

Court takes graft case against Hanif 6 others into cognisance

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, yesterday took the charge sheet of a graft case against former DCC mayor Mohammad Hanif and six others into cognisance for trial.

Judge Ahmed Jamil Mostafa passed the order after scrutinising the case diary (CD) and relevant documents.

The six other accused in the case are Hanif's wife Bibi Fatema Khatun, his son Sayeed Khokon, former RAJUK chairman Humayun Khadem, Lt Col (ret'd) Mohammad Nurul Haq, former DCC Chief Engineer Shamsul Haq Bhuiyan and Bhuiyan's wife Anwara Begum.

Mohammad Abdus Sobhan, an official of the Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC), submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM's) Court, Dhaka against the accused on October 13.

Thirteen people have been

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DrAlamgir's bail SC rejects govt appeal against HC verdict

BSS, Dhaka

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday rejected leave to appeal filed by the government challenging the High Court verdict regarding the bail of former state minister and Awami League leader Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir in a criminal case.

The High Court on August 11 granted ad-interim bail to Dr Alamgir in a session case in connection with "Janatar Mach" in 1996.

The government filed the leave to appeal before the Appellate Division challenging the High Court verdict.

Full Court of the Appellate Division comprising Chief Justice Mainur Reza Chowdhury, Justice Fazlul Karim, Justice Syed J R Mudassar Hussain and Justice Abu Syed Ahmed passed the order on hearing the petition.

Additional Attorney General Abdur Rezak Khan appeared on behalf of the government while Barrister M Amirul Islam stood for Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir.

Bail petition of PR Chanda rejected

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, yesterday rejected the bail petition of former additional DIG Prakriti Ranjan Chanda (PR Chanda), an accused in a Janatar Mancha (Sedition Case) case.

Judge Ahmed Jamil Mostafa passed the order following a bail petition submitted by the defence lawyers on behalf of the accused.

The lawyers submitted a criminal appeal to the Judge's Court, Dhaka on October 2 against the rejection order of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM's) Court, Dhaka.

The CMM's Court rejected the bail petition of the accused in September.

PR Chanda was arrested on August 18 under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) and placed on a five-day remand.

Later, he was shown arrested in the case on August 24 and placed on a two day remand.

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Goswami murder: 2 arrested in Chandpur

UNB, Chandpur

Two persons were arrested here on Sunday in connection with the sensational murder of Swapan Kumar Goswami, a teacher of Government Laboratory High School, Dhaka.

The arrested are UP Member Yunus Khan of Kalyandi village and Yunus Miazi of South Ashikathi village in Sadar upazila.

Police said dispute over land might be the cause behind the brutal killing.

Crackdown on Chechens follows hostage drama

Russia tightlipped on the nature of gas used by troops

AFP, Moscow

Russia stepped up its war on Chechen separatists yesterday after President Vladimir Putin ordered the military to draw up new anti-terror plans in the wake of last week's deadly hostage drama in Moscow.

Police arrested dozens of people suspected of involvement in the three-day stand-off which left 117 hostages and 50 Chechen militants dead, almost all of them gassed by Russian forces in a controversial army assault.

Putin vowed Monday that Russia would take bold action against "terrorists wherever they may be," but the crisis has renewed international pressure on Moscow to seek a political solution in tiny breakaway Chechnya.

Interior Minister Boris Gryzlov said several dozen people believed to have participated in the storming of a Moscow theatre last week, where more than 800 people were held hostage, were arrested, Interfax news agency reported.

Meanwhile an officer with Russia's elite special forces Alpha Squad, which led the assault that freed the hostages, told Izvestia newspaper that a huge security clampdown had begun in Chechnya as well as Moscow.

"A massive special operation has already begun there without too much publicity," the unnamed officer said. "Moscow and the Moscow region also need to be 'mopped up' thoroughly."

A Chechen lawmaker said Monday that Chechens in the Russian capital were being harassed, searched and taken in for photos and fingerprinting.

Putin vaulted to power more than two years ago with a pledge to crack down on Chechnya, where separatist militants have battled Russia for independence in two separate wars.

The north Caucasus republic enjoyed de facto independence after the first war but Russia launched a massive anti-insurgency campaign in its break-away southern republic in October 1999.

Moscow says Chechen separatists have links to international terrorism, including Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network, and likened its handling of the hostage stand-off to the US campaign since September 11.

Russia has ruled out all talks with Chechen leader Aslan Maskhadov, who said Monday that more attacks like the Moscow hostage taking were inevitable

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PHOTO: PID

A 22-member delegation of Bangladesh Government Employees Coordination Council called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday.

