Kalam signs controversial electoral reforms law

AFP, *New Delhi*

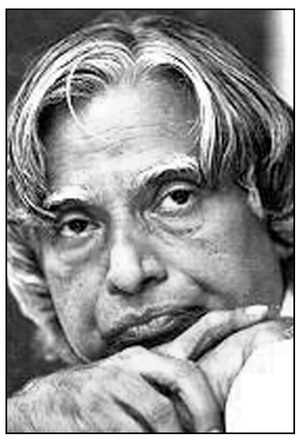
Indian President Abdul Kalam has signed a controversial electoral reforms ordinance which critics claim allows politicians to cover up their criminal pasts, media reports said yesterday.

Kalam, the architect of India's arsenal of guided and ballistic missiles, earlier this week had returned the ordinance, seeking clarifications on certain provisions of the government-proposed presidential decree.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist BJP-led coalition government refused to budge and a meeting of his cabinet Saturday decided to send the ordinance back to Kalam with a request that he sign on the dotted line.

Human rights groups say the proposed ordinance would cover up criminal records of politicians, who currently cannot contest elections if they have been formally convicted of criminal offences.

Constitutionally, the president is obliged to sign an ordinance - unless



Abdul Kalam

it has financial implications - when it is referred back to him by the federal government.

Television reports said Kalam signed the ordinance late Saturday.

Officials hinted that Vajpayee's cabinet chose the constitutional path to coerce Kalam to issue the ordinance without making changes.

The need for a presidential ordinance to amend India's electoral laws arose when a draft law on the subject set for introduction in parliament on August 12 could not be carried out as the national house adjourned ahead of schedule.

The bill, which Vajpayee hopes to introduce as a presidential ordinance, was forged by taking aboard suggestions made by all national and regional political parties for promoting transparency and minimising corruption.

The parties had, however, opposed an order by the Supreme Court which said all candidates must disclose details of criminal cases pending against them.

The clarifications sought by Kalam reportedly hinged on that very critical issue, sources told AFP.

They said the government has assured Kalam that the issues he has raised could be taken up at the time of legislating the ordinance in parliament.

PHOTO: STAR

Visiting Indian External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha talks to Leader of the Opposition and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina during a courtesy meeting at Sudha Sadan in the city yesterday.

Ashim Kumar Ukil

FROM PAGE 12

petition seeking bail and cancellation of the remand prayer. After hearing both the sides, the magistrate Khandaker Fatema Begum rejected bail petition and placed Ashim on a two-day remand.

A detection proposal under the Special Powers Act (SPA) 1974 was also submitted to the court.

The AL leader was shown arrested under section 54 of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

A team of the Detective Branch of Police intercepted Ashim's car at Abdul Gani Road on Saturday noon when he was on his way to the AL office. The DB men took him to their office at Mintoo Road.

Ashim was arrested four hours ahead of an AL general meeting scheduled to be held at Paltan Maidan in protest of price hike, brutality, violence and gruesome killing of children.

Police was hunting Ashim following the confessional statement of a young man arrested with an M-16 assault rifle on Aug 4 from Uttara area. Names of Ashim and four more AL leaders were reportedly mentioned in the confession.

The other AL leaders are former state ministers Mofazaal Hossain Chowdhury Maya and Obidul Kader, ex-Mp Kamal Majumder and former student leader Shafi Ahmed.

Reliable sources said these AL leaders were given charge to reorganise the party across the country. The arrest was a pre-planed ploy to mar possible AL's consolidation, sources added.

They said the AL leaders had already been granted anticipatory bail by the High Court. Police on Thursday night, however, arrested Kamal Majumder under section 54 of Criminal Code of Procedure (CrPC) who is now being interrogated by the detectives on his two-day remand.

Alamgir not released yet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former state minister for planning Dr. Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir was not released from the Dhaka Central Jail though he was earlier granted bail in all the six cases charged against him.

The jailer of the Dhaka Central Jail said that Alamgir could not be released as they have received a release order against only one of the six cases. They must receive all the release orders before freeing Alamgir.

The Awami League leader was arrested under section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) from the Zia International Airport on March 15 soon after he returned from Singapore. Later he was shown arrested in the Janatar Mancha (sedition) case and five other cases.

