

White paper
AL files writ:
Submission
by AG today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) yesterday filed a writ petition challenging the legality of the government's publication of a white paper on graft during the past AL government.

A High Court division bench comprising Justice Mohammad Abdul Matin and Justice Mohammad Marzi-ul-Haq yesterday heard the petitioners for admission of the case. It will hear the government argument against the petition today to finally decide whether to admit the case.

Awami League leader and former industries minister Tofail Ahmed

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Work to curb terrorism, arrest price hike, PM tells party MPs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has asked her fellow parliamentarians of the BNP to play a special role to help curb terrorism and resist price hike as well as maintain proper atmosphere in the educational institutions at their respective constituencies.

"We must work towards fulfilling the expectations of the people who have given us the mandate to serve them," she told the BNP lawmakers at a meeting of the BNP Parliamentary Party (BNPPP) meeting held at the ruling party conference room in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday afternoon.

Khaleda identified tardiness of the lawmakers as the reason behind the quorum crisis and asked them to

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INSIDE TODAY

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A civilisational aberration in defending civilisation!

Column: Perspectives

M Abdul Hafiz

Supplements 10 & 15

Two supplements: One on Independence Day of Sri Lanka and the other on the Second Convocation of American International University

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Feb 4		5:47 pm
Feb 5	6:38 am	

Prayer Timings

Feb 4

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:40	6:15
Zohr	12:45	1:25
Asr	4:15	4:30
Maghrib	5:50	5:55
Esha	7:15	7:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

7 years of graft gulps down Tk 15,000 cr

Audit reports of 24 ministries reveal

RAFIQ HASAN

The Comptroller and Auditor General's Office has detected misappropriation and irregularities of around Tk 15,000 crore in 24 ministries and government agencies in the last seven years.

The irregularities were revealed in 73 annual and special reports presented yesterday to President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury.

Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) Syed Yusuf Hossain yesterday called on the president and presented the 73 audit reports containing 1983 audit objections involving Tk 14,860 crore, said sources.

The reports contained cases of embezzlement, theft, wastage, non-deduction of VAT and income taxes and non-compliance with financial rules and regulations.

Of the 73 audit reports, 56 are annuals, 12 specials and four performance and one finance accounts. The audit was for 1994 through 2001.

Of the 24 ministries, misappropriation and irregularities to the tune of Tk 12,600 crore were detected at the communications ministry alone.

The post and telecommunications ministry also has a record of Tk 842 crore misappropriation.

The jute ministry has Tk 30.28 crore, industries Tk 12.41 crore, food Tk 47.58 crore, finance Tk 202, shipping Tk 1 crore, LGRD Tk 157.11 crore, civil aviation Tk 6.84 crore, commerce Tk 16.84 crore, works and housing Tk 130 crore, water resources Tk 120 crore, power Tk 44 crore, defence Tk 7 crore, fisheries and livestock Tk 7 crore, agriculture Tk 1.26 crore, education Tk 30 crore.

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PHOTO: AKM MOHSIN

Imported from Myanmar through the Teknaf border, these Pangash and Rhui fishes being offloaded at Swarighat yesterday for wholesale distribution at only Tk 40 to 60 per kg.

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PSA repeal bill tabled

But cases under the law to go ahead unless the govt withdraws them

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday introduced in the Jatiya Sangsad a bill seeking repeal of the controversial Public Safety (Special Provisions) Act (PSA).

But all the ongoing cases filed under the law would continue till their disposal unless the government withdraws them, according to provisions of the bill.

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed placed the bill titled Public Safety (Special provisions) (Repeal) Act, 2002.

"Provisions regarding investigation, further investigation, trial, appeal and other clauses of the act stand valid unless the government withdraws charges against a person ... the special tribunals set up for trial in cases under the law will also continue to function until the government abolishes those through gazette notification," he said.

bill said.

The law minister in his statement on the bill's aims and objectives alleged that the PSA was enacted with a political motive. "Many innocent people were victimised by the anti-human rights act," he said. While in the opposition, he recalled, the BNP challenged the anti-people law in the Supreme Court and promised to scrap it when it is elected to power.

The immediate past Awami League government introduced the stringent law in February last in a bid to curb growing acts of crime in the country. The then opposition BNP and its allies enforced hartal protesting this and termed the law a

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PM addresses nation today

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will address the nation today on her government's first 100-day programme. State-run electronic media Bangladesh Television and Betar will broadcast the speech at 7:15 pm, PM office said.

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Businessman shot dead in Tejgaon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

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A businessman was shot dead by a gang of hoodlums at Arjatpara in the city's Tejgaon area yesterday evening.

Kazi Sirajuddin Ahmed, 45, a resident of 74, Arjatpara, came under attack while he was going to his firm at Mohakhali at about 5:45 pm.

A gang of eight intercepted Sirajuddin in front of house no. 59 at Arjatpara and shot in his head. He died on the spot.

