

Mamun confesses to extortion

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Giasuddin Al Mamun, detained close friend and business partner of BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, yesterday confessed to his involvement in an extortion of Tk 2.40 crore.

Mamun was also placed on a three-day remand yesterday in connection with a case filed for extorting Tk 10.31 crore from a businessman.

Heavily guarded by police, Mamun was taken to the chamber of Metropolitan Magistrate ABM Abdul Fattah around 2:30pm. The magistrate recorded his statement for around two hours.

Sources said Mamun told the magistrate that he along with five others extorted the amount from a construction firm owner sometime between January 8 and April 3 last year. No more details of his statement could be learnt.

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Engr Mosharraf, 5 others charged with graft

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against detained Awami League leader and former housing and public works minister engineer Mosharraf Hossain along with five others in connection with a graft case filed against them six years back.

The other accused in the case are former secretary Jagannath Dey, joint secretary Yakub Ali, deputy secretary KM Abul Kalam, senior assistant secretary Chitta Ranjan Das and administrative officer Vares Ali -- all serving under the housing and public works ministry at that time.

All the accused including Mosharraf pleaded not guilty and demanded justice before the court after Judge Malik Abdullah Al Amin of the Special Court for Dhaka Division read out the charges against them.

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28 'militants' held across country

STAR REPORT

Law enforcers on Saturday and Friday night arrested 28 Islamist militants and suspected militants at Bogra, Tangail, Pabna, Meherpur and Jamalpur.

Bogra police arrested eight people including Abdul Mannan, brother-in-law of executed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) leader Abdul Awal, from different places in Bogra Sadar and in Gabtoli upazilas on Saturday for their alleged involvement in militancy, our staff correspondent in Bogra reports.

Awal was hanged along with five

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35 killed in series of Baghdad blasts

2 UK helicopters crash

AFP, Baghdad

Insurgent bomb attacks massacred 35 people in Shia shopping areas of Baghdad yesterday, while two British helicopters crashed after an apparent mid-air collision that killed two crew members.

Eighteen people died when a booby-trapped car blew up outside a restaurant and a second ripped through a market in the southern Al-Shurta al-Arabaa suburb of Iraq's capital, in bloody defiance of a two-month-old security crackdown.

"Of those killed 10 are men, five women and three children," said a medic at Yarmuk Hospital, adding that 35 wounded were receiving treatment, among them more

women and children.

As the skeleton of burnt wreckage still smouldered, a bus rigged with bombs exploded in a downtown shopping district in Karrada, killing at least 11 people and wounding 18, defence and security sources said.

In the northern and predominantly Shia district of Ul-Utaifiyah, a suicide bomber boarded a minibus and blew himself up, killing six people and wounding 10, said another security official on condition of anonymity.

Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, recently returned from a tour of Asian economic giants Japan and South Korea in a bid to drum up investment for his

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Rajuk engineer held while taking bribe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel yesterday captured a Rajuk engineer in the act of taking bribe from officials of a private firm for the approval of a construction plan of a 15-storey commercial building.

From a tip-off by the private firm, a team of Rab-2 led by Assistant Superintendent of Police Babul Akter raided the office of M Muzaffar Uddin, engineer of Rajuk's Zone-4, on the first floor of Rajuk Bhaban around 2:30pm.

Rab claimed they found him taking a bag containing Tk 5 lakh from the officials of Technoheaven Ltd, a firm at 70, Green Road.

Muzaffar, taken into Rab custody for interrogation, however denied the allegation.

"If I were involved in the incident, the money would have been

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Slain judge's family live in fear

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Biswanath Pandey, elder brother of killed judge Jagannath Pandey, lodged a general diary with Patharghata Police Station of Barguna district on Friday mentioning security concerns of their family members.

In the GD Biswanath said the killings of his brother judge Jagannath Pandey and another judge Shahid Sohel Ahmed have made them feel utterly insecure.

