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Arrest warrants against 5 eminent citizens

BoI chief files defamation case against CPD board members, threatens more suits; bail prayer today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a rare incident in the country, a Dhaka court yesterday issued arrest warrants against five prominent citizens who are also members of the board of trustees of an independent research organisation, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), following a defamation suit filed by Executive Chairman of the Board of Investment (BoI) Mahmudur Rahman.

The accused prominent citizens are renowned economist also CPD Chairman Prof Rehman Sobhan, its Executive Director Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, CPD trustee board members -- former adviser to a caretaker government Syed Mohammad Mujibul Haq issued the warrant order after Mahmudur Rahman, also adviser to the Ministry of Energy And Mineral Resources, filed the case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's



Prof Rehman Sobhan M Syeduzzaman Syed Manzur Elahi Debapriya Bhattacharya Laila Rahman Kabir

Laila Rahman Kabir.

Mahmudur, however, declined to talk to any journalist from The Daily Star or the Prothom Alo. He also threatened to file another civil suit against the same persons very soon, claiming damages.

Metropolitan Magistrate Syed Mohammad Mujibul Haq issued the warrant order after Mahmudur Rahman, also adviser to the Ministry of Energy And Mineral Resources, filed the case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's

Court in Dhaka at noon.

Mahmudur along with his lawyers appeared before the court around 12:30pm yesterday and filed the case alleging the accused of making defamatory statements against him at a news conference on August 8. A detail of the news conference was published in newspapers the following day.

CPD held the news conference on Tuesday after the BoI chief had made brash remarks about it while speaking at a meeting with the

members of Economic Reporters Forum (ERF) at the National Press Club on Sunday, where he branded the civil society think-tank as 'a conspirator and a shameless liar' and accused it of maligning the country and of making Bangladesh's economic development 'complex'.

Mahmudur in his lawsuit complained that the accused made libellous, disgraceful, indecent, misleading, conspiratory, false,

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Indigenous people of Bangladesh march in their traditional costume from the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka to celebrate the International Day of the World's Indigenous People yesterday.

Shock at case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Top business leaders, economists, bankers and civil society members were yesterday shocked at issuance of arrest warrant against five prominent citizens.

They termed it 'unfortunate' and 'regrettable' and two eminent persons said should a defamation case have been filed, it should have been against the BoI Executive Chairman Mahmudur Rahman for making defamatory statements.

Former adviser to the caretaker government M Hafiz Uddin Khan observed that Mahmudur Rahman should be charged for terming the CPD a 'conspirator and liar'.

According to him, the prominent citizens against whom cases

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Bimstec to speed up FTA talks before Feb

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The Bimstec countries yesterday agreed to speed up talks to conclude Free Trade Area (FTA) before the next summit to be held here in February next year.

The seven-nation group, during the day-long ministerial meeting here, welcomed the decision to set up Bimstec energy centre in India which will serve as secretariat to coordinate efforts for sharing experience and capacity building.

Describing terrorism as an important area requiring coopera-

tion, the meeting underlined the need for speeding up work of the Joint Working Group (JWG) to reach "concrete areas of agreement and cooperation" to combat terrorism.

On energy, the meeting stressed the importance of sharing experiences and strengthening cooperation amongst member countries in the fields of grid connectivity, gas pipelines, hydropower, renewable sources, efficiency and access.

The Bimstec comprises India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Bhutan,

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TV footage shows Manzur Elahi didn't comment on Mahmudur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Syed Manzur Elahi's comment, which prompted the BoI executive chairman to file yesterday's defamation suit, was not at all about Mahmudur Rahman, but a mere jocular demonstration of how unthinkingly people sometimes talk about others.

After viewing the file footage from TV channels, The Daily Star found that former adviser to a caretaker government Manzur Elahi had not made any such comment about Mahmudur Rahman.

During the CPD news conference,

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CPD protests distortion of Manzur Elahi's speech

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) yesterday strongly protested some daily newspapers' distorted version of some of the speeches delivered at the press conference on August 8 organised by CPD in response to the speech of Board of Investment (BoI) Executive Chairman Mahmudur Rahman.

Some daily newspapers including The Daily Inqilab, Ittefaq, Bangla Bazar, News Today made distortion of the speeches addressed at the

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JOINING DONORS' MEET ALONG WITH JAMAAT AL faces criticism from 14-party allies

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

Senior leaders of the main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday came under severe criticism from their allies in the 14-party combine over AL leaders' presence in a meeting of the Local Consultative Group (LCG) where ruling Jamaat-e-Islami leaders were present.

Most of the leaders of 14-party components, at an emergency meeting of the opposition combine, reacted sharply to AL leaders' sitting with Jamaat.

Having their strict stance against Jamaat and anti-liberation war force, leaders of the AL's allies also warned that they would not be with AL if it sat with Jamaat at any meeting in future. The meeting unanimously decided that the 14-party would never sit with Jamaat at any echelon.

Senior AL leaders who were present at the meeting held at 14-party Coordinator Abdul Jalil's Nam flat did not defend themselves from their allies' criticism over the

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Debapriya should not have right to live in country Says BoI chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Executive Chairman of the Board of Investment (BoI) Mahmudur Rahman said Executive Director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya should not have the right to live in the country.

He said this after filing a defamation case against Debapriya and four others yesterday.

Blasting Debapriya as a 'black sheep', Mahmudur Rahman said, "They (CPD) brought a false allegation against me, that I was a collaborator in 1971." He was speaking to reporters on the court premises after filing the case.

