

White Paper II today

Frigate purchase, novo-theatre, Swadhinata Stambha, appointments on the list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The second part of a white paper on alleged corruption, irregularities and abuse of office during the five-year rule of the Awami League comes out today.

Political Secretary to the Prime Minister Haris Chowdhury will formally release the white paper at a press briefing at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in the afternoon, official sources said.

Aspecial cell at the PMO headed by retired bureaucrat Mohammad Moniruzzaman has prepared the white paper.

The BNP-led coalition government published the first part of the white paper in two volumes on January 23, bringing some 40 allegations of graft, financial irregularities and abuse of power against former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and many of her cabinet colleagues in previous Awami

League government.

According to the officials, the latest white paper includes some 20 allegations of corruption, irregularities and abuse of power.

Former premier Sheikh Hasina, former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria, ex-labour minister MA Mannan, former law minister Abdul Matin Kashru, ex-environment and forest minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, ex-food minister Amir Hossain Amu and former LGRD minister Zillur Rahman along with a number of retired and serving civil and defence officials, businessmen have been charged with such allegations in the white paper.

Charges have been slapped on them in the purchase of the navy frigate, irregularities in the appointment of government employees through the Public Service Commission (PSC), irregularities in the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, the Bureau of Manpower,

Employment and Training (BMET); and finance, law and food ministries; corruption and irregularities in the allotment of industrial and commercial plots, and construction of Bangabandhu Novo Theatre and Swadhinata Stambha.

The "irregularities" in the purchase of Tk 550 crore much-talked about South Korean company Daewoo-built navy frigate feature prominently in the white paper. The former prime minister, the then defence secretary, navy officials and others have been accused in the purchase 'scam'. The white paper observes that purchase of the frigate was not necessary.

It also highlights the irregularities in the PSC in the 20th BCS batch recruitment and alleges that pro-AL Chhatra League leaders and activists were selected illegally.

PSC Chairman Prof. Mostafa Chowdhury and other officials have

All charges, no cases

STAR REPORT

The government has not yet filed any case against graft charges in 40 different issues it brought against ministers of the previous government, Awami League leaders and civil servants in the January 23 white paper on corruption.

In addition, the government has so far not changed or redressed the procedural violations identified in the white paper. In other words, while charges of corruption in many projects were made, there has not been any move to correct or modify those.

However, it did act on the allegation that the AL government had printed textbooks to 'brainwash' students with politically biased contents.

After coming to power, the government changed historical contents of 18 textbooks and wrote that Ziaur Rahman had announced the independence of the country from Kalurghat Betar Kendra on March 26, 1971.

"Our task was to find out corruption, misuse of power and misuse of national resources," said a highly placed source in the cell dealing with the white paper.

"We know that some of the allegations would not be translated into anti-corruption cases. But the rest are there for the Bureau of Anti Corruption to look into and file cases against," he said.

While releasing the first white paper, the government said it would not stop any ongoing projects that might affect companies belonging to influential foreign countries or lead to wastage of huge amount of money

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

ADP trimmed by Tk 3,000cr

Economy won't be run on 'fancied' donor prescription, says Saifur

UNB, Dhaka

Finance and Planning Minister Saifur Rahman yesterday asserted that the economy would be run on the basis of its necessity not on the "fancied" guidelines of donor agencies like ESCAP, World Bank and IMF.

"They (donors) publish reports with their imaginary views," he told a press conference after a meeting of the National Economic Council (NEC) that approved an ADP (Annual Development Programme) cut of Tk 3,000 crore for the current fiscal year.

Chaired by Prime Minister Khaleida Zia, the meeting approved the revised development budget for the fiscal 2001-2002, bringing down the development expenditure to Tk 16,000 crore from the original outlay of Tk 19,000 crore.

Saifur said the steps on the basis of necessity yielded results and the foreign exchange reserve rose to

the US\$ 1.48 billion mark on Tuesday.