Sources said, another corruption case against Alamgir is likely to be filed to delay his release.

Khaleda, Sinha

FROM PAGE 1

Commission meeting.

Later, briefing newsmen at the foreign office, Foreign Secretary Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury said Yashwant Sinha had conveyed an invitation from Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to Khaleda to visit India at a mutually convenient date.

The prime minister hoped Sinha's visit was the first of many by the Indian foreign minister, Chowdhury told newsmen.

"The meetings at the level of foreign ministers need not be structured and they should meet to resolve issues," she was quoted as saying.

Both sides discussed increased communication links to enable easier flow of human traffic.

In future, the foreign secretary said a rail link might be established between Sylhet and Shilong.

Completion of operational aspects for early launching of the Dhaka-Agartala bus service was also discussed during the Khaleda-Sinha meeting, Chowdhury said.

However, there was no discussion on transhipment or oil and gas exports, he said.

Khaleda and Sinha also agreed that bilateral issues should not be allowed to stand in way of greater regional cooperation, the foreign secretary said.

The prime minister said India should increase the number of seats available through scholarship or self financing in its educational institutions for Bangladeshi students.

In response, Sinha said mechanisms to solve all such issues had been decided upon at Saturday's official talks.

Khaleda said that Dhaka believes in establishing the best of relations with the close neighbours.

The prime minister expressed concern that killing of Bangladeshis at the border has increased in recent months and hoped that it would stop as New Delhi had promised during the official talks.

Forty-seven people have been killed in border firings since January, the meeting was told.

Chowdhury apart, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr Kamal Siddiqui and High Commissioner to India Tofail K Haider were also present at the meeting.

Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka ML Tripathy and Joint Secretary of the Bangladesh desk in Indian external affairs ministry Nilam Deo and joint secretary and ministry spokesperson Nirupama Rao accompanied Sinha.

Jet fuel

FROM PAGE 12

is around Tk 24.12 crore when used as Kerosene.

As the said jet fuel will now be used as Kerosene, a new consignment of jet fuel has to be imported, which will cause an indirect loss of Tk 6.50 crore to BPC for carrying and tests, they said.

HC asks govt not to harass, arrest Amu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A High Court Division Bench yesterday directed the government not to harass and arrest Amir Hossain Amu in connection with the case filed following alleged recovery of M-16 Rifle.

The directive came following a writ petition filed by Amu in the High Court challenging the illegal entry and search in his house at 1:00am on August 22.

The High Court Division Bench comprising Justice MA Aziz and Justice Momtajuddin Ahmed passed the order after a hearing of the petition yesterday.

Barrister Amirul Islam moved the petition on behalf of Amu while Dr. Shirin S Chowdhury, Barrister Tania S Hasan and Advocate Manzil Murshid assisted him.

Dengue

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gation should not be carried out in human presence under any circumstances," said Dr Manzur A Chowdhury, a leading entomologist.

Touhid Uddin Ahmed, another entomologist, echoed a similar view. "The place of fumigation must be vacated first."

It is recommended that people leave before fumigation and return about two hours after it is over.

According to a DCC source, the insecticide sprayed with kerosene is toxic for humans.

"Usually ultra low volume (ULV) spraying machine, not a fogger, is recommended for use. The advantage is that the ULV machine sprays small droplets of less than 50 microns, not fumes," said one DCC health official.

Devious dervish

FROM PAGE 12

Amirun Nessa, 70.

The victims were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where they were given stomach wash.

According to the victims, a guard of the FDC introduced the said dervish to Ayub Ali few days' back. The dervish had frequented Ayub's residence on several occasions and promised divine munificence.

Following the dervish's instruction, the family members and neighbours of Ayub Ali ate the rice pudding and became unconscious, allowing the fraud to escape with cash and jewelry.

They were later found by the Tejgaon police on Sunday morning and sent to the DMCH.

AL accuses Huda of patronising crime

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the Awami League (AL) yesterday blamed Communications Minister Nazmul Huda for turning his constituency, Dohar, into a safe haven for criminals.

Huda has made Dohar a place for killers, rapists and extortionists after assumption of power by the BNP-Jamaat alliance, alleged Abdul Mannan Khan, AL office secretary, at a press conference yesterday at the Dhaka Reporters Unity.