'Employees' demands will be met in phases'

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday sought continued cooperation of all government and semi-government employees in implementing the development programmes undertaken for the welfare and prosperity of the people and the country.

She thanked the employees for working hard during the last one year and said their cooperation helped bring momentum in different sectors and initiate development process after the present government had inherited a ruined economy from the past Awami League regime.

The Prime Minister was talking to

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Council delay slims AL revamping prospect

REAZ AHMAD

The long delayed central council of the main opposition Awami League (AL) billed for December 23-24 in Dhaka may be deferred again, shelving the prospect of a planned early revamping of the party.

Party sources said that against the backdrop of a changed political situation and countrywide anti-crime drive by the army, the party leadership is now uncertain about holding the repeatedly deferred council as per the present schedule.

They pointed out that in the run-up to the central council, the AL units at thana and district levels were supposed to hold their councils by October 31, but they could not do so.

"This is partly because of political persecution by the ruling alliance, forcing many of our grass-

roots level leaders and activists to leave their houses and also their localities. And now that an army drive is going on, they are passing their days in tension," explained a senior AL leader.

A number of councils of different units of the party had already been cancelled because of the changed situation. Besides, poor participation by party central leaders in organisational activities has left a demoralising effect on the party rank and file across the country, he mentioned.

Since its debacle in the October 1 general elections last year, the AL called seven hartals, some in the capital only and some throughout the country. But in most of the cases, senior party leaders relaxed at their homes while a handful of lower level diehard party men took to the streets to enforce the hartals

partially.

On Thursday, no AL central leader except Matia Chowdhury came out on the streets to enforce their half-day hartal, called by the city unit of the party, demanding release of the party president's political secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Jubo League Chairman Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, MP. Even the president and the general secretary of the city AL were not seen on the streets.

In such a situation, holding of councils of party units and also the central council on schedule seems somewhat uncertain, a party leader said seeking anonymity.

However, the AL would take stock of the latest situation and reasons

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Jessore blast: Udichi restates demand for trial

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Udichi Shilpi Gosthi, a premier cultural organisation of the country, has reiterated its demand for a trial of the bomb attack on Udichi convention in Jessore on March 6, 1999 that left 10 people dead.

The demand was made at the 34th founding anniversary programme organised by the Udichi central unit at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday.

Speakers at the programme asked the countrymen to be aware of the anti-people elements involved in the bomb attack.

The programme began with Udichi inaugural song 'Mora Manusher Jayagan Ga' (We sing the people's victory). Noted journalist and cultural activist Wahidul Haq inaugurated the programme with the Udichi acting President Golam Mohammad Edu presiding. Activist Kabir Ahmed later delivered the

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3 die, 40 fall sick after taking eggs of Potka fish in Cox's Bazar

UNB, Cox's Bazar

Three Rakhain people died and 40 others fell sick after taking eggs of poisonous 'Potka' fish in Kangpara in the town Monday night.

The dead were identified as Songprue Rakhain, 40, driver of Cox's Bazar Forest Department, his wife Prumeey Rakhain, 36, and a 4-year-old girl Omekey Rakhain.

Police and hospital sources said at least 40 members of 10 Rakhain families fell sick Monday night after taking eggs of Potka fish bought from a local bazaar.

Police arrested Abul Kashem, a fish trader who allegedly sold two kgs of Potka eggs to the Rakhain people.

Thirty-five people were admitted to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital yesterday morning. Condition of five of them was stated to be critical.



PHOTO: STAR

Children look at Japanese dolls on an exhibition jointly organised by the Embassy of Japan and the Bangladesh Shishu Academy at the academy's Children Art Gallery in the city yesterday.

Dolls with a difference

NICOLE MEIER

They are dolls, but the "Ningyos" from Japan are not for children's amusement. Since ancient times dolls have been part of everyday life in Japan. The making of human figures has not remained confined to being a talisman or simply a souvenir. They also have spiritual meanings: dolls seal friendship, protect those who use them and help young girls and boys explore their roles in society.

The Children Art Gallery of the Bangladesh Shishu Academy yesterday opened an exhibition jointly organised by the Embassy of Japan and the Bangladesh Shishu Academy. The exhibition is for a broad selection of Japanese Dolls.

Some of them might seem rather fearsome, others lovely and charming. Some may even seem to be bordering on kitsch.

