

Titas suspends millionaire meter-reader, at last

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Multi-millionaire meter reader of the Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd. Mahbubur Rahman has finally been suspended for passport forgery and making foreign trips using fake identity without the permission of the Titas authorities.

The Titas authorities issued a suspension order against him yesterday following an order by the energy ministry, sources said.

But no departmental action has so far been taken against him despite widespread charges of corruption and meter tampering against Mahbub.

Mahbub is a leader of pro-ruling BNP Titas Gas Jatiyatadabi Sramik Karmachari Union and enjoys blessings of an influential cabinet minister.

The Daily Star ran an investigative report on the corruption and irregularities of the meter reader on May 15. But no action was taken against him due to the patronage by the cabinet member.

Earlier, Mahbub was arrested under section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) from the Zia International Airport on April 27 before he was to fly off to Singapore.

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Donors worried over law and order downslide

STAR REPORT

Donors yesterday expressed grave concern over the deteriorating law and order, and cautioned if the government fails to arrest the downslide it would stand as the biggest hurdle to the country's development.

They observed that the country has been suffering from law and order problems since 1990s and the situation is deteriorating day by day. The situation has worsened to such an extent that people, both poor and rich, now feel increasingly insecure.

The development partners made the observations at a joint-appraisal meeting on the progress of the pledges the government made at the Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) meet in Paris in March.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman chaired the meeting held at the National Economic Council (NEC) conference room in the city's planning commission. Country representatives of all bilateral and multilateral donors and government secretaries of important ministries attended the meeting.

Starting at around 10:40am and running through 1:20pm, the meeting primarily focussed on the law and order and governance issues. It called for quicker, decisive steps to improve the situation and curb corruption.

The government also tabled the final draft of the I-PRSP, which is a donors' recipe and which observers believe will be the basis for future aid flow.

It could not be confirmed whether the donors' observations on the law and order and gover-

Law & order debate kept for late night

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A freewheeling question-answer session and freestyle deliberations by treasury bench members on a single issue kept at bay the already-deferred discussion on law and order downslide in the Jatiya Sangsad till 10:30 last night.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar had earlier deferred the one-hour discussion late Sunday night with the assurance that it would be taken up once the scheduled question-answer session was over the next day.

However, much to the dismay of the main opposition Awami League, the Chair allowed the question-answer session to continue for more than one-and-a-half hours yesterday.

When Sircar finally announced the end of the question-answer session, it was well over 8:00pm. As the AL lawmakers waited for the discussion on law and order, endorsed by the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) upon receipt of a notice filed by Shahjahan Khan, MP, the Speaker allowed as many as 10 ruling party lawmakers to speak on one issue on a point of order.

Without even referring to the articles of the rules of procedure, the lawmakers spoke one after another, all asking Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina to withdraw a comment that she had passed in the Sangsad on Sunday.

Starting at 8:12pm, the ruling party MPs, including several ministers, criticised Hasina for her reported comment on the new president for over an hour.

The unscheduled deliberations ended at the intervention of Finance and Planning Minister Saifur Rahman at 9:20pm. Still, the Speaker did not allow the discussion on law and order. Rather, he let lawmakers to speak on their rejected notices on different issues.

Hasina, meanwhile, tried to remind the Chair about the assurance he had made on Sunday about the discussion. It did not work.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed

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Father of Shaheb Ali meets his rescued son in tears at the Sutrapur Police Station in the city yesterday.

Kidnapped schoolboy rescued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eleven-year-old schoolboy Shaheb Ali who was abducted on his way back home from Narinda Govt. School Saturday afternoon was rescued from the Sayedabad Bus Terminal in the city yesterday.

Meanwhile, Sutrapur police have been interrogating the arrestee who was held Saturday following a complaint filed by Shaheb's father Siraj Ali.

Shaheb, a student of class five and the youngest among two brothers and a sister, went missing after he came out of school on Saturday. As he did not return home till noon, his parents and relatives started looking for the boy.

