

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 Bhauddin 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 Paralysed (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 Malika Quadir and Chief Technical Officer Roul 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 (IIE) 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.

Sujaiddin Chhoton of ATN Bangla, Jahangir Alam Aakash of CSB News, Selim Jahangir of Janakantha, Asaduzzaman Asad of Amar Desh, Abdullah Iqbal of Jugantor, 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.

Showing a survey conducted on 500 schools and 50 private universities in Dhaka and Chittagong metros, 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 float 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 Naeval, 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.

The chief adviser's notes on Carbon Mining on December 19 and Carbon Mining on December 26.

Regarding the licences that were issued during his time he said these were cleared by the chief adviser's office. The chief adviser's office on December 14, 2006 on Premier Minerals Ltd states, "Decisions required in the summary are within the power of the Minister for Energy and Minerals Division. As presently there is an Adviser responsible for the Ministry, due approval may kindly be given by the Adviser in accordance with the existing rules and regulations."

The chief adviser's notes on Carbon Mining Plc licence on 19 December likewise said, "...as presently there is an Adviser responsible for the Ministry, the case may kindly be disposed at Ministry's level."

Our reply:

The chief adviser's notes clearly put the responsibility of issuing the three licences to the sitting energy adviser. As for the fourth licence that went to KDS Minerals, it was issued on January 11, 2007 and its contract number is C-7. His predecessor may have given the approval on November 30, but the licence was issued on that date.

The Daily Star did not report that the adviser had awarded Hosaf with mining licence, but it mentioned that he formed a committee. This committee is however still in the process of formation -- and we stand corrected.

Chowdhury in his statement said he did not take any decision on Hosaf. The KDS was given licence on November 30 while Premier

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 (CIPR.B).

Maj Gen (retd) 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.

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 Sinopac.

Late last year, a top energy ministry official called a representative of the consultant and suggested him to recommend the consultant 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 not 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.

Selim-Delwar Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is Selim-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 Ayanagar 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, Qurankhawni

will be held after Fazr prayers and maftil will be held after Magrib prayers at Road-4, House-6, Section-5, Uttara Model Town in the city.



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

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."

Ineligible company to get gas plant deal

FROM PAGE 1

Sinopac'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 Sinopac.

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

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"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.

"The project consultant's report was that this company fully understood the requirements of the tender documents and their technical proposal complied with the requirements," the source said.

The consultant's February 26, 2006 report on Sinopac's proposal pinpointed hundreds of gross flaws. For instance, the Chinese 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 Sinopac as non-responsive and re-awarding the contract to Thermo Designs of Canada.

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

The 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.