

DEFAMATION CASE
Court asks
Inqilab editor to
appear before it
on May 8

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday asked the Inqilab editor and one of its reporters to appear before it on May 8 after BMA President Dr MA Hadi filed a defamation case for running a news item.

Metropolitan Magistrate Selina Akhter passed the order following a case against Editor AMM Bahauddin and Staff Correspondent Shamim Siddiqui.

In his complaint, Hadi mentioned that the daily ran a news item headlined "Corruption of hundred crores of taka against BMA leader DR Hadi" on February 26 that was false and fabricated.

Case against Amader Shomoy editor

The same court yesterday summoned editor and a reporter of the Amader Shomoy to appear before it on May 8 for running a defamatory news item implicating a Jatiya Party (JP) leader.

The order came when JP leader HM Golam Reza filed the case with the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate against Editor Naimul Islam Khan and a staff reporter Shamsuddin Ahmed.

In his complaint, Reza mentioned that the daily ran news item headlined "Ershad's close associate Reza is an absconding accused of six cases" on February 22, which was vague and concocted.

bracNet launches
sale of celebrity
memorabilia
to raise funds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

bracNet, one of the largest Internet Service Provider (ISP) of the country, yesterday launched a month-long initiative bringing celebrities and masses together to raise funds by selling celebrity memorabilia.

The sale proceeds will be donated to three charitable organisations Liberation War Museum, Centre for Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP) and Acid Survivors' Foundation.

At a press briefing at the Liberation War Museum, bracNet Chief Executive Director Khalid Quadir said although celebrity memorabilia sale is popular in the West including India, this is the first time that such an initiative has been taken on a large scale in the country.

A memorabilia can be anything from an item that a star has used to an item that people can relate to star when they think about a particular celebrity, he explained.

More than 50 celebrities including Suborna Mustafa, Afsana Mimi, Ishita, Jewel Aich, Habib, Sharmin Lucky, Shakila Zafar, Mehrin, Humayun Faridi, Tania, Tutul, Bipasha Hayat and Bappa Majumdar have donated over 200 items.

The items include jewellery, costume, musical instruments, mug, glasses, sari, dupatta, CD, DVD, shawl, award, books, posters, pictures, pens, bags, and cards.

Full details of the items along with prices are available on www.bracnet.net. The sale will continue on the bracNet site till March 30.

At the end of the online sale, the check hand-over ceremony to be followed by a cultural function will be held at Radisson Hotel in the city on March 31.

The Transcom Foods (KFC and Pizza Hut) will also donate the same amount of money as bracNet will get from the sale of its memorabilia.

The Daily Star, Prothom Alo, Channel i, Radio Today, Canvas and Dhanshri are the media partners of the initiative.

Director Maliha Quadir and Chief Technical Officer Roulf Blomberg of bracNet also spoke on the occasion.

CLIMATE CHANGE
Saleemul Huq
gets Burtoni
Award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Bangladeshi scientist, who is the head of the Climate Change Group at the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) based in London, has been awarded prestigious Burtoni Award for his contributions to Climate Change Adaptation.

The award is named after Prof Ian Burton of Canada who is a pioneer in the science of adaptation to climate change.

Dr Saleemul Huq received the award from its previous winner Dr Roger Jones of Australia on the first day of the three-day international workshop on 'Community Based Adaptation to Climate Change' at the Radisson Garden Hotel in the city on Monday.

IFFAT BIN MAHBUB MURDER CASE
Army captain, two
others get death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Rajshahi

Rajshahi speedy trial tribunal yesterday sentenced three people, including an army captain, to death for killing businessman Iffat Bin Mahbub of Rangpur.

Judge AFM Aminul Islam handed down the death penalty to the victim's brother-in-law Khondoker Mahmud Elahi, his brother Captain Khondoker Iftekhar Elahi and their friend Hussain Kabir Pavel in a packed courtroom.