He cited this example when his attention was drawn to a recent ESCAP report that said any increase in the inflow of foreign direct investment in Bangladesh would depend on an agreement to permit gas export.

Saifur said the Article IV mission of IMF had tried to influence the new government to cut the ADP size as low as Tk 12,000 crore and suggested introduction of floating exchange rate for the foreign currencies.

"We did not follow their prescription ... What we did is meet the requirement of the economy," he said, explaining the government efforts to overcome the poor state of the foreign exchange reserve that dipped as low as one billion dollars.

He said the government had decided to cut the ADP size to match the expenditure with the availability

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

New CGS on the cards

DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

Some key changes in the Bangladesh Army including appointing of a new Chief of General Staff (CGS), the second position in the Army hierarchy, and a new divisional commander were underway yesterday, sources said.

Besides, three officers of the rank of brigadier general have been promoted to the rank of major general raising the number of major generals in the active list to 26.

Major General Ekramul Haq, who has been serving as the divisional commander (Jessore) is becoming the new Chief of General Staff (CGS), replacing Major General Najmul Ahsan Amin whose services has been transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the sources said.

The newly appointed CGS is an infantry corps officer and served as defence advisor at the Bangladesh mission in New Delhi before taking command of the Jessore Division.

Brig General ANM Moniruzzaman, an artillery officer and commander of the Artillery Centre, Chittagong is being made the new GOC of Jessore Division as major general.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

Sajal murder Chargesheet against Mockbul, 7 others

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Former Awami League lawmaker Haji Mockbul Hossain and seven others have been chargesheeted in Sajal Chowdhury murder case.

The seven others are Nurul Islam Ratan, Abul Hossain, Habibur Rahman, Sadeq Khan, Mahabbat Ali, Mohammad Shahin and Nazmul Karim alias Tingku.

Investigation Officer (IO) of the case DB assistant commissioner Abdul Aziz submitted the chargesheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka.

In the chargesheet, 19 people were shown as prosecution witnesses.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

PM leaves for NY May 6 for UNGA session on children

Prime Minister Khaleida Zia will leave here May 6 for New York to lead the Bangladesh delegation to the 27th session of the UN General Assembly on children.

She will address the General Assembly on the first day of the three-day event beginning May 8, said an official announcement yesterday.

Khaleida will also participate in a roundtable discussion with other heads of state and government on the theme "Renewal of commitment and future action for children in the next decade."

This is the first major UN confer

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

INSIDE TODAY

South Asia 4

Zaglul A Chowdhury's What next?
Ekram Kabir's Back to square one
M Abdul Hafiz's
The battered blues of the IAF
Amoral victory for the opposition,
Pallab Bhattacharya
writes from New Delhi
Amusing ourselves to death,
CK Lal writes from Nepal

Asia 5
Koizumi starts a turbulent second year,
Monzurul Huq writes from Tokyo

Comment 6
Hasnat Abdul Hye's May Day
Mohammad Badrul Ahsan's
Dilemma and paradox
AMM Shahabuddin's
When Palestine was burning

Environment 8
Md. Asadullah Khan's
A self-destructive war



PHOTO: STAR

Reaping time

With high hopes of a crop bounty, enthusiastic farmers have started harvesting Boro paddy. Boro promises a back-to-back bumper this year. Despite rise in input-costs, which include diesel for irrigation, farmers invested generously in the best of the three rice seasons in Bangladesh to recoup drought-induced Aman loss. The agriculture department expects 12.6 million tonnes of paddy to come from Boro, cultivated in over 39,000 hectares of land this year. However, hailstorms and early flooding that have already stalked some of the northern, central and eastern districts may have some impact on total Boro output. The Daily Star senior photojournalist Sheikh Enamul Haq took the snap from Ashulia on the outskirts of the city.

