

SQ Chowdhury

FROM PAGE 1 Meanwhile, former BNP MP Engineer Manzurul Ahsan Munshi was taken on a fresh police remand for three days yesterday in another extortion case.

An AL supporter filed the case accusing nine people including Salahuddin Quader with Rangunia Police Station in Chittagong on Tuesday for physical assault, mental harassment and snatching his livestock some five years back.

Shamim was sued by the ACC yesterday as he failed to submit his wealth statement within the time frame set by the ACC, while a contractor filed a case against Mamun and six others on Tuesday on charge of extorting Tk 2.4 crore from him.

Our Staff Correspondent in Chittagong reports: Mohammad Ilias of East Kurushia village under Padua Union of Rangunia in his case statement said that a gang of cadres led by detained Padua UP Chairman Nasiruddin Selim, as per instruction of Salauddin Quader, demanded Tk 2 lakh from him on February 27, 2002.

Following his denial, the gang on March 6, the same year took him to a nearby hill, tortured him and later took away five cattle and five goats from his home.

With this, the number of cases against Salauddin Quader and his gang rose to five since February 16.

Among the accused, Abu Bakkar alias Kura Bakkar (arrested by joint forces), Dallur Rahman, Ahmad Nabi, Master Aiyub, Mahmud Ullah, former Lalanagar UP chairman Rafiqul Islam Talukder (now in jail), Didarul Islam Kanchan (a convict with life term and now in jail), Shahabuddin and Nurul Islam Nuru are notorious cadres of Salauddin Quader, police sources said.

Our Narayanganj Correspondent adds: The ACC Narayanganj Office's Deputy Director Benzir Ahmed filed a graft case against Shamim Osman with Narayanganj Special Judge Abdul Kuddus Mia's Court yesterday noon.

Accepting the case, the court ordered the police to produce Shamim before it within seven days.

In the case, the ACC said that it issued a notice on February 18 asking the former AL lawmaker to submit statement of his and his family's movable and immovable properties within 72 hours.

Apart from publishing the notice in the newspapers, the ACC also hanged the notice at the gate his house at Hazi Abdul Hamid Road of Jamtalain in Narayanganj, it added.

The court has issued warrant against Shamim and set April 10 for hearing, Benzir Ahmed said.

Shamim, who is accused of misusing of power, patronising the criminals, harassing the opposition political leaders when he was an MP, had left the country along with his family after he lost the 2001 polls.

After a long stay in Canada, he returned home on December 26 after the end of BNP-Jamaat government's tenure.

CASE AGAINST MAMUN

Mir Zahir, a contractor of Mir Akter Hossain Limited construction firm, filed the extortion case against Mamun and six others with Dhanmondi Police Station on Tuesday.

The complainant said that Mamun and his six cohorts demanded Tk 3 crore from him and he had to provide them Tk 2.40 crore at different dates from January to March in 2006.

The other accused in the case are -- Obaidullah Bhuiyan, Kamruzzaman, Mahbub, Hablu, Mota Tareq and Manik.

So far four extortion cases have been lodged against Mamun who is

already in custody. The same complainant filed a Tk 53 lakh extortion yesterday for filing cases against Mamun and Harris Chowdhury, but the court asked them to place the cases today, court sources said.

Our court correspondent reports: Two ACC officials along with their lawyer appeared before the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court yesterday for filing cases against Mamun and Harris Chowdhury, but the court asked them to place the cases today, court sources said.

On February 18, the ACC had directed Mamun and Harris to submit their wealth statements within 72 hours from the date, but neither they nor any representatives on their behalf submitted the statements. The anti-graft body at a meeting on March 29 gave approval for filing of the cases, sources said.

Meanwhile, a Comilla court yesterday remanded former BNP MP Engineer Manjurul Ahsan Munshi for three days in another extortion case, reports UNB.

According to the case, Munshi, through his brother Atiquzzaman Babu, demanded Tk 10 lakh in toll from the complainant, Rafiqul Islam, when he submitted a bill of Tk 63 lakh on completion of his road construction work.