Six out of seven JMB killers, top terrorists and masterminds awarded death were executed while JMB regional commander

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HC rejects UZ poll officers' prayer

UNB, Dhaka

The much-talked-about upazila election officers, allegedly appointed on political considerations by the immediate past government, will have to appear in a qualifying test as the High Court yesterday rejected their writ petition.

The order of rejection came when the counsel for the petitioners prayed for accepting the writ petition that challenged the decision of the Election Commission for holding the qualifying test of 320 such upazila election officers.

On December 26, 2005, the government appointed them thana/upazila election officers. It was widely believed that they were appointed on 'political considerations' and in violation of the rules.

After the reconstituted caretaker government headed by Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed took

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PHOTO: STAR

Students of the Institute of Fine Arts, Dhaka University, bring out a colorful procession in the capital on Saturday to celebrate Pchela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla New Year 1414.

Extortion case against Hasina 'peculiar'

Says Mainul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the extortion case against Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina 'peculiar', Law and Information Adviser Barrister Mainul Hossain has said that the caretaker government would examine the case and take action only if the allegations are proved to be true.

"Why such a case will be filed against a former prime minister? Rather, it should have been a corruption case," the law adviser said adding that due to this oddity, the

national task force will examine the allegation. He was speaking at the BBC Bangladesh Sanglap on Saturday.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) would verify the corruption charges against the AL chief, Mainul said.

He also stressed the need for bringing reforms in the rules of First Information Report (FIR) so that the cases filed by the government get more importance over the

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Bird flu-hit farms to get compensation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will compensate poultry farms, which incurred losses due to culling of bird-flu infected chickens.

The government will pay prices of culled fowls to the owners of affected farms, Fisheries and Livestock Adviser CS Karim told the leaders of poultry farm association yesterday.

The prices would be fixed after consultation with the stakeholders, Karim added.

"The process would start as soon as the affected areas will be

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Tapan for quick decision on Tata proposal, but not for special facility

UNB, Dhaka

Power and Energy Adviser Tapan Chowdhury yesterday said the Indian Tata Group should not be given special facilities in its proposed investment in Bangladesh.

He, however, said the government should make its position clear on the investment proposals within next three to six months.

"We should clearly say 'yes' or 'no' about Tata -- this should not be kept hanging for indefinite time," he told reporters at his ministry.

If any special facilities are given to Tata, the adviser said, other international investors will deserve the similar facilities and the government will need to maintain that for the sake of a level-playing field for all.

Tapan Chowdhury was also very conservative on the issue of natural gas supply to Tata Group under long-time security package and lower gas price.

He said the government should not accept any proposal securing a long-term gas supply like 12 years since the country's gas reserves are limited.

The adviser appreciated the immediate-past BNP-led government's secretary committee's

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Prayer Timing		
April 16		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-35	5-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-24	6-28
Esha	7-45	8-15
Source: Islamic Foundation		

World Bank divided on Wolfowitz's future

AP, Washington

The controversy involving World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz and his involvement in a huge pay increase awarded to a close female friend moves to center stage Sunday as the bank's policy-steering committee meets.

Wolfowitz, who has been working behind the scenes at weekend meetings of finance ministers and central bankers to drum up support to stay in his post, presents reports to the bank's Development Committee and participates in its closing news conference.

The United States, Britain and France, whose governments have a major role in bank operations, said it was important to await the outcome of the World Bank's board of directors' investigation into Wolfowitz's actions.

But Britain said Saturday the controversy had damaged the World Bank. Development minister Hilary Benn failed to give wholehearted backing to Wolfowitz, who has been under fire since it emerged that he secured a \$193,590 job for his companion, Shaha Reza, at the State

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Charge sheets in graft cases soon: Mashhud

UNB, Dhaka

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury yesterday said charge sheets would be submitted soon in the cases already filed by the anti-graft watchdog.

"We'll submit charge sheets in

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