

SCC chief engineer held for 'graft'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The joint forces picked up Chief Engineer of Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) Saiful Islam from his office yesterday afternoon on corruption charges.

Earlier SCC Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran suspended Islam upon receiving a message from the LGRD ministry over telephone.

Executive Engineer Noor-E-Aziz has been given the charge of the chief engineer.

During the preliminary interrogation, Islam admitted corrupt practices and gave details of his wealth amounting to Tk 20 crore, sources said.

Islam also admitted that he has a bank balance of over Tk one crore with Standard Chartered Bank, 10 plots at Bashundhara, flats at Gulshan and Uttara, a petrol pump and a CNG filling station at Sirajganj, sources added.

Kader Siddiqui's retreat on 'grabbed' land demolished

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

The army-led joint forces yesterday demolished a weekend retreat of Krishak Sramik Janata League (KSJL) President Abdul Kader Siddiqui built on 21 acres of vested property at Silimpur village in Sakhipur upazila.

The joint forces started their drive at around 10:30pm and demolished all four rooms of the tin roof house.

Abdul Kader Siddiqui built the weekend retreat in 2002 grabbing about 21 acres of government land, sources said.

The joint forces also arrested the caretaker of the house Jahangir Hossain and seized all items including construction materials and CI sheets from there, sources added.

The arrestee and seized materials were handed over to Sakhipur Police Station.

Local people seemed very satisfied over the action by the forces and they cheered the forces by beating drums.

When contacted, Ahammedul

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CTG PORT Container handling still goes at slow pace

RAFIQ HASAN from Chittagong

Container handling at Chittagong Container Terminal (CCT) is still far below the expected pace as export containers arrive at the port jetty very slowly and in an unplanned way.

Operators of the four sophisticated Quay Gantry Cranes (QGC) for handling containers told The Daily Star yesterday that they are unloading import containers from ships very quickly but they have to wait for hours to get export containers for loading those in ships. As a result, the ships cannot sail off timely.

"Arrival of export containers is so slow that on Sunday we got only three containers," said one opera-

tor.

He pointed out that if export containers do not arrive at the jetty before a ship anchors, handling activities would not get momentum and turnaround time of a ship would not reduce drastically.

Meanwhile, a high level meeting between Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) and a taskforce of the joint forces fixed the time for loading of export containers at 48 hours instead of seven days earlier.

The meeting also took a number of decisions to reduce congestion and turnaround time of ships at the port.

The meeting decided to install two power plants of 25 megawatt capacity each as an alternative way

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level of delivery of containers and arrival of export containers. "It would take at least another two weeks to streamline the entire container operation," he said.

While visiting the CCT Monday afternoon, this correspondent found two of the four cranes lying idle after unloading import containers.

"Arrival of export containers at the terminal is too slow because shipping agents call for those at their convenient times," said a high official of Saif Powertec, which has been given the charge of container handling at the CCT.

Tarafder Ruhul Amin, managing director of Saif Powertec, admitted that there are some difficulties at the



PHOTO: STAR

The demolished structure at the weekend retreat of Krishak Sramik Janata League President Abdul Kader Siddiqui set up on 21 acres of vested property at Silimpur in Tangail.

Detention of 6 BNP, AL leaders declared illegal

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday declared illegal the detention of six BNP and Awami League (AL) leaders under the Special Powers Act.

They are former state minister for civil aviation and tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin, former BNP lawmaker Mosaddak Ali Fala, former AL minister Engr Mosharrar Hossain, AL president's APS Dr Awlad Hossain, Chittagong BNP leader Dastagir Chowdhury and Chittagong Port CBA leader Nurullah Bahar.

Making "absolute" the habeas corpus rules issued earlier, a division bench comprising Justice MA Wahhab Mian and Justice M Emdadul Huq passed the orders.

The court asked the government to release the six forthwith if they are not wanted in any other case.

The court, however, held back orders on the detention of Awami Swechchasebok League General Secretary Pankaj Debnath and Aditi Sengupta, an officer of Channel-1, a private TV channel run by Giasuddin Al-Mamun, after completing the hearings.

M Amir-ul Islam, Rafique-ul Huq, Ruhul Quddus Kazal, Toufique Imam Tipu, Abul Kalam Azad and Tania Amir appeared for petitioners.

Hasina flies to US tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina flies for the US tomorrow morning on a personal visit.

Senior presidium member Zillur Rahman, who is undergoing treatment at BIRDEM Hospital, will act as the party's acting president in absence of Hasina.

The AL chief accompanied by presidium member Kazi Zafarullah and her chief security officer Maj Gen (retd) Tareq Ahmed Siddique went to the US embassy in the capital at about 8:30am yesterday to seek visa.

According to the new rules of the embassy, everyone has to give fingerprint while seeking visa.

Zafarullah told The Daily Star that they have applied for visas and hoped to get today.