Although he gave Munshi Tk 6 lakh, Munshi was not satisfied and terminated his work, the complainant said.

On Tuesday, Munshi was sent to jail after a six-day remand in another extortion case.

NCBs falls flat

FROM PAGE 16 percent. Janata Bank realised Tk 1.66 crore or 6.4 percent against a target of Tk 25 crore.

However, the two other NCBs--Agrani Bank and Rupali Bank--performed relatively better with 46.11 and 21 percent recovery rates. Agrani Bank realised Tk 8.36 crore against Tk 18 crore target and Rupali Bank recovered Tk 7.4 crore against a target of Tk 35 crore.

The banks also recovered Tk 585 crore classified loans against a target of Tk 860 crore during the period, according to available data.

Of this, Sonali Bank realised Tk 224 crore against Tk 400 crore target, Janata Bank recovered Tk 107 crore against Tk 150 crore, Agrani Bank Tk 205 crore against Tk 250 crore and Rupali Bank realised Tk 48 crore against a target of Tk 60 crore.

The amount of Sonali Bank's classified loan rose to 24.44 percent in 2006, which was 22.53 percent in 2005. Janata Bank's classified loan also stood at 12.30 percent in 2006 from 10.87 percent in the preceding year. Classified loan of Rupali Bank was 26.03 percent in 2006, which was 17.05 percent in previous year.

Only Agrani Bank's classified loan reduced to 26.27 percent in 2006 from 28.31 percent in 2005.

The NCBs' operating costs also went up during the period though the central bank had asked the banks to reduce it by five percent.

Sonali Bank's operating expenses increased 12.99 percent, Janata Bank's 12.57 percent, Agrani's 17.89 percent and Rupali Bank's cost up by 13.55 percent in 2006 compared to those of 2005.

The NCB officials said the expenses increased because they had to implement the new pay scale fully and pay off the arrears the banks accumulated over the years.

4 Bangladeshis

FROM PAGE 1 "If the outcome is reconfirmed as positive, we will have to send blood samples to the World Health Organisation (WHO) laboratory in Cairo for a final confirmation," the source said.

The four workers were admitted to Kuwait's infectious diseases hospital with flu-like symptoms on Tuesday.

Since the outbreak of bird flu in Kuwait, 22 people have been admitted to hospital on suspicion of being infected, but later discharged after confirming they were healthy.

The four Bangladeshis were part of official teams culling and burying hundreds of thousands of chickens in Wafra, south of Kuwait City on the Saudi border.

Kuwait has culled about 1.7 million birds, most of them egg-laying chickens in four commercial poultry farms, since confirming last month an outbreak of the H5N1 strain of the bird flu virus that is dangerous to humans.

Alamgir Kabir

FROM PAGE 1 Mondol -- were recorded under Section 164 before the court of first class Magistrate Shafikul Islam in Naogaon.

In the second case filed by victim Abdul Bari of Atrai, two witnesses recorded their statements with the same court. They are Jamsed Choudhary and Sujan.

Shamsur Rahman recorded his statement in the third case filed by another torture victim Amin Uddin Sardar of the same upazila.

The witnesses also named former post and telecommunications minister Barrister Aminul Haque, former deputy minister for land Ruhul Kuddus Talukhdar Dulu, and former lawmaker Nadim Mostafa as patrons of the militants, said a senior police official quoting the statements.

Kabir was accused in the statements for masterminding various criminal activities by militants of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh including torture, extortion, collecting ransom and damaging properties, added the police official.

Police sources said, the three cases were filed with a court on December 31, 2006 and the court asked Atrai Police Station to conduct investigation. The investigation into the cases however was stalled at that time due to unavailability of witnesses.

Oriental bank

FROM PAGE 16 on April 2, Investigation Officer (IO) Syed Momin Hossain of the Criminal Investigation Department mentioned that the accused along with others misappropriated Tk 488.50 crore. So, he needs to be quizzed to find out where he deposited the money and to know the whereabouts of his accomplices, the IO added.