According to the prosecution, Iffat Bin Mahbub, an expatriate who had been living in London, was kidnapped from Rangpur town and murdered in a private car near Mahiganj in Peergachha on May 16, 2006.

After the judgment, as the police were taking the convicts to prison van from the courtroom, photojournalists started taking photographs of the convicts.

But all of a sudden Captain Iftekhar Elahi and two other convicts, who were handcuffed to one another, started punching and kicking the photojournalists, although some 200 policemen were deployed in the area for security purposes.

Sujauddin Chhoton of ATN Bangla, Jahangir Alam Aakash of CSB News, Selim Jahangir of Janakantha, Asaduzzaman Asad of Amar Desh, Abdullah Iqbal of Jugantar, Badrul Hasan of Sunshine, and TV cameramen Liton and Masud were injured in the

attack. They later called on Superintendent of Police Didar Ahmed and complained about the inaction of the policemen during the attack.

Hasina visits
fire victims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said those who built different business houses through corruption might have set fire to Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation (BSEC) Bhaban at Karwan Bazar in the city on Monday only to destroy the evidences of their corruption.

The AL chief said this while she was visiting five fire victims Azizur Rahman, Abdul Momin, Harunur Rashid, Abdul Mannan and Abul Khaer at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH).

Hasina stayed there for more than half an hour and asked the on-duty doctors to look after the injured people with proper care.

She also handed over Tk 10,000 to each of the five victims for their treatment.

The former prime minister said such a big incident of fire would not have taken place if the high-rise building were constructed as per building code.

100km beach
walk from
Mar 23 to 26

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With a view to building a healthy, active and energetic nation and showcasing the beauty of world's largest sea beach, a 100km long beach walk is going to be held in the country.

The beach walk styled 'Grameen Phone Activate Bangladesh', first of its kind in the country, will be held on March 23 to 26 with the participation of 500 students of country's different schools, colleges and universities.

The organisers of Activate Bangladesh and Grameen Phone (GP) announced their programme at a press conference titled 'Challenge of the longest beach 2007', a world first 100km beach walk' at a city hotel organised by Active Bangladesh and MAA Consortium.

GP is the title sponsor of the programme while Channel i, Prothom Alo, The Daily Star and Radio Today are the strategic partners. The project is initiated by Centre for Injury Prevention and Research, Bangladesh (CIPRB).

Maj Gen (ret'd) Mohammad Anwar Hossain Bir Pratik, chairman of Activate Bangladesh, said although the young generation of the country are educated, they are little aware of the physical activities and this carelessness leads them to severe diseases.

Apart from education, physical and mental competency is also needed, as many highly educated youths fail to establish themselves in the society due to physical and mental incompetence, he said.

Showing a survey conducted on 500 schools and 50 private universities in Dhaka and Chittagong metropolitans, Dr Anupam Hossain, programme co-ordinator of Activate Bangladesh, said there is a little presence of organised sporting activity in the country's educational institutions and 90 percent students are inactive in terms of sports activity.

Demonstrating the details of the beach walk and criteria and selecting process of the programme, he said the longest beach challenge comprises a three day beach walk from Teknaf to Cox's Bazar and they are expecting 500 participants in the first programme.

He also said the participants will be selected on the basis of height, weight, indoor and outdoor experience and they will flock forms from today.

Aly Zaker, chairman of MAA Consortium, said this is not merely a sports programme, it is also a matter of national health and the event would be a popular event across the world if it gets due coverage.

Stein Naevdal, CMO of GP, Prof Fazlur Rahman, executive director of Activate Bangladesh, Tim Steel, vice chairman of Activate Bangladesh, KM Saiful Islam, director (sales) of Square Group, SM Mahfuzul Huq, director (marketing) of HRC, Faridur Reza Sagar, managing director of Channel i and Anisul Haque, deputy editor of Prothom Alo also spoke.