Power payment on knock-on roll

Two PDB-Petrobangla meetings next week

SHARIER KHAN

The energy ministry will ask the Power Development Board (PDB) to arrange payment of at least Tk 300 crore to the Petrobangla on an urgent basis.

In its turn, the PDB would ask the Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) - the biggest bill defaulter in the chain of gas and power sectors - to arrange the same.

Meanwhile, the DESA, which never has enough cash to operate on its own, would seek loan from commercial banks.

These issues will be resolved at two separate meetings next week, a top Petrobangla source said. The first meeting will take place at the Power Division of the energy ministry with the Petrobangla and the PDB on May 4. The state minister for power and the power division secretary will be present at the meeting.

The second meeting with the Petrobangla and the PDB will take place at the finance ministry on May

7 with the finance minister in the chair.

The Petrobangla has asked for both these meetings, sources said.

The PDB, which consumes half the gas produced and supplied by the Petrobangla, owes the latter Tk 512 crore for a long time.

In such a context, the Petrobangla in March announced that if the PDB failed to pay the arrears, equivalent to the power board's seven months' gas-consumption billing, it would be compelled to cut down gas supplies to the power plants.

As the power board did not take the warning seriously, the Petrobangla contacted the finance ministry, the home ministry and the National Security Intelligence (NSI), seeking their cooperation in disconnecting gas supplies to some of the PDB power plants.

The Petrobangla has become desperate because it is unable to pay the international oil companies (IOCs) - Shell and Unocal - around

US\$50 million in bills for Sangu and Jalalabad gas under production sharing contracts (PSCs).

A major earner for the country which annually contributes around Tk 1,500 crore to the public exchequer in taxes and duty, and another Tk 100 crore in dividend, the Petrobangla now faces severe liquidity crisis as more than Tk 1,400 crore lies pending with its state-owned and private-sector clients.

The PDB aside, the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) alone owes it Tk 240 crore.

The power board, in its turn, is crippled by liquidity crisis as its clients have not paid over Tk 5,500 crores, with Tk 3,500 pending with the DESA alone.

"The financial management situation in the energy sector has become unbearable and something must be done about it," commented a high official of the Petrobangla.

To set the ball rolling, the DESA would be asked to seek bank loan on

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Six foreigners seek asylum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six foreign nationals have sought political asylum in Bangladesh. Or, the government send them to a third country, they appealed.

The appeal was made at a press conference jointly organised by the Bangladesh Society for Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR) and Odhikar in the city yesterday.

The nationals are Mohammad Nurul Haque, Mohammad Ramjan Ali Niyo Yen, Kingkong Tingtu, Jong Aong Pantho Nath, MA Rahim of Myanmar and Sanjib Deb Barman of India.

At the conference, Advocate Sigma Huda of the BSEHR said the persons left their home countries because of 'brutal repression' by the government, as they belong to different political groups.

The home ministry (Bangladesh) has already rejected an appeal submitted by BSEHR for political asylum to these stateless people, she said.

"It's a matter of human rights," she said with an appeal for reconsideration of the issue.

Two written statements were read out - one by Sigma Huda and the other by Masud Alam Ragib

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Beximco terms SEC bid 'discriminatory'

BD Lamps, Wata Chemicals showcaused

M SHAMSUR RAHMAN

The Beximco Group yesterday served a legal notice on the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) for suspending share trading of 11 of its companies on the bourses.

The SEC suspended trading of the companies Tuesday for disclosing inadequate price sensitive information and summoned the company officials yesterday to explain reasons behind not disclosing the AGM and book closure dates.

In a separate development, the SEC yesterday served notices on two other companies Bangladesh Lamps and Wata Chemicals for issues relating to adequate disclosure of AGM and book closure dates.

In yesterday's meeting, Beximco officials handed over the legal notice to the SEC. The notice termed the

regulators' action discriminatory and malafide and alleged that the commission did not initiate similar proceedings against other companies for inadequate disclosure.