On March 25, Koyes Sami surrendered before a court and submitted a petition seeking bail. The court rejected the bail petition and sent him to the Dhaka Central Jail.

On January 25, the Oriental Bank filed the case with Teigaon Police Station against Oriou Group chief Obaidul Karim, Koyes Sami and 23 other present and former officials of the bank for embezzling Tk 488.5 crore.

According to the FIR (first information report), Tk 488.50 crore was misappropriated through unauthorised issuance of 369 inter-branch debit advices with the help of several officials at the Oriental Bank head office and at Bangshal, Nawabpur, Mirpur, Road and Karwan Bazar branches between 2003 and June 2006.

"Obaidul Karim, who is a close relative of some members of the bank's then board of directors, is the main beneficiary of the misappropriated money," said the FIR.

'Daylight saving'

FROM PAGE 16 formed in 2005 but it did not hold any meeting during the last two years.

The taskforce, however, held a meeting on Tuesday and decided to reschedule the master plan programme.

The meeting discussed in details when a tender for power order can be floated and which programme of the master plan can be sent to the purchase committee, the energy adviser said.

The BKMEA representatives led by its President Fazlul Haque urged the adviser to allow traders to continue production with generators on the said power-rationing day.

They also urged the government to divide the Narayanganj industrial zone in several zones and ration the power in pick hours instead of a whole day.

Fazlul Haque urged the government to take immediate initiative to recover the embezzled Tk 20,000 crore of the power sector and invest it for its development.

The BKMEA representatives sought the energy adviser's support to extend the effluent treatment plant (ETP) timeframe from eight months to one year.

The adviser asked them to place their proposals in writing so that the ministry can consult with other agencies for consideration.

The government earlier informed all industrial groups, business leaders and chambers about the whole day power rationing plan.

Nations to work for better

FROM PAGE 1 Saarc Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism.

However, the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (Safta) remained mired in the Pakistan-India trade disputes, as Pakistan's reluctance to implement the regime holds back its effectiveness.

The Delhi Declaration, almost half the size of the 53-point declaration adopted in the 13th summit in Dhaka, also emphasised the need for planning a phase-by-phase roadmap for a South Asian Economic Union and a South Asian Customs Union at the earliest.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh proposals to reduce regional telephony tariffs, greater agricultural research, environmental conservation, boosting intra-regional tourism and holding annual Saarc youth camps also received prominence in the declaration.

"We have agreed to make tangible progress in the next six months on four issues which affect our people's daily lives: water (including flood control), energy, food and the environment," Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the new Saarc chairperson, said in his closing remarks.

He said the organisation would work with international agencies to develop and implement viable cross-border regional projects.

Welcoming the five new observers who attended the Saarc summit for the first time, Manmohan said, "This manifests our common desire for Saarc to be outward looking and engaged with the world community; to be a springboard for exploiting the vast physical and intellectual resources of South Asia."

In the declaration, the eight leaders committed to adopting the Saarc Development Goals in national policy, harmonising customs procedures, greater cooperation in energy, ICT and implementing social charter.

Manmohan said, "The cooperation and accommodation that have characterised our deliberations and negotiations show that our countries are ready for a transformation of Saarc into an effective instrument of regional advancement."

"I did feel a new sense of purpose and determination among the leaders of Saarc," he said, adding, "I believe that a new dawn is breaking out over South Asia and that we are all set to fulfill the promise and vision of Saarc."

The 14th Saarc leaders' summit declaration stated that the South Asian University would be set up in New Delhi and asked an inter-governmental body to work out its details.

While the Saarc Food Bank has also been agreed to "Supplement national efforts to provide food security to the people of the region."

In an effort to combat terrorism, its funding through narcotics trafficking, and trafficking in people and illicit arms, the declaration mentioned an Indian proposal to draft a Saarc Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters.

The convention and its modalities, which might include an extradition clause, would be discussed before the second meeting of the Saarc interior/home ministers to be held in Sri Lanka in October this year.

The declaration also condemned terrorism in all its forms and called for implementation of the counter-terrorism instruments outlined in the Saarc Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism and its Additional Protocol.