2 Biman MDs
go on voluntary
retirement

UNB, Dhaka

The managing directors of Airport Services and Project and Works of Biman Bangladesh Airlines yesterday went on voluntary retirement.

A Biman press release said Managing Director (Airport Services) Anwar Ahmed and Managing Director (Project and Works) AM A Razzak went on retirement on personal grounds.

Selim-Delwar
Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is Shaheed Salim-Delwar Day.

On this day in 1984, HM Ibrahim Selim and Kazi Delwar Hossain, two final year students of Dhaka University, were killed near Gulistan in the city as a police truck intentionally ran over a demonstration of students who had been protesting against the dictatorial rule of Ershad.

Obituary

Historian Prof Abu Imam passed away due to old age complications in the city early yesterday at the age of 78, says a press release.

A fellow of Oxford University, Dr Abu Imam founded the Department of Archaeology at Jahangirnagar University, the first of its kind in the country.

Muhammad Yahya

Muhammad Yahya, younger brother of ATM Ishaq, a journalist of Prothom Alo, passed away yesterday at the age of 34 in a city hospital, says a press release.

He was buried at his family graveyard at Ayenagar in Ramganj in Laxmipur last night.

Death anniversary

Today is the 13th death anniversary of Nurul Islam Chowdhury, former district and session judge, says a press release.

On the occasion, Qurankhwani will be held after Fazz prayers and milad mahfil will be held after Maghrib prayers at Road-4, House-6, Section-5, Uttara Model Town in the city.



Stein Naevdal speaks at a press conference at Hotel Sonargaon in the city yesterday. On his right are Maj Gen (ret'd) Mohammad Anwar Hossain and Aly Zaker while on his left is Faridur Reza Sagar.

Ineligible company to get gas plant deal

FROM PAGE 1

Sinopec's technical proposal to set up the plant and sought 160 clarifications. The consultant observed that the Chinese bid grossly deviated from the tender specifications which cannot be corrected by mere clarifications.

Instead of disqualifying its bid following the project consultant's recommendation, the SGFL board early last year formed a four-member committee to "evaluate" the clarifications. The convenor of this committee was a senior Petrobangla official who had served the SGFL as its managing director in 2005, in the earlier phase of this project.

This committee sketchily okayed the clarification so that the SGFL could justify awarding contract for this project against the opinion of the consultant. Even this committee's report questions experience records of Sinopec.

Late last year, a top energy ministry official called a representative of the consultant and suggested him to recommend in favour of the Chinese company. The consultant filed its final report but with hand-written reservations expressed in separate sheets attached to it.

"The guardians of the SGFL in connivance with a business lobby has undermined national interest. If the SGFL-Petrobangla committee is so competent to evaluate clarifications of the Chinese bidder, why did it appoint an international consultant? Whose interest is being served by such handling of this tender?" one source questioned.

SGFL officials however claimed to The Daily Star that the consultant was "biased" to another bidder-Thermo Designs Engineering of Canada. They could not explain how the SGFL drew the conclusion about bias since the same consultant disqualified the Canadian company in the first tender on this project that was floated in 2005. They also could not answer why the SGFL was so determined about awarding contract for the project to the Chinese company when so many questions still remain unanswered.

"The government must immediately stop the contract awarding process and scrutinise the whole tendering process anew. Or else it will become a diplomatic issue between Bangladesh and China, which is uncalled for," said a senior Petrobangla official.

This situation could have been avoided if there was a true check and balance between the energy ministry and Petrobangla's subsidiary SGFL. "Unfortunately, the SGFL board is headed by a high official of the ministry, and there is no room for check and balance since all SGFL decisions are always owned by a high official of the ministry," he pointed out.

Background
Under this project -- Kailastila Molecular Sieve Turbo Expander Processing Plant-- the SGFL would daily produce 16 barrels of Natural Gas Liquid (NGL) and about nine barrels of associated condensate using 45 million cubic feet per day (mmcf/d) gas.