He said Hasina would stay in the US for about three to four weeks to

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PHOTO: STAR

The luxurious sports utility vehicle Hummer found by the police in abandoned condition from the city's Kakrail area on Monday night.

Saarc Car Rally begins tomorrow CA to inaugurate the event at Cox's Bazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

The Saarc Car Rally 2007, which will touch all the member nations of the regional body, begins tomorrow with a view to demonstrate the commonalities in South Asia.

The month-long rally will be flagged off by Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed and it will cover a distance of around 8000 kilometres across varying terrains. Besides, a special intermediary flag off ceremony will take place at the 14th Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) summit in Delhi on April 3.

The rally, first of its kind in the region, will officially conclude at Male in the Maldives on April 14.

Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation has already brought 26 Saarc jeeps provided by Indian Tata Company in cooperation with Nitol

Motors through the Benapole port.

Four personalities from the fields of literature, culture, sports and film will comprise a team to be accompanied by four others from the print and electronic media of the Saarc countries. All the participants were supposed to arrive here by yesterday.

On the eve of the occasion, the authorities have been cleaning up the roads, lanes and drains of the town as well as painting the walls of the stadium and different hotels and motels. The district administration will also organise a seminar titled 'Apar Sombhabanar Cox's Bazar' at a local cultural centre tomorrow celebrating the event.

Security in the town has also been tightened ahead of the car rally, Deputy Commissioner Mohammed Aminul Islam said.

The rally is planned as a media and business event to highlight

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Be stringent in lending to large firms

BB asks banks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) yesterday asked commercial banks to be cautious in providing loans to large institutions and groups of companies as a recent investigation by the central bank identified some of them as bad borrowers who are not repaying previous loans.

In a circular, the central bank also directed the commercial banks to thoroughly examine the loan applications of those groups of companies who approached more than one bank for loans for the same business.

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Prayer Timing			
March 14			
	Azan	Jamaat	
Fajr	5-05	5-40	
Zohr	12-45	1-15	
Asr	4-30	4-45	
Maghrib	6-12	6-15	
Esha	7-30	8-00	
Source: Islamic Foundation			



PHOTO: STAR

A 300-kg coral fish netted from deep sea was brought to Kazir Deuri market in Chittagong yesterday. The fish will be sold today at Tk 250 a kg.

55 more deer seized

STAR REPORT

A total of 55 deer were seized in the last 48 hours from different parts of Khulna by the joint forces as part of the ongoing drive against rearing wild animals without permission.

The forces seized 28 deer after discovering a 'mini zoo' at Jabbar Bricks at Kharnia of Dumuria upazila yesterday. The kiln belongs to Satkhira Jatiya Party leader M Abdul Jabbar. Jabbar is also the owner of Sundarban Hotel in Dhaka and Hotel Park in Khulna, reports our staff correspondent in Khulna.

Earlier on Monday, the joint forces seized another 21 deer from a clinic named Dr Badsha Mia Clinic at Farazipara in Khulna sadar. The animals were handed over to forest officials yesterday.

The same day, the forces seized six more deer from an abandoned iron foundry on Baikali Road in Khalishpur thana.

Two more rare animals rescued

The Dulahazara Safari Park authorities yesterday set free two more rare species of animals, a Goral and a Sambar, to the wildlife refuge, reports our staff correspondent in Chittagong.

A joint team comprising park authorities, forest department officials and joint forces had rescued the two animals the night before from Bandarban hill district and Lohagara upazila of Chittagong district.

Sources said the Goral (antelope-like goat) was rescued from the residence of Bandarban District Council Chairman Ma Ma Ching while the female Sambar deer was retrieved from the residence of Kabir Hossain, a brick kiln owner, near Lohagara upazila headquarters.

Dr Tapan Kumar Dey, project

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CURBING PRICE HIKE BDR to set up 25 'free markets' in Dhaka

UNB, Dhaka

BDR Director General Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed yesterday said BDR will set up "free markets" at 25 places in the capital from March 23 as part of the government's efforts to stabilise the soaring prices of essentials.

The "free markets" will sell essential commodities at fair prices to help the lower and middle-income groups having hardship due to the price spiralling.

The markets will operate three days a week -- Friday, Monday and Wednesday -- from 6:00am to 12:00 noon, and will sell rice, potato, pulses, ginger, garlic and vegetables.

The BDR chief said he held several meetings with traders who assured of their cooperation in

operating the markets where farmers from Manikganj, Gazipur and surrounding areas will be able to sell their products without having to pay any charges.

In reply to a question, he said most warehouses sealed off during the crackdown have been reopened for releasing foodstuff to markets to ensure smooth supply and bring down the prices.

To another question, General Shakil said the BDR will encourage normal import from across the border but will not allow smuggling.

SENDING BACK 170 CRIMINALS FROM INDIA

The BDR chief Shakil said Delhi has assured Dhaka of looking into its proposal to send back 170 Bangladeshi criminals who took

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