The leaders also called for inclusion of the new full member Afghanistan in all Saarc plans, including the Saarc Regional Multimodal Transport Study (RMTS).

The leaders stated in the declaration that India has offered to hold a Saarc Ministers of Transport Meeting in New Delhi in 2007 to comprehensively address customs clearance, facilitation measures and transport operations among the

eight countries.

The declaration states that the SDF will bring concrete and effective benefits to South Asians and directed its quick operationalisation.

They agreed that the resources for SDF would be mobilised from within and outside the region and be consistent with the Saarc Charter. The leaders called for "early identification and implementation of regional and sub-regional projects under the SDF".

The leaders also observed the need for accelerating development of renewable energy development such as hydropower, bio-fuel, solar and wind power, which would be discussed in the South Asia Energy Dialogue to be held in Delhi in March 2007.

The Eight leaders also asked for concerted efforts to quickly implement the various initiatives under the Saarc Plan of Action on Environment.

The declaration stated, the leaders emphasised that Safta should be implemented in 'letter and spirit', but also "stressed that to realize its full potential, Safta should integrate trade in services."

They called for quick finalisation of the Agreement in the services sector, and the Agreement on Investment Promotion and Protection.

The leaders also noted the importance of implementing trade facilitation measures, especially standardisation of basic customs terms, documentation and clearing procedures.

The declaration also stated the need for harmonising technical and phyto-sanitary standards and their trade-friendly implementation to boost intra-Saarc trade.

They also welcomed the establishment of a Saarc Standards Coordination Board as a precursor to the Saarc Regional Standards Body.

The leaders also asked for the World Trade Organization to show commitment for a successful conclusion to the Doha Round.

The leaders also stressed the need for focusing on women empowerment and participation in decision-making processes.

Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom spoke on behalf of the Saarc leaders and appreciated their contribution to the summit.

Bangladesh Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukhat Aziz, Sri Lanka President Mahinda Rajapaksa, Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai, Bhutan Prime Minister Khando Wangchuk and Nepal Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala attended the concluding.

ALL BANGLADESHI PROPOSALS ADOPTED

All of Bangladesh's proposals in the pre-summit and the leaders' summit were accepted and were prominent in the Delhi declaration adopted at the end of the 14th Saarc summit.

Dhaka's proposals focused on sowing seeds for future cooperation and Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed outlined his vision in his speech at the summit's opening on Tuesday.

Fakhruddin's concern over global climate change was also reflected in the declaration, as it stated that the leaders "expressed deep concern over global climate change and the consequent rise of sea level and its impact on the lives and livelihoods in the region."

One of Bangladesh's proposals, greater cooperation in environment, was also adopted by the declaration. The leaders noted the need for deepening collaborations to address arsenic contamination of groundwater, desertification and melting of glaciers and assistance to the affected.

The leaders emphasised the need for assessing and managing its risks and impacts and called for cooperation in early forecasting, warning and monitoring, sharing of knowledge and pursuing climate resilient development in South Asia.

number will increase.

On businessmen's allegation against the evaluation of the pre-shipment inspection companies, he said the government has an agreement with these companies until April 2008. "Whether to keep these companies or not will be decided after that deadline," Badiur said.

The NBR chairman appreciated the businessmen's proposal for auditing these companies and assured them of examining the proposal.

According to its pre-budget proposal, the DCCI recommends simplifying the tax paying procedure so that people are encouraged to pay tax. The DCCI also recommends bringing consistency and transparency in paying income tax, wealth tax, corporate tax, Vat, utility tax and municipality tax.

"If any company profits less or faces loss causing less income than the previous year, tax officials hesitate to accept the return, which is totally unjustified," the DCCI president said in his speech. He urged the authorities concerned to change the situation.

Another Bangladesh proposal to commission a team of regional experts to identifying collective action in this regard was also mentioned in the declaration.

Another Bangladesh proposal to reduce telecom tariff to improve the standard of telephone services in the region was also mentioned in the declaration. Sources said Dhaka had been firm on the particular proposal despite initial Indian resistance.