The Sinopec computer process simulation revealed that the company was confused about understanding the tender requirements. "The bidder's proposal assumed a design basis which did not conform to the tender document. And in so doing, the bidder's design was unable to confirm the NGL product specification as specified in the tender," the source said quoting the consultant's report.

"Sinopec was so callous in filing its documents that in its introductory remarks it stated we also declare and ensure that we will indulge in any political activities in Bangladesh during the execution of the project," he added.

The first tender for this fractionation plant project was floated in May 2005. Though such a technical project demands that the SGFL seek a contractor with international experience of installation of such projects, its tender criteria did not put such restrictions so that Chinese companies, which are new in this field, can enter the competition.

According to a competent source, 12 companies initially expressed interest but hectic lobbying by business groups and corrupt politicians drove away most of the bidders and only four participated in the bid.

These four companies are Sinopec (represented by Sahnco), PT of Indonesia (backed by Haris Chowdhury, political secretary to immediate past PM), Thermo Designs Engineering of Canada and Astra-Evangelista of Argentina.

"The project consultant disqualified all the bids. The Argentinean and Canadian companies submitted incomplete bids and their offers were summarily rejected while Sinopec and PT bids were found technically non-responsive," said the source.

The project was re-tendered in January last year and this time three offers were dropped by Sinopec, Thermo Designs and Astra-Evangelista. "The Indonesian company did not participate as Haris Chowdhury lost interest in the bid due to pressure from the business lobby that was mounted through another top influential bureaucrat of the Prime Minister's Office," he mentioned.

By February last year, the consultant came up with its evaluation of the bids declaring Astra-Evangelista and Sinopec as non-responsive and recommending Thermo Designs of Canada.

"On Thermo Designs, the consultant's remark was that this company fully understood the requirements of the tender documents and their technical proposal complied with the requirements," the source said.

Gross Deviation
The consultant's February 26, 2006 report on Sinopec's proposal pinpointed hundreds of gross flaws. For instance, the Chinese company named Survey, Design and Research Institute of ZPEB for designing the major plant components. The consultant noted that this was an institute, not a bidder or a qualified partner. There was no documentary evidence about the institute's experience or capability or even its existence or its relationship with Sinopec.

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The consultant's recommendation on its bid stated clearly that Sinopec's technical proposal has a "grand process design deviation, major material deviations and contradictions. It has plenty of material exclusions as per tender clauses. It is not technically responsive and cannot be accepted."

In addition, its bid was declared "summarily rejected" due to non-compliance with several tender clauses, plus the bidder's proposal did not establish its eligibility as per the tender terms.

Sinopec's technical proposal "cannot be made technically responsive by mere clarifications only," the consultant said, adding that Sinopec has to re-do the whole exercise to qualify.

Sources alleged that Sinopec simply copied the technical proposal of Thermo Designs Engineering (TDE) which it had submitted in the first tender in 2005. This allegation is substantiated by the report of the SGFL committee which noted, "The process descriptions stated by TDE and Sinopec International are similar."

SGFL's bid to overturn consultant's report

While the consultant submitted negative reports on Sinopec, the SGFL tender committee made a positive technical evaluation of the Chinese company. The two views were placed before the SGFL board headed by a senior energy ministry official on March 29, 2006. To resolve this difference of views, the SGFL board formed a four-member committee "to examine the points of differences and to put forward comments/recommendations on the evaluation."

This committee headed by a Petrobangla official said, "None of the three bids fully complied with the summary rejection criteria. All of them some way or other deviated from tender stipulations."

In its report filed on May 8, 2006, the committee said it found that the bidders generally met tender requirements on experience as evidenced by statements and reference letters from users. The committee however could not ascertain their authenticity.

"This means, the bidders may have given false records of experience, and this committee is not taking the responsibility of such records," said a source.

