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DCC commissioner gets 27yrs in prison in arms case



Khwaja Habibullah Habib

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Khwaja Habibullah alias Habib, BNP leader and commissioner of Ward-57 of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), and two others have each been sentenced to 27 years in prison for illegally possessing firearms.

The other two are Aminul Islam alias Amin, president of Lalbagh thana unit of the Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal, and Shyamal Kumar Das, an activist of Juba Dal.

Habib and Amin are in jail custody while Shyamal is absconding. The Speedy Trial Tribunal-3,

Dhaka Division, yesterday gave the verdict in a crowded courtroom. Habib and Amin were in the dock.

Judge of the tribunal Mohammad Abu Hanif read out important portions of the 10-page judgement.

The judgement said the three were found guilty of illegally possessing firearms and ammunition and given 27 years' rigorous imprisonment. They will also have to pay a fine of Tk 30,000 each, in default will be in jail for one and a half years more.

The judge said all categories of
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A large part of the Sitalakhya river is now under capture of stone traders who have illegally set up crushing machines to run business in full swing as shown in this snap near the Kanchpur Bridge yesterday.

PHOTO: S K ENAMUL HAQ

Gram Sarkar off to low-key start amid legal questions

REZAUL KARIM

Gram Sarkar, the lowest local government tier, began coming into being yesterday 22 years after initiation of the process amid legal challenges as well as political opposition.

But the first day efforts lacked steam when only a few units were formed in Cox's Bazar, Gopalganj, Gazipur, Munshiganj, Jessore, Barguna and Satkhira districts.

According to preliminary reports, four of the bodies, auxiliary to Union Parishad (UP), were consti-

tuted in Cox's Bazar, seven in Gopalganj, six in Gazipur and one each in Munshiganj, Jessore, Barguna and Satkhira districts.

Officials admitted the low-key initiative on the beginning day, saying the figure of units formed was 'quite insignificant', but hoped that large-scale formation would be seen at the end of the week.

Eminent lawyer Dr Kamal Hossain filed a writ challenging the legality of the Gram Sarkar Act 2003 in favour of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) on July 6. He argued that articles 3, 4 (4) of

the act, assented to by the president on February 27 this year, were contradictory to Articles 7, 9, 11, 27, 28, 59 and 60 of the constitution.

The High Court Division of the Supreme Court served a show-cause notice on the government asking it to explain why the act should not be declared illegal and beyond the constitution. The government replied the notice.

Hearing on the writ is due today. The court bench comprising Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury and Justice AFM Ali Asgar in a brief
SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Commentary

Is this what the PM wants her student front to do?

MAHFUZ ANAM

We have decided to pose the question, as in our heading, directly to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. As the chief of the BNP and as the person who has handpicked the leadership

of the party's student front she must ponder about what happened on the Dhaka University campus from Wednesday night through to Thursday afternoon.

The JCD activists attacked a peaceful student procession taken

out late night on Wednesday in favour of a student strike on Thursday. After beating up the leaders of the rival Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), this newspaper's DU campus reporter was
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Illegal detention SC asks govt to meet HC ruling

STAFF CORRESPONDENTS

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday directed the government to implement within six months a High Court (HC) directive that bars detention of anyone arrested on suspicion.

However, the court allowed the government to appeal against the HC's 15-point directive passed on April 7.

The Appellate Division yesterday did not allow a government appeal seeking stay of the directives.

The HC directive was aimed at ensuring human rights of a person under arrest or detention or on remand. It observed that some of the provisions of Section 54 of the Code

of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) pertaining to arrest on suspicion and Section 167 dealing with remand were not consistent with the fundamental rights. It asked the government to amend the relevant sections of the CrPC within six months from the date of the ruling.

The HC ruling had also made it mandatory for a police officer to produce a person before the nearest magistrate within 24 hours of their arrest.

The writ on illegal detention was filed by the Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust following the murder of Rubel, a university student, in police custody in 1998.

The government sought permis
SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Imports suffer as customs points paralysed

Taxmen intensify strike

NAZMUL AHSAN

Activities at the Dhaka Customs House, Inland Container Depot (ICD) and all 30 customs outposts known as letter of credit (L/C) stations came to a halt as officials abstained from work for the fourth consecutive day yesterday. Imported goods were not

released from those points because of the work stoppage to protest the arrest and harassment of customs officials on tax evasion charges.

Businesses, those especially dealing with release of imported goods, were seriously hampered following the complete stoppage of
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