The AL presidium members -- Tofail Ahmed and Mohammad Abdul Jalil -- and Dohar AL leaders also attended the press conference.

At least 523 leaders and workers of the Dohar Awami League have been implicated in false cases and many left home, fearing arrest, Mannan alleged.

And at least 100 AL men have been arrested over the last ten months on an instruction from the minister, he said.

The arrestees include Mahbubur Rahman, organising secretary of the Dhaka District Awami League, Mohammad Motaleb Khan, treasurer of the Dohar Thana Awami League and Alamgir Hossain and Azad Hossain Khan -- local AL leaders.

Six union parishad chairmen were not allowed to perform their duties, Mannan alleged.

Leaders of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and the Jubo Dal, wings of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), are controlling official work, he alleged.

Moreover, the JCD leaders extort money from the businessmen in Dohar.

Abdul Jalil, director of the People's Protein House Private Limited, the largest poultry farm in Dohar, had to close down his farm and left the country due to torture by the BNP-backed goons.

At the press conference, Tofail Ahmed said the AL leaders and workers were subjected to harassment and torture across the country.

Cabinet meeting on UZ not held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A scheduled meeting of the cabinet committee on Upazila Parishad was postponed yesterday as another high-level meeting overlapped it.

Official sources said the cabinet committee meeting was due to be held at 11am yesterday at the conference room of the LGRD and Co-operatives Ministry. But it was postponed yesterday morning when an ECNEC meeting was convened by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. The ECNEC meeting was called hurriedly on Saturday evening.

Fresh date for the 7th cabinet committee meeting will be announced soon.

Four new secys

FROM PAGE 12

According to an official notification, post and telecommunications secretary Mohammad Omar Farooq has been appointed home secretary.

Dr Saadat Husain, who was promoted to the post of cabinet secretary on May 6, had been holding the post of home secretary for the last four months in addition to his current duties as cabinet secretary. Dr Saadat had been holding the post of home secretary since the caretaker period.

Member of Tax Administration under the National Board of Revenue Faruque Ahmed Siddique has been appointed secretary of posts and telecommunications ministry.

Textile secretary Aminur Rahman has been appointed secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Public Works.

Syed Tanveer Hussain, secretary of housing and public works, has been appointed Textile secretary.

Gas committees

FROM PAGE 1

Star yesterday.

Former secretary Azimuddin Ahmed, Chairman of the utilisation committee and Vice Chancellor of BUET Dr Nuruddin Ahmed, chairman of the reserve committee, handed over the reports to Energy Secretary Khairuzzaman Chowdhury on Saturday.

According to the two reports, the country is in no position to export gas through pipeline or in value-added form like power or fertiliser. Limited export could be considered in future in case of new gas discoveries side by side with gas demand saturation.

The utilisation committee made its assessment on the basis of a gas demand growth scenario up to the year 2020 and taking into account a proven gas reserve of 16 trillion cubic feet (TCF).

The Committee found that at a gas demand growth rate of 7 per cent, the present gas reserve would be exhausted by 2014-2015. If this growth rate is set at 6 per cent, the reserve would run dry some time before 2020; and with a growth rate of 5 per cent, it would exhaust fully in 2020.

During the eighties, the average gas demand growth rate was 15 per cent and in the nineties, it was 10 per cent.

This is why, majority of the committee members believe that export of gas from Unocal's Bibiyana field would be suicidal. The country would need Bibiyana field's gas within the next four years, they said.

The Committee also presented an analysis showing that the country could easily continue to afford gas purchase from international oil companies under the existing Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs).

The option to export in future has however been considered in the Committee report because the country would need huge investment in the gas sector and such an option would give the oil companies extra incentive and assurance of markets. Therefore they would increase their exploration activities in the country. The country is already giving the oil companies one of the most lucrative incentive packages in the world.

The Committee believes that export of gas through pipeline will marginally improve the balance-of-payment scenario.

Decision on ETV fate

FROM PAGE 1

The court then said it was willing to hear the arguments of the all the parties concerned. But the manner in which the arguments are placed, it would not be possible. The court also observed that the way the arguments over the review petition are made was not proper at all. It called on all sides to complete the hearing by today.