"They (the leaders) agreed to take steps to facilitate rationalisation of telecom tariff on a reciprocal basis," the declaration read, adding, "National and regional telecom infrastructure should be upgraded to boost people-to-people connectivity in the region."

Bangladesh's focus on sowing the seeds of people-to-people contact was further boosted by the mention of Bangladesh's offer to host a Saarc Youth Camp in 2007, mentioned in Fakhruddin's speech at the summit inauguration.

The leaders also took on another people-to-people issue raised by Bangladesh on boosting of intra-regional tourism, as the declaration stated that the leaders acknowledge the importance of "increased exchanges, particularly among the youth, civil society, and parliamentarians."

More specifically, the leaders agreed with Dhaka's proposal to take measures for charging uniform entry fees from citizens of Saarc member states for archaeological and heritage sites.

Another Dhaka proposal to expand the Saarc Scholarship Scheme in ICT and related areas was also directed to be instituted by the leaders.

Dhaka, along with Colombo, has also been campaigning for a greater focus on agriculture, which was also adopted in the declaration yesterday.

The leaders "stressed that South Asian agriculture must benefit from collaborative efforts within and among Saarc countries in developing an effective agriculture research, extension, farmers' linkage and exchange of farm technology."

Corruption

FROM PAGE 16 In the GD, police mentioned that during the alliance government rule Tarique, his friends and business partners earned a huge amount through unbridled corruption.

Tarique also amassed a huge amount by taking commission from people, who earned illegal money by appointing many in the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, according to the GD.

Moreover, he siphoned off crores of taka which he earned through manipulating tenders using his, other family members' and business partners' influences in purchasing CNG-run auto-rickshaws, setting up power plants and manufacturing electric poles which caused huge losses to the government, reads the GD.

EXTORTION CASE

Another Dhaka court will today hear on charge framing against Tarique and his close aide Mian Nuruddin Apu in connection with a Tk 1 crore extortion case filed with Gulshan Police Station on March 8.

Metropolitan Magistrate Abdur Rouf Khan of the Speedy Trial Court-2 will hear on the issue and later pass an order whether the charges will be framed against them or not.

The investigation officer submitted the charge sheet against Tarique and Apu before the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate showing 12 people as prosecution witnesses on March 18.

Tarique was also shown arrested in connection with the Tk 81 lakh extortion case filed with Gulshan Police Station on March 27.

The joint forces arrested Tarique at his mother former prime minister Khaleida Zia's cantonment home on March 8.

He is now serving a month's detention in Dhaka Central Jail.

CEC asks govt

FROM PAGE 1 hold dialogue due to the embargo on indoor politics."

The CEC also said he discussed with the law adviser the planned electoral reforms for holding the stalled ninth parliamentary election in a free and fair manner.

In addition to the restriction on political activities following the proclamation of emergency on January 11, the caretaker government on March 7 slapped a ban on all sorts of political activities including indoor politics, processions and meetings across the country until further order.

In such a situation, the CEC met the law adviser at his secretariat office.

The council of advisers may discuss the issue (CEC's proposal) at its meeting scheduled for Saturday, the law adviser told newsmen. "The government will have to consider this proposal because it is the government which can allow indoor politics."

Mainul however said the caretaker government is working for a meaningful change of the existing pattern of politics. "We want good leadership to emerge instead of the old ones."

Iran frees Britons

FROM PAGE 16 captive Nathan Summers, said it was "brilliant news."

"It's been a long, long 13 days," he told Britain's Sky News.

Iranian state media said the 15, who were seized while patrolling the northern Gulf on March 23, had "shouted for joy" when the news of their release was broken.

The standoff had further damaged ties between Tehran and the West already frayed by Iran's controversial nuclear programme, and had sent jitters through world oil and financial markets.

Oil prices -- which have surged to near seven month highs over the crisis fell on the news of the release, while US share prices opened slightly higher.