The committee concluded, "Subject to re-verification of work experience through ICB (International Competitive Bidding) that an opportunity may be given to them (the bidders) to fully meet the tender requirements by correcting deficiencies and waiving exceptions without any change in financial offers, in an attempt to avoid retender and consequential delay in implementing the project."

By this remark, the committee accommodated Sinopec's 160 clarifications.

Consultant's final views

Following this committee report and SGFL's subsequent decision to go ahead with the Chinese bid and put

2ND DHAKA-CTG HIGHWAY
Malaysia keen
to help

UNB, Dhaka

Malaysia is interested to provide assistance for construction of the 2nd Dhaka-Chittagong highway on the basis of build, operate and transfer (BOT).

Malaysian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Dato Abdul Malek Bin Abdul Aziz said this when he met Communications Adviser Major General (Retd) MA Matin at his office yesterday.

The Malaysian envoy also expressed satisfaction at the steps taken by the caretaker government.

The Communications Adviser said the government is working for the welfare of the country and its people, and "it's ready to take and implement any projects to this end."

aside the Canadian bid, the project's consultant added a few more pages to its original report.

The consultant clarified that it had not been biased to the Canadian bidder, as alleged by the SGFL, saying it had recommended in favour of the bidder that fully understood the requirements of the SGFL and is capable of delivering the plant.

Reiterating that Sinopec was not technically qualified for the project, the consultant said, "It will be a total disaster" if the SGFL accepted the Chinese or the Argentine plant.

The tender was held in a two envelop system in which the bidder submits technical bid and financial bids separately. If it is qualified technically, the financial offer is opened. Therefore, the consultant did not consider the price offer of Sinopec against that of the Canadian company. Price comparison cannot be made between a technically responsive and non-responsive bidder. Price will be compared if there is a comparison between an apple and an apple, one source pointed out.

DHAKA TODAY

Symposium

United Nations Association of Bangladesh (UNAB) will hold a symposium on 'Information Technology and Mother Language' to mark the International Mother Language Day. Venue: Scout Bhaban Auditorium. Time: 5:00pm.

Seminar

Plan Bangladesh organises a seminar on 'People's participation in health'. Venue: Brac Centre Inn. Time: 10:00am.

Book launching

The launching ceremony of a book titled 'Socio-economic indebtedness-related impact of micro-credit in Bangladesh' organised by Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad will be held. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:30pm.

Workshop

The Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce (FBCCI) and Industry and Fulki, a child rights organisation, will hold a work on 'Child care will ensure women's participation in job market'. Venue: FBCCI conference room. Time: 11:30am.

Website launching

The launching ceremony of a website and on-line course of Russian language organised by Russian Centre of Science and Culture, Dhaka will be held. Venue: Exhibition hall of Russian Centre of Science and Culture. Time: 5:00pm.

BNP, Jamaat men try to bury scam

FROM PAGE 1

Superintendent of Police (SP) Abdullah Baki yesterday recovered 36 pieces of CI sheets for relief from "Young Muslim Generation" at Jhaudanga bazar in sadar upazila, police sources said.

Jamaat-e-Islami won three seats the 2001 parliamentary election while BJP secured one in Satkhira. The elected lawmakers are Principal Maulana Abdul Khaleque from Satkhira 2 (sadar), Maulana Riasat Ali from Satkhira 3 (Ashashuni), Gazi Nazrul Islam from Satkhira 5 (Shyamnagar) and Kazi Alaaddin from Satkhira 4 (Kaliganj-Debhata).

Locals in these constituencies alleged that their lawmakers deprived the poor of the relief goods and distributed those among their party activists, influential people and a number of fictitious organisations.

This correspondent came across structures of a kitchen and a barn at Machkhola in sadar upazila where CI sheets for relief were used illegally. The owner of the structures is Nazibullah, personal assistant of former Jamaat lawmaker Maulana Abdul Khaleque.

Another Jamaat activist, a "Rukan", Anisur Rahman from Reyui of the same upazila, built his house with CI sheets for relief, sources said.