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EC sits today to extend time limit for update

School students feature high in slow-paced revision of voter list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the voter list not updated in many areas as yet, the Election Commission (EC) sits today for another round of extension to the time limit, which expires today, amid allegation of underage people being drafted in the list under political pressure.

The EC first extended the time limit from July 30 to August 10 to complete the job after it gave in to the popular demand of a door-to-door visit for the update.

The EC Secretariat yesterday claimed that field level staffs received over one crore applications from aspiring voters and 9.31 lakh applications for deleting

names from the list.

But Secretary of the EC Secretariat, Abdur Rashid Sarkar, said the update progress in the capital unsatisfactory.

Meanwhile, the Tk 1,000 remuneration for each of the 1.35 lakh temporary field level staff is yet to be disbursed by the secretariat, which

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Implement HC verdict on voters' right to know

Experts, civil society members demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Legal experts and prominent civil society members at a roundtable yesterday demanded full implementation of the High Court (HC) verdict on voters' right to know about candidates in elections.

Prior information about them is citizens' constitutional right and it is a must to form a healthy parliament through polls and thereby protect democratic institutions from politicisation and corruption

to free the society from the scourge of black money and criminalised politics, they stressed.

They felt that civil society members, professionals and media personnel should immediately start collecting information about candidates in the next polls so that people can judge them and exercise their voting right judiciously.

The Prothom Alo, The Daily Star and Sushashoner Jonno Nagorik -- Shujan organised the roundtable on "The Verdict of the High Court

and Voters' Right to know about the Election Candidates" in the city.

Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain said the HC verdict on the voters' right to know the bio-data, accounts of resources and other information about the candidates is based on the constitution, and proper implementation of it is needed for electing competent and honest people as lawmakers.

"If the sources of resources are known to the voters, they can

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Khaleda hails political talk initiative by businessmen

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday welcomed the dialogue initiative taken by the business community to end the persisting political standoff between the government and the opposition.

"We are always in favour of discussion and still ready to sit across the table if the opposition comes in," the prime minister made the remarks when a delegation of the newly elected executive body of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), led by its president SM Fazlul Huq, called on her at the International Conference Centre (ICC).

The prime minister also urged the BGMEA leaders to consider the legitimate demands of their workers and advised them to share earnings with their employees and workers equitably.

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32 Bangladeshis arrested in Mumbai

Police say they are illegal immigrants

UNB, Dhaka

Thirty-two Bangladeshis suspected as illegal immigrants were arrested on Tuesday night in a neighbouring district of Mumbai, Indian satellite television channel Zee News reported yesterday.

The report quoted police as saying that they suspected that illegal immigrants have settled down in the Vasai-Virar belt of Thane district. Some 80 people have been arrested in a combing operation, 32 of them are proved to be suspected Bangladeshi nationals.

Police said the arrestees will be produced in the court, seeking a direction to deport them.

"These suspected immigrants will also be questioned to find out if anyone of them was involved in July 11 serial train blasts," police said.

Jurists decry BoI chief's case, arrest warrants

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

Eminent jurists and lawyers' leaders termed the filing of the case and issuance of warrants against five eminent citizens as unfortunate and said the incident reminds how urgent is the separation of judiciary from the executive branch of the government.

The jurists strongly criticised the filing of the case by Energy Adviser Mahmudur Rahman and

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REPORT ON HC Contempt rule issued on Prothom Alo editor, publisher

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a contempt rule on The Prothom Alo Publisher Mahfuz Anam, Editor Matiar Rahman and Reporter Zahid Hossain for publishing a report on harassment of justice seekers in the HC Division of the Supreme Court.

Following a contempt petition filed by a Supreme Court advocate,

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An orchard of coconut trees remains submerged due to waterlogging in Kumira village in Tala, Satkhira, for the last few months. As a result, the trees are dying as well as people are suffering.

WATERLOGGING IN 3 DISTRICTS Livelihood, ecology under threat

SHARIFUL ISLAM, back from southwest region

Waterlogging on a vast swath of land in Khulna, Satkhira and Jessore districts poses a serious threat to livelihood and environment while over 5 lakh people in the three districts have already become marooned.

Many of the vegetations and wildlife have become extinct in those south-western districts, where waterlogging has become a problem since the early 80s.

Many more are on the verge of extinction as new areas are becoming waterlogged every year, environmentalists said, adding that most of the trees and plants that grow on dry land are dying while wildlife, different local variety of fish and livestock are facing extinction.

The waterlogging, if persists for long, will also decrease fertility of soil.

This correspondent visiting the waterlogged southwestern region found many dying trees and plants.

"I can not check my tears when I look at my fruit bearing trees," Shyamolendu Biswas of waterlogged Dumurtola village in Abhoyagar, said, adding, "I grew all of my guava, mango, jackfruit and many other fruit trees like my children, but all of them are dying before me."

Even if the water recedes, it will take 10 to 12 years to grow such trees at this level, he said.

"All vegetations which do not grow under water will become extinct," said Dilip Kumar Dutta, associate professor of the environmental science department in Khulna University (KU).

Dilip, who has done a research on the impact of waterlogging, said if proper measures are not immediately taken saltwater will enter the areas, there will be no sweet water vegetation there and inhabitants will suffer from lack of food security and firewood crisis.

Around 10 to 12 species of local variety of fish including

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