Meanwhile, counsel for the ETV Barrister Rafiqul Haq continued with his submission yesterday. Earlier on the day before yesterday, he argued why should the ETV pay for the foul up by the people involved in the process of awarding the license.

In reply, the court said if the license is declared illegal then the ETV will be closed down. "You could have approached the government," the court contended. At this, the ETV counsel urged the court to stay the judgement for three more months so that the government can be approached. The court pointed out that the stay order is already there. The counsel said, "Since the case is pending with the Appellate Division, how can we approach the government?"

As the court questioned the hand-over of the license to the ETV Limited before the government's approval,

the ETV counsel said, "It (the license) was handed over on approval of the government."

The court also enquired how AS Mahmud was made the Chairman and Simon Dring the Managing Director even before the company came into being. It was a framework of the committee, the counsel replied and added that the framework was made to convince the government that the company was being floated with the help of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Simon Dring, a journalist with BBC who created a place in the hearts of the Bangali during the War of Independence.

The ETV did not get the license only due to the report of the evaluation committee; rather technical, financial and other matters were taken into account for awarding the license, the ETV counsel contended.

The court was adjourned till 9:00 this morning.

Sinha tells editors

FROM PAGE 1

Replying to a query, the Indian external affairs minister said: "Our relation with Bangladesh is not a hostage to our relations with Pakistan or any other issues."

"Nothing will act as an impediment in our relation with Bangladesh," he asserted.

Sinha told a questioner that India does not have "big brotherly" attitude towards Bangladesh. The question does not arise, he said.

India is a big country, it's a geographic reality, he said, but its dealings with Bangladesh will always be as between two sovereign nations -- to mutual advantage.

About Bangladesh's huge trade deficit with India, the Indian minister said it is an economic problem and should not viewed with emotions.

"We will always go more than half way" to improve the situation, he assured.

He mentioned that Bangladesh had a deficit of US$ 889 million in its bilateral trade with India in fiscal 2001-02 while $821 million with China, $523 million with Japan, $ 331 million with South Korea and $ 333 million with Hong Kong.

Replying to a question about BSF killings on the border, Sinha said India has a long border of 1,700 kilometres with Bangladesh. This long stretch of open borders is often used by smugglers, criminals, terrorists and infiltrators, he said, adding that BSF never opens fire on anybody unless their challenge goes unanswered.

Giving figures, he said that since January 1 this year, 92 people have been killed by BSF firing in the border areas. Of them, 32 were Indians, 39 Bangladeshis and the remaining 21 of unidentified nationality.

BSF also apprehended 7,000 people from the border areas for various reasons, Sinha added.

Kamal Majumder

FROM PAGE 12

mation from Kamal Majumder during the interrogation.

Meanwhile, Kamal Majumder told the court that he was not allowed to have bath, to sleep and was tortured mentally during the remand period.

Moreover, the IO of the case asked him why he did not change his political party, Kamal Majumder said.

After hearing both sides, the court directed the jail authorities to take necessary steps for treatment of the accused if he was sick.

JCD

FROM PAGE 1

two shots at the office of local Bangla daily Shyamol Sylhet at Minabazar.

Protesting the incident, local people of Minabazar area put up a barricade on Sylhet-Tamabil road yesterday morning. The barricade was later cleared by police.

Three cases were filed in connection with the incidents.

Earth summit

FROM PAGE 12

The protesters, who said the summit was promoting globalis-ation, retreated after lighting candles and placing them around the police's feet, and burning official summit pamphlets.

The diplomats, from more than 30 key countries, are trying to resolve crucial disagreements between rich and poor nations and between the United States and Europe on the three pillars of sustainable development - poverty alleviation, social progress and protection of the environment.

Some 1,500 ministers from around the world will do the negotiating at the summit proper, with around 100 heads of state or government arriving for the final two or three days.

A notable absentee will be US President George W Bush, who is sending Secretary of State Colin Powell in his place, a decision that has angered the thousands of activists in Johannesburg.

Signboard of sleaze

FROM PAGE 12

The locals told The Daily Star that some unknown persons set up the signboard a few days ago in a bid to revive the Tk 2 crore project in connivance with some DCC officials.