The reason behind the killing could not be known immediately.

Family sources said the victim was sleeping in his residence. Some one called him over mobile phone at about 5 pm.

Tejgaon police recovered the body and sent it to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Kazi Shahed, father of the victim, filed a case with Tejgaon police station in this regard. None was arrested in connection with the killing till 9 pm yesterday.

Mob does it again, burns one to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Once again, a mob beat and burnt to death an alleged mugger in front of a police box in the city's Dhanmondi residential area yesterday.

Identity of the victim aged about 25 could not be known immediately.

Three others said to be his accomplices were also beaten by the mob and handed over to Dhanmondi police. They are Mohammad Masum, Minto Mian and Shaheen Hossain, driver of the auto-rickshaw boarded by them. They were arrested.

On January 28, three suspected muggers were caught and burnt to death by a mob in the city's Motijheel commercial area as they snatched Tk 2.60 lakh from two employees of a private firm.

Witnesses said muggers boarding an auto-rickshaw stopped a rickshaw carrying two women -- Lutfi Begum and Rabeya Rahman -- near Takuya Mosque at Road 13-A in Dhanmondi yesterday afternoon. They snatched gold ornaments and handbags of the rickshaw passengers and tried to flee. As the women screamed for help, local people and pedestrians chased the gang.

When the auto-rickshaw boarded by the muggers slowed its speed at a speed breaker in front of Adarsha police box, the mob caught and beat them. They also set fire to the vehicle and threw an unidentified mugger inside it. As a result, he was burnt alive, the witnesses said.

Some other sources however said, as the auto-rickshaw was moving fast being chased by a mob near Adarsha police box, two policemen tried to stop it. Sensing the presence of police, the driver of the vehicle tried to take a U-turn and it over turned. The mob then started beating the gang. At this time, a cracker exploded inside the auto-rickshaw and it caught fire, resulting in the death of a mugger.

Police recovered a knife and three crackers from the arrested. They also recovered the charred body of the suspected mugger and sent it to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

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Another graft case against ex-minister, 6 others

STAR REPORT

The Bureau of Anti Corruption (BAC) yesterday filed one more corruption case against a minister of the immediate past Awami League government and some bureaucrats.

In the case filed with Ramma thana, seven persons including former public works minister Mosharrif Hossain and former public works secretary Jagannath Dey have been accused of being involved in irregularities in setting up an independence monument at Suhrawardy Uddayan in the city.

With this, BAC filed 20 cases against former AL ministers, party leaders and bureaucrats since December 11 last year. A dozen

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Plight of pilgrims on as flights yet to begin

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of pilgrims are still waiting to be ferried as private tour operator Air Bangladesh (AB) is yet to start flights of its chartered aircraft.

None from the private company visited the pilgrims stranded at the hajj camp at Ashkona near the Zia International Airport (ZIA), pilgrims complained to reporters yesterday.

For some of them, including elderly women, the wait began from January 28, when Air Bangladesh was supposed to start its flight. Each of the pilgrims paid US\$ 950 to the company as airfare.

Although a vintage Lockheed L1011 Tri-Star with 360-passenger capacity finally arrived on

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Saturday, the plights of the pilgrims did not stop.

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Company officials said they could not operate flights as the

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) denied permission to fly the aircraft.

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Reek returns

Two-stroke auto-rickshaws back on city streets

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The same old fume and stench of unburned lubricant greased capital commuters yesterday.

The capital returned to its old self of foul air and traffic snarls as thousands of two-stroke autorickshaws took to the city streets yesterday, ending a three-day strike after the government and the three-wheeler owners reached an 'understanding'.

Earlier, the city dwellers witnessed a respite from the pollution and traffic jams as thousands of pollutant-spewing two-stroke baby-taxis went off the city roads on Wednesday for an indefinite period. The move was a protest against the recent government decision to slap a ban on the movement of unfit autorickshaws and tempos.

The government has set February 16 as the deadline for the two-stroke three wheelers to obtain road permits, tax tokens and fitness certificates, and the 'foolproof' stickers have to be stuck on their windshields.

The Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) officials said the crackdown on two-strike vehicles came

as they caused massive air pollution as well as traffic congestion.

The BRTA also aims to bring the actual number of baby-taxis in the city down to 10,000 from the existing 50,000. But baby-taxi owners, drivers and police sergents said the actual number of such three-wheelers plying the city roads without any documents could be as high as 120,000.

The government has so far remained firm in its decision to contain and eventually phase out baby-taxis from the city.

Meantime, it was learnt that during Saturday's meeting with autorickshaw owners Communications Minister Nazmi Huda gave them 'some more time' to phase out the vehicles.

The government is also planning to offer loans to the taxi owners to buy four-stroke three-wheelers to replace the two-stroke ones.

Yesterday, the number of baby-taxis in the city was significantly higher than usual. At busy intersections, hundreds of three-wheelers spewed toxic fumes.