The Gogatsu Ningyos, for example, are dolls for the Boy's Festival ("Tango no Sekku") which is held on May 5. These dolls have a grim look. They wear long beards and shaggy eyebrows cover their eyes. The might remind the visitors of Vikings, but their meaning is not sad at all. Families with sons display sets of miniature armor and figures of costumed warriors at the Festival and they pray that their sons will grow up

strong and healthy. Families with daughters celebrate the "Hina Matsuri" on March 3.

Another important species of Japanese Dolls are the so-called "Gosho Ningyo", Imperial Palace Dolls. They are made with large heads and white skin to convey the sweet appearance of children. With their fatty little arms and legs they give the impression of being something between an angel without wings and a corpse.

The history of the Ningyos shows that about 1000 years ago the dolls had religious signification. In those times they were made for children before or at birth and were kept near them to distract evil spirits. Nowadays the Ningyos reflect the customs of Japan and the aspirations of its people. Besides, dolls are a highly rated form of artistic craft.

The exhibition has been inaugurated by the Minister for Women and Children Affairs, Khurshid Zahan Haque and Japanese Ambassador Jiro Kobayashi in the city yesterday. It will remain open until November 9. The exhibition is part of the Japan Month commemorating the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Bangladesh.

The writer is a Swiss journalist doing internship with The Daily Star

Pilferage, corruption plague energy sector

Roundtable in city observes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A city roundtable yesterday observed that the country would not have to look for foreign investment for development of the energy sector if pilferage could be stopped and the revenue collected properly.

The roundtable said pilferage and corruption in the billing process are the biggest problems the sector now faces.

Chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Rehman Sobhan presided over the roundtable organised by the Energy and Mineral Resources Division of the ministry.

Business leaders at the roundtable came down heavily on the gas supply authorities and said cost of business runs high because of corruption of the gas employees and officials.

Narrating his own experience, Youth Group Chairman Abul Kashem Haidar said he had to pay a bribe of Tk 1.25 crore to get gas connection for his spinning mill in Tangail.

He also observed that frequent increases in power and gas tariffs also make industries sick.

Haidar said if the systems loss, which basically is outright theft, could be reduced, the country would not have to look for foreign investment for the development of

the gas sector. President of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) Kutubuddin Ahmed also echoed what Haidar said regarding hassles faced by businessmen in getting gas connection.

The businessmen also said the proposed Energy Regulatory Commission should be well equipped to protect businessmen from such harassment.

State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharrif Hossain admitted the allegations raised by the businessmen and said it is very difficult to immediately put a stop to corruption and malpractice in the sector.

"It has been going on for a long," he said, blaming the trade unions at the gas supplying authorities for the situation.

The minister hoped that the commission would be functional from January 1 of next year. The commission will be responsible for issuing licenses to operators and fixing transmission and distribution tariff. It will also protect consumers' interest, he said.

Mosharrif said a new policy is being framed to ensure timely gas connection for subscribers, which will also eliminate scope for corruption. The new system would be in place from January.

Tea-garden manager abducted at Rangunia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, City

Tribal gunmen kidnapped a tea-garden manager from Ranganagar under Rangunia thana in the district here in the morning yesterday.

The victim identified as Md. Nurul Anowar alias Jahangir, 40, is the manager of Thandachery Alam Shah Tea garden of Ranganagar adjoining the border of Kaukhali upazila of Rangamati district.

Police and witnesses said, when Jahangir along with his cousin, one Quazi Fazlul Haq, and a staff, went for an inspection into the garden at around 9:00am, he fell victim to the armed tribal miscreants.

Some eight tribal gunmen blocked their way and kidnapped Jahangir at gunpoint.

They left with a warning to Fazlul Haq to refrain from disclosing the incident to the police or any other law enforcers. Jahangir is believed to have been taken into the forests of Kaukhali.

However, both the police of nearby Ranganagar Camp and Rangunia Police Station and army at the Ghagra camp in Rangamati, were informed of the matter.

The law enforcers raided the nearby areas. But the victim could not be traced out till the filing of this report.

Jahangir is the brother of Nurul Alam, owner of the tea garden and a former upazila chairman.

A case was filed in this connection.

Decision to build residences in JS Bhaban area protested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (BPA) at a rally in the city yesterday protested the authorities' decision to construct residences for the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker on the lush green open space in the Sangsad Bhaban area.

This will spoil the beauty of the area and be violation of the Wetland and Open Space Protection Act, 2000, they said. Prior permission from the Rajdhani Unnayan Kortipakkha (RAJUK) is required for constructing any structure, they said.

Abu Naser, General Secretary of BPA, Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar, Country Director of the Hunger Project, Golam Kibria, JK Boral, Dr Mahbubur Rahman and Dr Masuduzzaman addressed the rally.