Meantime, a senior SEC official said trading of the above mentioned two companies were not been suspended as the combined leverage of these companies is not as much as that of the 11 Beximco units.

Beximco also asked the SEC to withdraw the suspension by 10:00am of May 8, 2002. Otherwise, the group would go for legal action.

The group did not submit the balance sheets of its listed companies with the SEC as asked by the regulators. It said the financial statements are now with the auditors.

Meantime, the SEC will hold a meeting with institutional investors

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8



Rokia Afzal Rahman

New chair for Mediaworld

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rokia Afzal Rahman, chair and managing director of Arlinks Group, has been elected new chair of the Mediaworld, the owning company of The Daily Star, at a meeting of the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Siege on Arafat ends Shooting rocks Church of Nativity again

AFP, Ramallah

Yasser Arafat stepped out into freedom yesterday, blasting the Israelis, vowing to rebuild his shattered Palestinian Authority and demanding an end to violence around Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity.

He emerged from a 34-day Israeli siege facing some tough choices, with the militant Palestinian group Hamas vowing to launch new anti-Israeli attacks and Israel again threatening to keep him in exile if he travels abroad.

About 100 cheering supporters greeted Arafat as the Palestinian chief, squinting into the sunlight, left his offices after the Israeli blockade was lifted Wednesday night under a US-brokered deal.

Looking haggard but smiling, the keffiyeh-clad Arafat flashed the "V" sign and made his way through the

adoring throng to an armoured car for a 3-1/2 hour tour of devastation wrought by the Israelis in Ramallah.

"It is racism, it is fascism," he told reporters as he visited the local chamber of commerce, a cemetery, a hospital and the destroyed head-



quarters of his security chief just outside the city.

"Is this acceptable to the world?" he asked reporters, vowing to rebuild after the devastation. "Zionism and those who stand behind it will not be able to break these people."

Arafat drew cheers and salutes from Palestinians in the street everywhere he went before returning to his badly scarred compound, where he received a steady stream of local officials and dignitaries.

The 72-year-old Arafat, transformed into an Arab hero by the siege, faces the daunting task of rebuilding his Palestinian Authority shattered by Israel's fierce military offensive on the West Bank.

He is also under heavy US pressure to take concrete steps to rein in the suicide bombings that triggered

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Jamal's mother files court complaints against cops

ABUL KALAM AZAD, back from Kapasia

A petition was lodged with the Kapasia First Class Magistrate's Court yesterday accusing the officer-in-charge (OC) and two other policemen of the Kapasia Police Station of the killing of college student and BCL activist Jamaluddin Fakir on April 19.

The petition was lodged following repeated refusal by the Kapasia police to take case regarding the death.

Ramiza Begum, mother of Jamaluddin, filed the case with a crowded court at about 1:00pm. The accused are OC Gazi Mainuddin, Assistant Sub-inspector (ASI) Abu

Bakar Siddique and Constable Altaf Hossain.

Ramiza, the petitioner, alleged that she went to the Kapasia police station several times after her son's killing to file a murder case, but on each occasion the police refused to take it.

About 150 lawyers from the capital aided by some 50 counselors appeared before the court and moved the case. Senior lawyers of the Supreme Court Barrister Amirul Islam, Barrister Shafiq Ahmed, advocates Ozair Farook and Syed Ahmed, writers Syed Shamsul Haq and Shahriar Kabir, and President of Gazipur District Bar Association Wazi Uddin Mia were present.

Briefing newsmen, Barrister

Amirul Islam, also the convenor of the Combined Lawyers Coordination Council, said the police are infringing human rights although they are supposed to protect them.

The lawyers also urged the court to add the autopsy report of Jamal to the case documents. The autopsy report is yet to be submitted.

After the hearing, Magistrate M Abdul Kader accepted the case and formed a one-member judicial probe committee to probe the death. He also asked the committee headed by Magistrate Rashida Ferdous to submit its report before the next hearing scheduled for June 8.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1