Some local brick and sand businessmen have said the commissioner is lobbying with the DCC for resumption of the project.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (BAPA) yesterday held a rally and a procession on the bank of the Haikkar Khal, protesting the filling-up of the canal. A large number of environmental activists gathered at the project site. Hundreds of local people also joined the rally.

The demonstrators urged the government to remove the dumped earth. They would go on a greater movement, if the government did not cancel the project with urgency, said the demonstrators.

Several organisations, including the Hunger Project, SEHBA (Dhaka University), Youth Ending Hunger, the Asia Pacific University, Poverty Elimination Assistance Centre for Everywhere (PEACE) took part in the demonstration.

General Secretary of BAPA Abu Naser Khan presided over the rally, where Mihir Biswas of the Save the Buriganga, Mohammad Shahjahan Mridha, Dr. Nuruddin, Dr. Mahbub Hossain, Ifma Hossain, Khondokar Mirajur Rahman, among others, spoke at the rally.

Campus violence

FROM PAGE 12

cases the teachers, who are supposed to have the sovereign power of an education institution, are sidelined by politicians or by the people they patronise. "As long as politics continues to control the institutions, there would not be any real autonomy or any improvement in the educational atmosphere," said Abdullah Abu Sayeed.

Most of the speakers, however, rejected the idea of banning student politics mentioning the glorious past of student politics in the country. "A student must have political awareness," said Mosharraf Hossain. "He can be a good student but never a good citizen unless he is politically conscious," he clarified.

They grumbled that some people are using student politics or the education institution as a source of earning. These individuals use campus as a platform for future gain and they should not be called students.

The speakers underscored the improvement of the law and order situation of the country to restore congenial academic atmosphere in the educational institutions.

They also stressed on a healthy teacher student relationship. "If a teacher cannot treat his students as children, he should not come to this profession," said Tasnim Siraj Mahbub.

Teachers should also cut off its link from political parties, some of the speakers noted.

The meeting was addressed among others by Foyez Ahmad, Sultana Kamal, Ahmedul Kabir with Prof. Khan Sarwar Murshid in the chair.

DU reopening date late next week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka University(DU) authorities will declare a date for the reopening of the university at the end of this week, acting Vice-chancellor (VC) of the university Prof. AFM Yusuf Haider told the BBC yesterday.

"We have already met with different university bodies including provosts, standing committee, deans committee and student organisations", he said.

He further said "They asked me to reopen the university as early as possible and at the same time be aware of any type of disturbance on campus".

"I will meet with Paribesh Parishad, a forum of all students' organisations active on the campus, today to discuss the campus situation and agree on a probable date for reopening," Prof. Haider said.

Accused sheltered

FROM PAGE 12

Hospital sources said Rani's attackers have also threatened to harm the doctors and nurses who are looking after the battered woman at the hospital.

A case was recorded with Rampal thana in this connection on Saturday evening, naming 15 BNP leaders and activists as accused. So far, police have arrested three accused named in the FIR. They are Tayeb Noor, 35, Md Wahab, 25, and Humayun Kabir Himu, 35. The prime accused Kazi Bashar is reportedly staying at the Bagherhat residence of a top local BNP leader.

Four BNP leaders -- Kazi Abul Bashar, Tayeb Noor, Kazi Humayun Kabir Himu and Kamal Hossain -- allegedly involved in this brutal incident have been expelled from the party as per a decision taken in a meeting held Saturday with district BNP secretary Shamsul Alam Talukdar in the chair.

Kalidashi Mondol, Chhabi Rani's mother, said at a press conference yesterday that BNP cadres are threatening to kill her family members if they don't leave the country for good.

"We are extremely scared and fear for our lives. Despite the home minister's directive, my daughter has not yet been transferred to a cabin in the hospital, which is necessary for her security. Most of the accused are still at large and are threatening to abduct me, my husband and my injured daughter," Kalidashi Mondol said yesterday.

She said the case has been recorded by order of the home minister against the desire of the BNP leader allegedly sheltering the prime accused. The Superintendent of Police said the accused would not get away and would be given exemplary punishment.

Meanwhile, more than 10 BNP activists were arrested yesterday in connection with the case, Nasiruddin, OC of Rampal thana, said yesterday.

Foreign investment

FROM PAGE 1

The survey says Tk 2,169.2 crore have been invested in 75 of the 182 registered projects in this sector, the real investment being 17.20 per cent only.

The survey detected "incomplete and baseless information" regarding registration for foreign investment. Worse still, the BOI failed to track down many foreign companies that got registered with it. These distorted and incomplete facts and figures do not reflect the real investment scenario of the country, it said.

About non-implementation of the registered projects, the survey noted that investment shown in papers only could never be considered as investment in true sense of the term.

Some of the traceless foreign projects were from the USA, United Kingdom, Malaysia, South Korea and Thailand.

Of them, a US company got registered for a Tk 621.88 crore barge-mounted power plant in Narayanganj in 1997. Another listed US company had a Tk 363.7 crore project for a five-star hotel in 1998.

Two more US companies were registered -- one for a cable network television company (Tk 25 crore) in 2000 and the other for manufacturing telecommunication equipment (Tk 6.48 crore) in 1998.

A British company got registered for a Tk 2,600 crore investment in the telecommunications sector.

The missing companies also include one from Malaysia, which got listed with the BOI for a Tk 19.9 crore project for setting up a three-star hotel including an amusement park in 1998. Another Malaysian company was registered in 2001 for a power plant involving Tk 49.3 crore.

A Tk 92 crore Korean project and a Tk 56 crore Thai project in the telecommunications sector are among the other foreign investment projects registered with the BOI during the 10 years till 2001.

In this backdrop, the BOI has decided to continue with "implementation status survey" in order to discourage registration for "imaginary and unrealistic" investment proposals, officials said.

"We'll also conduct a similar survey on investment proposals made by the local entrepreneurs during the same period (1991-2001)," said one official.

He said the BOI would like to assist and encourage the entrepreneurs yet to start implementing their projects or facing problems in the implementation.

Wheat scam: Clue

FROM PAGE 1

wrote a letter to the food secretary on May 23, informing him about the allegations from some districts that substandard imported wheat was being procured.

In response, the food secretary instructed the director to have the wheat tested by experts. But the test never took place, sources said.

Interestingly enough, Habibur Rahman handed the letter (addressed to the food secretary) over to the probe body chief Thursday but did not mention anything about the letter that the secretary wrote back.

The food ministry yesterday served a notice on Habibur Rahman to show cause in seven days why he did not have the wheat tested in May.

Islam, assisted by the chief chemist of the food directorate, Mahmuduzzaman, had collected wheat samples from public granaries in Pabna, Bogra, Mymensingh and Satkhira since August 11.

The tests are being carried out at the Institute of Public Health in the city and at the Wheat Research Centre at Nashipur, Dinajpur.

Meanwhile, five regional controllers of food (RCFs) from Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Dhaka and Barisal, who came to the capital yesterday to attend an audit meeting at the food ministry, said their granaries did not stockpile any putrid wheat.

Irregularities took place allegedly over the purchase of an additional one lakh MT wheat worth Tk 90 crore towards the end of the extended procurement drive from March 15 to July 31.

The initial procurement target of three lakh MT was raised, though the country grew two lakh MT less than the previous year's production.

A four-member food ministry probe committee already submitted its report to the food secretary on August 18. The report found involvement of the ruling party lawmaker, Helaluzzaman Talukdar Lalu, and ten food officials, including the additional director-general of the food directorate, Entajul Huque.

Meanwhile, another probe committee headed by a food directorate director, Aminul Haq, is now on a visit to nine districts against which allegations of buying low-quality imported wheat was levelled.

Marwari scam

FROM PAGE 12

The BB probe also found that the banks have fewer assets mortgaged against the loans of Giridhari Modi, the sources added.

Meantime, Giridhari Lal Modi took ad-interim bail from the High Court Division on a case that accused him of transfer of money abroad through illegal channels.

The law enforcers filed a case against Modi with the Chuadanga Police Station on August 19 accusing him of transferring Tk 8.38 crore and US$ 10,300 through illegal channels outside the country. Another case was filed with the city's Motijheel Police Station against him on August 22.