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P6

Rifts within the Taliban surface



P7

From TSC to Madison Square Garden



P8

Is sanding in Bibiyana a wake-up call?



P10

Match fixing has turned into an epidemic

Magic of phantom exports

At least 20 companies pocket incentives over 5 years thru' ghostly shipments of 965 consignments

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

Between August 2018 and September 2020, Dhaka-based Mamun Enterprise has drawn over Tk 6.2 crore in incentives against agro exports.

Nothing wrong in it, as farm sector exporters are entitled to the government benefit that aims to boost export of certain goods. The problem is, the company did not ship any of the 142 consignments against which it pocketed the incentive, a customs investigation has found.

Including Mamun Enterprise, at least 20 companies have claimed 20 percent export incentive over the last five years, laundering huge sums through ghostly shipments of 965 consignments worth about Tk 451.5 crore.

Investigators assessed data from three out of the seven local banks where these companies opened their LCs (letter of credit), and found 17 of them pocketed Tk 33.5 crore in incentive.

Although these companies did not ship a single item, they received about Tk 182 crore against these shipments, as per bank documents.

Customs officials suspect the amount of incentive thus pocketed would go up to Tk 90 crore once information from the four other banks was available.

Customs documents seen by The Daily Star give no indication that these banks were involved in the scam, but officials said they would not

“Some exporters are taking incentives from the government by falsely showing exports, with the help of some customs officials and C&F agents. Investigations show these products did not even enter the private ICD yards or the port.”

A letter to NBR chair from Ctg Customs House commissioner

rule out anything at this stage.

While the probe continues, the customs authorities unearthed the fraud after scrutinising documents of some 4,000 consignments against which cash incentives were claimed between May 2017 and January this year.

All the 965 non-existent shipments were shown to be agro products or processed food such as potato, sesame seed, red chili, turmeric, tomato, curry coriander powder and biryani masala. Exporters of these items are entitled to a 20 percent cash incentive on the export value.

Investigators said the ghostly exports were shown by breaching the NBR server by an unholy alliance of exporters and their agents as well as some customs officials.

The NBR server is maintained by its IT department, which issues and manages IDs of all customs officials to access the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA). It is an integrated customs management system for international trade and transport operations of import, export, and transit procedures. With a valid ID and password, the system can be accessed from anywhere in the country.

Of the companies, Mamun Enterprise and Mazi Food Product Ltd, both owned by Elias Mamun Mazi, showed export of 205 consignments worth around Tk 99 crore. They encashed Tk 7.61 crore in incentive, data collected from three of the seven banks show.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Firefighters with the help of locals put out flames at a plastic factory in the capital's Lalbagh after a fire broke out there around noon yesterday. Twelve fire engines doused the blaze after about four hours. No casualty was reported.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Russia strikes Kyiv missile factory

Threatens more attacks on the capital after Ukraine sinks Moskva flagship

AFP, Kyiv

Russian strikes pounded a military factory near Kyiv that makes the missiles Ukraine claims it used to sink the Moskva naval flagship, with Moscow yesterday vowed renewed attacks on the capital.

A workshop and an administrative building at the Vizir plant, which lies near Kyiv's international Zhulyany airport, were seriously damaged in the overnight strikes, an AFP journalist saw.

Russia had earlier announced it had used Kalibr sea-based long-range missiles to hit the factory, which Ukraine's state weapons manufacturer Ukroboronprom says produced Neptune missiles.

"There were five hits. My employee was in the office and got thrown off his feet by the blast," Andrei Sizov, a 47-year-old owner of a nearby wood workshop, told AFP.

"They are making us pay for destroying

the Moskva," he said. It was the first major Russian strike around the Ukrainian capital in over two weeks.

The governor of Ukraine's southern Odessa region, Maxim Marchenko, said the 186-metre-long Russian missile cruiser was hit by Ukrainian Neptune missiles on Wednesday.

The Moskva had been leading Russia's naval effort in the seven-week conflict, and the circumstances around its sinking and the fate of its crew of over 500 remain murky.

Russia's defence ministry said a blast on the vessel was the result of exploding ammunition and that the resulting damage had caused it to "lose its balance" as it was being towed to port on Thursday.

The fleet has been blockading the besieged southern port city of Mariupol, where Russian officials say they are in full control although Ukrainian fighters are still

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

RAMNA BLAST CONVICT

Ex-Huji chief faked identity to evade arrest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab, at long last, has arrested Mufti Shafiqur Rahman, a former chief of banned militant outfit Huji-B, who dodged law enforcers for over a decade.

Shafiqur, also a founder of the outfit, was sentenced to death in a case filed over the 2001

Ramna Batamul carnage. Besides, he was sentenced to life in prison in the August 21 grenade attack case.

He had been hiding in a remote char in Narsingdi since 2008 using the alias, Abdul Karim. He also managed to have a national ID card with the fake name, said a top Rab official at a press conference yesterday, a day after his arrest.

A team of Rab 2 picked up the 61-year-old from Kishoreganj's Bhairab upazila during a drive on

SEE PAGE 7 COL 2



Eid shoppers pour into the weekly holiday market on the road in front of Ideal School and College in the city's Motijheel yesterday. The number of customers at the city markets shot up on the weekend ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr, to be celebrated early next month.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Given the potential desperation of President Putin... none of us can take lightly the threat posed by a potential resort to tactical nuclear weapons.

CIA director William Burns



CHILD SHOT DEAD IN FATHER'S LAP
3 arrested, main accused still on the run

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Expatriate worker Abu Jaher met his four-year-old daughter Tasnia Akter for the first time after returning home recently to Noakhali's Begumganj from Saudi Arabia.

On Wednesday afternoon, Tasnia went out with her father to buy chips and juice. Little did her family know that a terrible fate awaited them.

She was shot dead while in her father's lap after a group of armed men fired at Jaher, who suffered bullet wounds.

Police and locals said seven-eight armed criminals led by one Rimon went to Malkar Baper Shop, a grocery store owned by Jaher's nephew Mamun and verbally abused the owner over a land dispute.

That was when Jaher, carrying Tasnia, went to the shop. Locals said Jaher was targeted as he had attended an arbitration over a land dispute, angering the attackers, although he was not directly involved with the issue.

Talking to this correspondent, Jaher said, "The criminals were saying that I was in the meeting and because of me all this happened. And then they started firing. The first shot missed.



SEE PAGE 2 COL 6