However, Iran's headline president -- who had postponed the conference from Tuesday -- lashed out at Britain over its handling of the 13-day crisis and decorated a Revolutionary Guards commander who had seized the Britons in the northern Gulf.

He also said the British government had promised in a letter not to repeat the incident.

"The Blair government chose the path of media hype and sent the issue to the UN Security Council," Ahmadinejad said. "The British people can ask its government what the British soldiers are doing in Iraq or in Iranian waters," he said.

His announcement came after Iran had applauded a "change of tone" from Britain following talks between top security official Ali Larjani and Blair's chief foreign policy advisor Sir Nigel Sheinwald late on Tuesday.

Iran had insisted that they key to resolving the crisis was an admission from Britain that the sailors and marines did intrude into Iranian territorial waters when they were seized on March 23.

Britain maintains the group was carrying out routine anti-smuggling operations in Iraqi waters in line with a UN mandate, but Iran says the sailors' Global Positioning System (GPS) devices show they intruded on Iranian waters.

The latest developments coincided with the release in Baghdad of an Iranian diplomat kidnapped in Iraq in early February. Iran had blamed US forces in the country for the abduction.

Iranian state media also said five Iranian officials captured by US forces in northern Iraq in January and accused of seeking to stir trouble were expected to receive their first visit by an Iranian diplomat.

US President George W. Bush welcomed the release of the British naval personnel but denied there was any link between the sudden granting of consular access to the five Iranians held in Iraq.

The crisis had come at a perilous time for Iran's relations with the West, with the United States refusing to rule out military action over the Iranian nuclear programme and the United Nations imposing tough new sanctions.

Ahmadinejad also reaffirmed his oft repeated position that Iran was ready to negotiate with the United States but only if Washington changes its position.

"Today we have no objection to relations (with Washington) but this requires US action," Ahmadinejad told reporters.

The United States has said it will

Eng peg

FROM PAGE 1 bowled by Sajid Mahmood for 25 in the eighth over with the score on 37.

Kumar Sangakkara was then caught by Paul Collingwood off Mahmood for 17 with the score on 69 off the first ball of the 19th over.

Earlier, England skipper Michael Vaughan won the toss and elected to field on a weary wicket.

Sri Lanka were unchanged from the side that beat West Indies by 113 runs on Sunday and England went in with the same team that defeated Ireland by 48 runs on Friday.

Tharanga struck only two boundaries in his 103-ball knock which basically anchored the innings after Jayasuriya's departure. Sangakkara's cup of woes continued as he again fell cheaply.

Sri Lanka's natural born aggressors were restricted by a canny opening spell from Mahmood, and clever field placings by Vaughan, as England rose to the occasion at Antigua with two wickets in the first 25 overs.

The big fear for England's bowlers yesterday was whether the nightmares of last summer -- when Sri Lanka drubbed them 5-0, saving particular scorn for Mahmood -- would haunt them. It did not as James Anderson and Mahmood, the two opening bowlers, were tight, controlled and accurate in their opening spells on an odd-looking sub-continent like pitch.

Jayasuriya, Sri Lanka's bristling opener who on the day became the most-capped ODI player, struggled initially before opening his vast locker of shots, hammering past square and flicking a few leg-side gifts England offered through midwicket.

Sri Lanka, the 1996 champions, currently have four points to lie third in the Super Eights and England only two after losing to fellow qualifiers New Zealand in the group stage.

talk to Iran but only if the Islamic republic suspends uranium enrichment, something it has hitherto vehemently refused to do.

In a separate affair, local officials denied US reports that a missing former US FBI agency had disappeared while on a private visit to Iran's southern resort island of Kish, state media reported.

The French foreign ministry also announced that a French researcher was being held against his will in Iran after police seized his passport while he was travelling in a province bordering Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Obama raises 25mi dollars on Hillary's heels

AFP, Washington

Democrat newcomer Barack Obama raked in 25 million dollars for his presidential bid in three months, almost matching Hillary Clinton and dashing for now her hopes of an easy path to the party's nomination.

"The Obama for America campaign today announced that it will report raising at least 25 million dollars