingyas, was relocated to Bhasan Char on December 4. Over 1,800 others were relocated on December 29.

The Bangladesh Navy has undertaken the Tk 3,100 crore project, titled Ashrayan-3 Project, on the island to provide shelter to the refugees.

On the Char, the buildings are equipped with electricity, solar panels, biogas plants, and mobile networks.

The houses have been built four feet above the ground with concrete blocks. Each building will house 16 families of four in its 16 rooms, providing more than the UN stipulated 37 square feet per person, project officials said.

The United Nations and other development partners, however, expressed concerns and demanded independent assessments of the project before the relocation.

The UN and rights groups have been questioning the relocation plan, saying the island was prone to floods and could be submerged during high tides.

Election today in 62 more

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He said health measures would be strictly followed as the election are taking place amid Covid-19 pandemic.

A total of 229 people are running for mayor at the 62 municipalities in 36 districts.

There are 2,360 councillor candidates and 755 women's reserve seat candidates.

The EC was supposed to hold elections to 64 municipalities in the third phase. But the election to the Sujanagar municipality was postponed due to a court case.

No election will be needed for Laksam of Cumilla as all mayor and ward councillor candidates of the municipalities were elected unopposed.

No election for the mayor position will be held for two municipalities -- Tungipara of Goplaganj and Morelganj of Bagherhat -- as the AL mayoral candidates of the municipalities were elected unopposed.

Our Correspondent in Pabna reported that tense situation is prevailing in Pabna town over Pabna municipality.

The situation arise an a polling agent of AL rebel candidate Sarif Uddin Prodhan was beaten by the supporters of AL candidate Mortuza Bishwas Sony yesterday noon.

Supporters of AL candidate attacked and vandalised at least three election

campaign offices on Thursday night. The attack left five injured.

Pabna Superintendent of Police Muhibul Islam Khan said additional police deployed in the important places for keeping the law and order situation under control.

Beside, Police and six platoons of Rab and BGB were also deployed in Pabna for keeping law and order situation under control in the election, the SP said.

So far the ruling Awami League candidates clinched sweeping victories in the first and second phase of the municipality elections.

AL men won 45 out of 60 municipalities in the second phase of election on January 16. BNP gained victory in four municipalities and independent candidates in eight. One candidate each from the Jatiya Party and the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal won the elections.

In the first phase election on December 28, AL contenders achieved success in 18 municipalities out of 24, BNP candidates in two municipalities and independent candidates in three.

Fifty six municipalities will go for election on February 14 in the fourth phase, of them EVM will be used in 31 municipalities.

Elections to 31 municipalities will be held in the fifth phase on February 28, using EVM.

EU regulator okays

FROM PAGE 12
"REACHING THE LIMIT"
Cases have soared past 101 million worldwide, and despite the rollout of vaccines, the fight has been further complicated by the emergence of more contagious variants first detected in Britain, Brazil and South Africa.

American biotech firm Novavax said Thursday that its vaccine showed an overall efficacy of 89.3 percent in a major British clinical trial, and was highly effective against the variant first detected there.

But other results showed it offered significantly less protection against the South African strain.

Mozambique's President Filipe Nyusi has warned that warned hospitals across southern Africa are

"rapidly reaching the limit of their capacities", in part down to the new variant.

Pfizer and Moderna have said their vaccines are effective against the variants.

Also released yesterday, data from a mass trial of Johnson & Johnson's single-shot vaccine showed it was 66 percent effective overall, with a better rate in the US and lower in South Africa.

The company is quickly expected to apply for a US emergency authorisation.

And in the EU, Hungary became the first member state to approve the Chinese-made Sinopharm vaccine, a week after it also broke ranks with Brussels by issuing a provisional permit for Russia's Sputnik V jab.

RFP Ref. No.: LRPS-BAN-2021-9164695

Request for Proposal (RFP): Establishing Long-Term Arrangement (LTA) for delivery of reliable, adequate, and inclusive life-saving WASH services for the Rohingya refugees living in the eight (8) camps under UNICEF WASH responsibility.

UNICEF-Bangladesh is inviting interested companies with a strong record and credibility of providing the above required service. To receive the detailed scope of work and procedure to submit the bid response, please email to ["supplybangladesh@unicef.org"](mailto:supplybangladesh@unicef.org)

Pre-bid Meeting date: **Please see the schedule mentioned in the RFP.**

The deadline to submit proposal is **Thursday, 11 March 2021; Time: 11:00 Hrs.**

Please note UNICEF does not charge any fee at any stage of solicitation process.

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জয়িতা ফাউন্ডেশনের সক্ষমতা বিনির্মাণ প্রকল্প

জয়িতা ফাউন্ডেশন, মহিলা ও শিশু বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয়
কনকর্ড রয়্যাল কোর্ট (৬ষ্ঠ তলা), ২৭৫/জি
রোড-২৭ (পুরাতন), ধানমন্ডি, ঢাকা-১২০৫

স্মারক নং- জঃফা/সঃবিঃপ্রঃপ্রশাসন/০১/২০১৮-৩৬৪ তারিখঃ ২৮/০১/২০২১

আবেদনপত্র আহ্বান

মহিলা ও শিশু বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয়ের নিয়ন্ত্রণাধীন জয়িতা ফাউন্ডেশন ও জয়িতা ফাউন্ডেশনের সক্ষমতা বিনির্মাণ প্রকল্পের যৌথ উদ্যোগে জয়িতা নারী উদ্যোক্তা সৃষ্টির লক্ষ্যে নিম্নোক্ত বিষয়ের উপর প্রশিক্ষণ প্রদানের জন্য বাংলাদেশের সকল জেলার মহিলাদের নিকট হতে আবেদনপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

১. প্রশিক্ষণের বিবরণঃ

ক্র. নং	প্রশিক্ষণের নাম	শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা	প্রশিক্ষণের মেয়াদ	প্রশিক্ষণের ধরণ	প্রশিক্ষণ প্রদানের স্থান
১	ফ্যাশন ডিজাইন	ন্যূনতম এসএসসি	৬ দিন	তাত্ত্বিক ও ব্যবহারিক	জয়িতা ডিজাইন সেন্টার, লালমাটিয়া, ঢাকা।

২। প্রশিক্ষার্থীদের প্রদেয় সুযোগ সুবিধাসমূহঃ

ক) জয়িতা ফাউন্ডেশনের সক্ষমতা বিনির্মাণ প্রকল্প হতে প্রশিক্ষণ সংক্রান্ত ব্যয় (প্রশিক্ষণ ফি, সকালের নাস্তা, দুপুরের খাবার ও সন্মানী) বহন করা হবে।
খ) বিশিষ্ট ডিজাইনার ও গবেষক জনাব চন্দ্রশেখর সাহা ও ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, শান্ত মারিয়াম ইউনিভার্সিটি অব ক্রিয়েটিভ টেকনোলজি, বিজিএমইএ ইউনিভার্সিটি অফ ফ্যাশন এন্ড টেকনোলজি ও অন্যান্য প্রতিষ্ঠানের অভিজ্ঞ শিক্ষকগণ উক্ত প্রশিক্ষণে প্রশিক্ষক হিসেবে দায়িত্ব পালন করবেন।
গ) জয়িতা ফাউন্ডেশন হতে ফ্যাশন ডিজাইন প্রশিক্ষণের সনদ প্রদান করা হবে।
ঘ) ফ্যাশন ডিজাইন প্রশিক্ষণ সকাল ৯.০০টা হতে বিকাল ৫.০০টা পর্যন্ত অনুষ্ঠিত হবে বিধায় প্রশিক্ষার্থীদের প্রশিক্ষণ চলাকালীন ঢাকায় অবস্থান করতে হবে। প্রশিক্ষণকালীন ঢাকায় অবস্থানের ব্যয়ভার প্রশিক্ষার্থীরা বহন করবেন।

৩। আবেদনের শর্তাবলীঃ

ক) আবেদনকারীদের বয়স ১৮ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২১ তারিখে ১৮-৪৫ বছরের মধ্যে হতে হবে।
খ) আবেদনপত্রের সাথে শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতার সনদপত্র/মার্কশিট, জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্র ও ৩ কপি পাসপোর্ট সাইজের ছবি সংযুক্ত করতে হবে।
গ) প্রশিক্ষণের জন্য নির্বাচিত আবেদনকারীগণ প্রশিক্ষণ আরম্ভ হওয়ার দিন রেজিস্ট্রেশনের সময় (সকাল ০৮.৩০ হতে ০৯.০০টার মধ্যে) চাকুরীরত বা সংক্রামক রোগে আক্রান্ত নন মর্মে ঘোষণাপত্র প্রদান করবেন।
ঘ) আবেদনকারীকে নিজের নাম, পিতা/স্বামীর নাম, মাতার নাম, বর্তমান ও স্থায়ী ঠিকানা, শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা, বৈবাহিক অবস্থা, ধর্ম, জন্ম তারিখ, ১৮ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২১ তারিখে বয়স, অভিভাবকের নাম ও মোবাইল নম্বর উল্লেখপূর্বক আবেদনপত্র প্রকল্প পরিচালক, জয়িতা ফাউন্ডেশনের সক্ষমতা বিনির্মাণ প্রকল্প, কনকর্ড রয়্যাল কোর্ট (৬ষ্ঠ তলা), ২৭৫/জি, রোড-২৭ (পুরাতন), ধানমন্ডি, ঢাকা-১২০৫ বরাবর প্রেরণ করতে হবে। আবেদনপত্র ডাকযোগে/কুরিয়ার সার্ভিস/সারাসরি/ই-মেইলে (rouf.fmrp@gmail.com)/প্রেরণ করা যাবে।
ঙ) আবেদনপত্র গ্রহণের শেষ তারিখঃ ১৮ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২১ তারিখ বেলাঃ ৫.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
চ) বিস্তারিত জানার জন্য মোবাইল নম্বরঃ ০১৫৫২৪২৫৭৬০, ০১৭২৯৭০৩৪০৪, ০১৩০৩২০৩৫৪৬ তে যোগাযোগ করা যেতে পারে।
ছ) প্রশিক্ষণের জন্য আবেদনকারীকে অবহিতকরণঃ সকল শর্ত পূরণকারী আবেদনকারীদেরকে প্রশিক্ষণের সময়কাল ডাকযোগে/ই-মেইলে জানিয়ে দেয়া হবে।

মোঃ আব্দুর রউফ
প্রকল্প পরিচালক (অতিরিক্ত সচিব)

জিডি-১৯৯