Some local people told Siraj, Shaheb's businessman father, that

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SHAZNEEN CASE

Cross-examination ends Shahid was at my house that night: Latifur Rahman

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Cross-examination of Latifur Rahman, second prosecution witness in the Shazneen case and father of the victim, by the lawyer of principal accused Shahidul Islam alias Shahid ended yesterday.

He was cross-examined for 17 days from June 18.

Judge of the Special Court for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka, Kazi Rahamat Ullah, adjourned the hearing till 11 am tomorrow.

During the cross-examination for one-and-a-half hours yesterday, Latifur Rahman turned down the defence lawyer's contention that Shahid was not present at his

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Police camp attacked in Sirajganj 4 cops killed, 12 rifles looted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Outlaws equipped with stenguns and LMGs attacked Randhunbari police camp in Belkuchi, killed four policemen and looted 12 rifles along with ammunition yesterday.

Five policemen were critically injured in the hour-long gunfight when about 50 outlaws came in country boats and attacked the outpost at about 4:30 pm, Sirajganj police control room said. The outpost is on the bank of Jamuna river.

Of the 22 policemen stationed at the camp, nine were there when the attack was made. They are members of Range Reserve Force (RRF).

The dead constables are Sushanto Chakma, Rezaul Islam, Zahedul Haq and Sadequul Haq. Sushanto died on the spot and the three others died at Sirajganj Sadar Hospital.

The critically injured policemen admitted to the sadar hospital are Havildar Gulzar Hossain and constables Babul, Anisur rahman, Abdul Karim and Babul. They will be sent to Dhaka for treatment, sources at Sirajganj Sadar Hospital said.

Additional police force has been deployed in the area as a tense situation

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Selim Osman's house attacked for 5th time

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

The Chashara residence of Selim Osman, the elder brother of former Awami League lawmaker Shamim Osman, was attacked for the fifth time by unidentified gunmen on Sunday night.

Earlier since the last parliamentary elections, the house was attacked four times by criminals allegedly belonging to the Jubo Dal and led by Shaka and Lavlu. The same men also tried to abduct Selim Osman from the judge's court area a few months ago.

Police said a group of gunmen sometime around Sunday midnight went to the 96, North Chashara house of Selim Osman and tried to snatch the key to the main gate. But failing to do so, they fired at least 8 rounds of shots, damaging the front part of the house.

Ukil released on rare HC ruling

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a rare ruling, the High Court yesterday ordered release of Awami League (AL) leader Ashim Kumar Ukil from the court premises.

The order touched off chaos in the court compound, with the jail authorities and police caught in two minds.

Initially, they did not want to release Ukil without a written order, saying they need to check whether there was any other case against the former Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) general secretary.

At one stage, the jail authorities and police engaged in a tug of war with the defence lawyers with Ukil in the middle.

Later, Ukil was taken to the chamber of Barrister Tanya Amir, who presented argument against the detention before Justice Abdul Aziz and Justice Abdur Rashid. Meanwhile, a home ministry official rushed to the High Court.

After a three-hour standoff, Ukil was eventually set free at around 4:00pm.

The AL leader was arrested on August 24 without any specific charge and put on a two-day police remand the next day.

Later, he was sent to the Dhaka Central Jail, after the government issued a one-month detention

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Stern action against fraud manpower agents on cards

RAFIQ HASAN

The government will take stern action against fraudulent manpower recruiting agencies sending people abroad with fake documents and without permission of the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET).

Show-cause notices will be served on such fraudulent recruiting and travel agencies first, and their licenses could be cancelled if allegations are proved, source said.

According to rules, job seekers should take clearance from BMET before going abroad and pay Tk 1600 each as immigration fee.

But a section of unscrupulous agents, in connivance with a section of dishonest immigration officials at Zia International Airport (ZIA), send people without BMET permission to avoid payment of the fee.