Local Jamaat leaders have already removed most of the CI sheets illegally used on office structures and hid those in a local leader's house, sources said.

After former Jamaat lawmaker Mizanur Rahman of Nilphamari was arrested, the authorities of Agardari Alia Madrasa in sadar upazila removed the misappropriated CI sheets worth over Tk 40,000 from the madrasa and dumped those in a nearby pond, said Kawsar Ali from Agardari village. Former Jamaat lawmaker Maulana

Abdul Khaleque is principal of the madrasa.

Police recovered at least 200 CI sheets from Khalilnagar Mohila Madrasa in sadar upazila.

There have been widespread corruption and favouritism allegations against former Jamaat lawmaker Gazi Nazrul Islam. Shyamnagar Sadar UP Chairman Jagul Haidar said, Gazi Nazrul Islam distributed CI sheets to party leaders who used those for personal purposes or for constructing party offices at Munshiganj, Banspur, Kashimari, Iswaripur, Atulia, Noormagar and other places in Shyamnagar upazila.

Gazi Nazrul Islam also allotted CI sheets for relief to his cousin Manzur Sardar. Manzur used the materials to build structures at Chakbara, Bashar Dhal and Khalsabunia. He has been trying to cover up the government markings on the sheets, said Liaquat Ali, chairman of Hurulia UP.

Another former Jamaat lawmaker Maulana Riasat Ali distributed CI sheets among his party leaders, sources said.

Riasat distributed the relief items to local leader Abdur Rahim of Anulia who used those to build a shop. He also erased government markings from the relief goods. Police recovered the CI sheets, but failed to arrest Abdur Rahim.

Maulana Riasat Ali also gave away over 185 pieces of relief CI sheets to Lal Chand Gazi, father of Anulia UP Chairman Ruhul Qudus of Eksara village in Ashashuni upazila, sources said. The UP chairman is now in jail.

Ashashuni police said Lal Chand used the CI sheets on his house. To evade arrest, he removed the materials from his house and sunk those in a pond

on Wednesday night. Police recovered the sheets, but failed to arrest Lal Chand.

Meanwhile, police recovered 54 pieces of CI sheets from a canal in front of the house of local Jamaat leader Omar Farooque of Fatepur in Kaliganj upazila.

Quoting villagers, Kaliganj police said Omar Farooque constructed his house with CI sheets that he had received from former BJP lawmaker Kazi Alaaddin for distribution among the destitute. He removed those from the structure and dumped them in a nearby canal to dodge the lawenforcers.

Police also recovered a large number of relief CI sheets from Kazi Alaaddin College at Kaliganj upazila. The college is named after the local lawmaker.

Police said local leaders of different parties who received relief CI sheets are now busy erasing or painting over government imprints on the materials to evade arrest.

Denying allegations of disbursing government relief materials to party men, Maulana Abdul Khaleque and Maulana Riasat Ali said over telephone that they had distributed the CI sheets only to the destitute. The CI sheets for relief found from the "Islamic Libraries" might have been purchased from the destitute.

This correspondent following repeated attempts could not reach Gazi Nazrul Islam.

SP Abdullah Baki and Officer-in-Charge of sadar police station Safiqur Rahman said more drives would be launched in other areas to recover relief CI sheets.

"Preparations are underway to file cases against the accused," the SP said.

WEATHER TODAY

Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is also likely at one or two places over Sylhet divisions, Met office said in a forecast.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

Highest temperature 33.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Teknaf and lowest 13.5 degree Celsius at Srirampal.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:01pm today and rises at 6:21am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature In Celsius	Humidity in percentage		
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	29.6	17.4	54	41
Chittagong	32.0	18.8	64	45
Rajshahi	29.5	15.0	75	48
Khulna	29.3	17.8	81	64
Barisal	29.2	16.5	80	72
Sylhet	29.7	15.7	71	46
Cox's Bazar	32.0	20.6	65	51