Immigration authorities at ZIA recently arrested 24 Bangladeshis trying to go abroad without clearance from the BMET.

Four officials of three agencies were also arrested for allegedly sending people abroad with fake documents. They are Saiful Alam of Murvaluo International, Idris Ali and Jalaluddin of Nabi Jam Agency and Abdul Hamid of Grand Travel Agency. Cases were filed against them.

The Saudi embassy here in a letter requested the ministry of foreign affairs to take preventive measures after immigration authorities in that country arrested eight Bangladeshis with fake documents recently.

When contacted, State Minister for Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Mohammad Quamrul Islam said directives have been given to immigration authorities to tighten security at all international airports to check the fraudulence. This is tarnishing the country's image and affecting manpower export, he said.

Vigilance teams comprising men from SB, DB and other security agencies have been deployed at ZIA to check visa and other papers to check the illegal practice.

He also said immigration officials at airports will be changed regularly so that they can not be involved in the fraudulence.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Samity in Saudi Arabia urged the government to have detailed discussions with all relevant quarters and

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ETV petitions rejected

STAR REPORT

The High Court Division of the Supreme Court yesterday summarily rejected two writ petitions filed by the ETV Limited challenging closure of its transmission and seizure of its transmission equipment.

The Vacation Bench of the High Court Division, comprising Justice Mohammad Abdul Matin and Justice SK Sinha, rejected the petitions after hearing both the sides.

Earlier, Justice Sinha had expressed embarrassment to hear the petitions and those were sent to the Chief Justice. The Chief Justice however returned those to the same bench for disposal.

Counsel for the ETV Azmalul Hossain yesterday argued that the government action was mala fide as the ETV was not allowed time to give its explanation following the court verdict regarding it (ETV).

He argued that his client was deprived of fundamental rights ensured by the Constitution.

Attorney General AF Hassan Arif opposed his submission.

Earlier, a Division Bench of the High Court had declared the licensing agreement between the government and the ETV illegal upon a writ petition.

The ETV was shut down on August 29 after the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court dismissed the review petitions filed by the ETV and others.

Cabinet approves power distribution co for SW

RAZIUR RAHMAN

The cabinet yesterday approved establishment of a new company for power distribution to greater Jessore, Kushtia, Khulna, Barisal, and Faridpur districts.

The West Zone Power Distribution Company Limited will be a subsidiary of the Power Development Board (PDB).

Formation of a power distribution company for the southwestern districts is one of the conditions attached to the \$198.9 million loan agreement the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed with the government for the power sector on January 17.

As per the agreement, \$11.6 million will go to the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh Limited (PGCB), \$41.20 million to the Rural Electrification Board (REB) and the remaining \$46.11 million to the PDB.

The company is expected to be commissioned by the end of this year, a top PDB official told The Daily Star.

Major donors have long been pressing the government to improve financial and administrative performance of the power sector. None of the donors' suggestions on reforms in the power distribution sector has meanwhile proved effective.

It began with formation of the Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (DESA) in 1991 for power distribution to the capital and its surrounding areas.

The DESA has never made any profit since its inception. In fact, it

owes at least Tk 2,600 crore to the PDB, with unrealised electricity bills to the tune of Tk 1,400 crore.

In 1997 the Dhaka Electric Supply Company (DESCO) was formed. It also bungled up.

The DESA-DESCO experience has made local experts suspicious about the success of the West Zone Power Distribution Company Limited.

However, senior PDB officials believe it will bring positive change to the power distribution sector.

The West Zone Power Distribution Company Limited will be registered under Company Act. A managing director will be appointed from within the PDB and the PDB chairman will be the chairman.

"The DESA apparently failed to

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Saudis fall in line with US

Riyadh to cooperate in Iraq strike if UNSC gives go-ahead

AFP, Dubai

Saudi Arabia, which had vocally opposed US plans to attack Iraq and refused to allow use of its air bases for strikes on any Muslim state, has finally fallen back into line with old ally Washington.

Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal announced Sunday that Riyadh would cooperate in a US-led attack on Iraq if the United Nations Security Council gives the green light.

Several Arab countries have also moved towards accepting what appears to be the increasing inevitability of a new war unless Iraq caves in and allows unhindered UN arms inspections.

In the Gulf, Bahrain, home to the US fifth fleet, Kuwait, and Qatar, as well as Saudi Arabia, host large numbers of US troops and huge stocks of materiel.

While supporting a diplomatic solution to the crisis, all can be counted on to line up behind the United States, the region's military policeman since the 1990 invasion of Kuwait by Iraq.

Oman, an important staging post controlling access to the Gulf, and the United Arab Emirates also, if more discreetly, grant Washington military facilities.

"If the United Nations takes a decision, by the Security Council, to implement a policy of the UN, every country that has signed the charter of the UN has to fulfill it," Prince Saud said.

"A decision of the Security Council under Chapter Seven (of the charter) is binding on every member country" of the UN, he said in an interview with CNN.

The kingdom, which initiated a thaw in relations with Baghdad during the Arab summit held in Beirut last March, had sounded warnings that a new US war to oust President Saddam Hussein would ignite a "humanitarian catastrophe", threatening regional and global chaos.

Iraq, which responded to Riyadh's concern by offering to restore diplomatic ties whenever the kingdom was ready, jangled Middle East nerves with its own warnings that countries such as Saudi Arabia also risked breaking up.

Riyadh's refusal to support President George W Bush's war in Afghanistan and then Iraq had earned ever greater scorn from the American media, which had already accused the kingdom of breeding terrorism in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks.

With Osama bin Laden, stripped of his Saudi nationality in 1994, behind the suicide hijackings and 15 of the 19 hijackers carrying Saudi passports, relations between Riyadh and Washington were sorely tested.

The United States has increasingly looked to Qatar as the main staging post for any attack on Iraq. Qatar signalled Friday it would consider any request to use its terri

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Mosharraf, 8 others sued for graft in NAM flat allocation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bureau of Anti-corruption (BAC) filed a graft case against former minister and eight Rajuk officials on charges of illegal allocation of NAM Conference flats yesterday.

The allegation also included that the accused allotted flats to their partial choices.

The other accused are Azizul Huq, former Rajuk chairman and chairman of the NAM Conference flat allocation committee, the committee members and Rajuk officials Khan Belayet Hossain, Mamataz Uddin, Abdul Awal Chowdhury, Abdullah AL Mamun, Nurul Islam, Faruque Ahmed and Humayun Khan.



Sri Lankan opening batsman Marvan Atapattu sweeps a ball for four as Dutch wicketkeeper Reinout Scholte looks during the ICC Champions Trophy match at the Premadasa Stadium in Colombo yesterday.

Discord among pro-BNP teachers delays new VC's appointment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Discord among BNP-leaning teachers of Dhaka University delayed the appointment of a new vice-chancellor (VC) of the university.

Sources said the process virtually halted after some influential teachers belonging to the BNP-backed 'White Panel' strongly opposed the appointment Prof SMA Fayez as the VC.

These teachers belonging to the 'Noakhali group', a strong faction in the 'White Panel', are now lobbying for Prof. Shahiduddin Chowdhury.

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HSC results Wednesday

UNB, Dhaka

Results of this year's HSC examinations held under Secondary and Higher Secondary Examination Boards will be published at 4:00pm on Wednesday.

Results of HSC (Business Management) examinations under Technical Education Board and those of Alim, Fazil and Kamil examinations under Madrassah Education Board held this year will also be published simultaneously.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Sept 17		6-01 pm
Sept 18	5-45 am	

Prayer Timings		
Sept 17		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-40	5-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-06	6-10
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation