

Special court

FROM PAGE 1

yesterday heard arguments of the prosecution and set today for delivery of verdict.

The prosecution said they are able to prove the allegations against the accused and prayed highest punishment for Harris.

Earlier, the prosecution produced five witnesses before the court. They are Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Deputy Director (DD) Abu Sayeed, ACC Field Officer Khandaker Akhteruzzaman, caretaker of Harris' neighbour's house, Abdul Hakim, Harris's cousin Fakrudin Chowdhury and caretaker of Harris' another neighbour's house, Alfazuddin.

On April 30, Judge Momin Ullah of the Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court framed charges against Harris in his absence.

The ACC DD filed the case on April 5 for not submitting wealth statement to the commission within the stipulated time.

In response, the court issued an arrest warrant and ordered the authorities concerned to send its copy to the police station concerned.

On February 18, the ACC asked Harris to submit his wealth statement within 72 hours, but neither Harris nor any of his representatives complied with the instructions.

MAMUN ARMS CASE

Judge Mohammad Azizul Haq of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court yesterday framed charges against Giasuddin Al Mamun, close friend of BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, in a case filed for possessing illegal firearms and ammunition.

Mamun pleaded not guilty and demanded justice after the charges were read out to him.

Earlier on April 26, Cantonment police submitted the charge sheet against Mamun to the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka showing 12 people as prosecution witnesses.

Officer-in-Charge of Cantonment Police Station Shahrum Khan, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, pressed charges against Mamun, who was arrested from his Banani DOHS residence on March 26.

Police seized a 22 bore Spanish pistol and eight bullets from his house.

Later, an arms case was filed against Mamun and he was placed on a four-day remand.

HAFIZ IBRAHIM CASE

The same court yesterday framed charges against detained former BNP lawmaker Hafiz in a case filed for possessing illegal firearms.

Hafiz demanded justice and pleaded not guilty when the court read out the charges to him.

Gulshan police pressed charges against Hafiz on March 18.

The joint forces seized a sword and a knife from his Gulshan residence on February 27.

NASIR CASE

A special court yesterday recorded statement of Abdullah Al Zahid, complainant of a graft case filed against detained former state minister Mir Nasir and his son, Mir Helal.

After recording the statement, Judge AK Roy of the Second Special Court fixed today for next hearing of the case.

ACC DDs Sharmin Ferdousi and Abdullah Al Zahid, also the IOs of the case, submitted the charge sheet of the case filed with Gulshan Police Station on March 6.

According to the charge sheet, the two accused accumulated assets worth over Tk 24.39 crore illegally.

Helal also transferred Tk 2.83 crore from different bank accounts following his father's arrest, the IOs added.

AMAN CASE

Judge Firoz Alam of the First Special Court yesterday adjourned hearing of the graft case against former state minister for labour and employment Aman and his wife Sabera Aman until today following a time petition by the prosecution lawyers.

The adjournment came since Sabera was not produced before the court due to her illness. However, the complainant appeared to give his deposition.

The case was filed against them with Kafur Police Station on March 6 accusing them of amassing huge wealth through illegal means.

ACC DDs Abdullah Al Zahid and Jibon Krishna Roy, also the IOs of the case, submitted the charge sheet of the case.

In the charge sheet, the IOs said Aman and his wife amassed properties valued over Tk 10 crore illegally.

The DDs accused Sabera of giving false information in her statement to the anti-graft body.

ntvMD REMANDED

Metropolitan Magistrate Jagannath Das Khokon yesterday placed ntv managing director (MD) Enayetur Rahman Bappi on a two-day remand in a fraud case.

On the other hand, owner of Sky Autos, Istiaq Sadiq, was not granted any remand since he was not produced before it.

Earlier, the ACC on May 16 sought a three-day remand prayer to interrogate Bappi and Sadiq in the case filed on March 17 with Pallabi Police Station in connection with evading tax during import of a luxury car by abusing duty-free car import privilege of an MP.

In his remand prayer, the IO Monam Hossain, also assistant director of the ACC, mentioned that they were directly involved with fraud and they need to be quizzed to find out vital clue to the incident.

DIPJAL ARMS CASE

Another Dhaka court yesterday adjourned hearing on charge framing against Dhaka City Corporation Ward Commissioner Monowar Hossain Dipjal and his wife Rumana Dipjal in an arms case.

Judge Mohamamd Azizul Haq of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court set May 27 for next hearing of the case.

The IO pressed charges against them on March 16 showing 12 people as prosecution witnesses.

Dipjal is still at large while Rumana is now in jail custody. The joint forces seized huge arms and ammunition from their Mirpur house on March 8.

Hasina

FROM PAGE 1

you just delay and delay -- it's a delaying tactic. But they should not play this tactic anymore, people are not fools," she said in an interview with Indian TV channel CNN/IBN.

Hasina said that both her and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's wealth statements should be made public.

The AL chief questioned the military-backed government's stance regarding corruption. "Their stand against corruption at first -- we supported that, but where is that stand now? There are so many corrupt people moving around."

Hasina also observed that after 1975, the military rule had destroyed each and every institution, including the Election Commission and the judiciary. "This caretaker government should allow the people to choose their own government," she added.

terday afternoon.

The probe team also includes a Rajshahi metropolitan magistrate and Rajshahi Rab second-in-command Major Karim.

"We are interrogating them as they were primarily identified to be involved in the operation, they were not closed or suspended," Shamsuzzaman said.

He, however, declined to name the four saying the matter is still under investigation.

Police, however, recorded a murder case against Rab personnel and others involved on Saturday night and started its own investigation.

Piarul Islam Manjur, victim's brother, lodged the case alleging that Zahurul Islam, Basar Ali and Ali Hossain of Chapainabagan had Majnu killed by the Rab personnel.

Piarul, also a college teacher, told newsmen that a Rab official requested him to settle the matter through compromise at Boalia Police Station compound Saturday night as he went there to file the case.

"We were looking for kidnapper Kuddus Ali Mondol, your brother died accidentally. We are sorry, please make a compromise," Piarul quoted the Rab official as saying.

As Piarul refused to settle the matter and told him that he wanted justice as per the law of the land, the Rab official became angry and threatened him with dire consequences.

"I read in newspapers about the killings by Bangla Bhai's [Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh kingpin Siddiqui Islam who was recently executed] people in Bagmara in 2004 ... now I am trying to contemplate whether there are any difference between the actions of Bangla Bhai and Rab," Piarul commented before journalists in front of RMCH morgue yesterday.

Boalia police also recorded a kidnapping case filed by Zahurul Islam Saturday night.

AL expresses

FROM PAGE 1

However, both the leaders said they will discuss the matter with the EC after the withdrawal of the restriction on indoor politics.

The EC on Saturday disclosed the proposal for introducing a system for casting "no votes" in the parliamentary election to express voters' lack of confidence in the contesting candidates in a constituency. The EC draft of electoral reform proposals said the number of the "no votes" cast will not affect the election results and the statistics might be used only for academic purpose.

The EC also proposed that every registered political party must have specific provision in its constitution for including at least 33 percent women as office bearers of its central and other committees.

Both the two AL and BNP leaders agreed in principle that they want participation of more women in the party politics and parliament.

But Syed Ashraf told The Daily Star, "We always want more woman leadership in politics, parliament and the party, but it will not be right to set a framework-like the 33 percent binding-for that."

MKANwarsaid, "The constitution of the BNP has provisions for keeping 10 percent women and the number can be increased through discussion."

The two leaders said the government should withdraw the ban on indoor politics so that the political parties can give their opinions on such important issues.

"Let the Election Commission first discuss the issues with us [political parties], then we will see, analyse and examine those and give our decisions," said Ashraf.

AL to go tough

FROM PAGE 1

is the only party that believes in reforms and practises democracy. He said, "Reforms have been a continuous process in the Awami League since its formation."

Jalil said, "We first placed the reform proposals before the nation. We hope the caretaker government will take necessary steps to implement those proposals" which will restore and strengthen the country's democracy.

He said decisions on the reform issue will be taken in the party forum under Sheikh Hasina's leadership who is the "symbol of unity" in the party.

The AL leader said the caretaker government should transfer power to an elected government as early as possible through a free and fair election and help the country move towards democracy.

Refuting Law and Information Adviser Mainul Hossain's views on politics and politicians, Jalil said the politics still prevailing in the country is dynamic and transparent and worthy of leading the nation.

Mainul on Saturday said undemocratic politics and leadership have led the country's democracy towards "near-collapse".

Jalil said, "I think the country's politics is still transparent and dynamic... And through this politics, democracy could be strengthened and the country could be developed. There cannot be any alternative to this politics."

Referring to the price-hike of commodities, he said people's sufferings will aggravate if the government does not take necessary steps to keep the prices under control.

"It is essential that the caretaker government take immediate steps to control price spiralling," he said, adding that when in power the AL had shown how to control price hike.

Rejoinder

FROM PAGE 16

the revised DPP.

The rejoinder also contradicted with the amount of money as stated in the report for purchasing vehicles for the project. It said original allocation for purchase of vehicles was Tk 1.35 crore and allocation in approved DPP was Tk 2.43 crore.

"The vehicles were purchased within the limit of the approved allocation," it added.

Our reply:

The Daily Star report was based on the IMED's special investigation into the 16 town power distribution project (second phase - revised), and the investigation report was placed before the National Economic Council (NEC) meeting on April 30.

The IMED report categorically stated that the project spent money without approval of the authorities and it pointed out yearly additional spending in the project. The IMED team described such spending as 'serious violation of financial discipline' and 'irresponsibility'.

"The project did not notify the Power Division or the Planning Commission about additional spending since 2000-2001, until preparing a revised project in 2004," the investigation report says.

We stand by our report. However, we regret an error in the report regarding spending against purchase of vehicles. We erroneously reported that the IMED inquiry team found Tk 2.8 crore additional spending for purchase of vehicles for the project, but the actual figure was Tk 1.8 crore.

The IMED report also found that PDB spent about 80 per cent more than the original allocation for purchasing cars and the cars were used by officers and persons who were not involved in the project -- such as, Prime Minister's Office, Chairman of the PDB and Power Division. Such use of project vehicles is direct violation of existing rules, the IMED report pointed out.

Investment package

FROM PAGE 16

oil company in the country. He has recently been assigned to lead Chevron's Nigeria operation.

Andrew believes that the country's gas extracted from land based discoveries cannot be exported due to high local demands. He said high domestic demands will require expansion of the Bibiyana field between 2011 and 2015.

But his company had refrained from developing Bibiyana gas field after its discovery in 1999 arguing that Bangladesh market would not be able to absorb it and therefore it had to be exported. Andrew's leadership changed the perspective in early 2003 and Bibiyana is now serving the country.

Unless there is a major off-shore discovery, the issue of gas export is unlikely to return, he said.

"If Bangladesh is lucky, there will be a big off-shore discovery. In case of such a big discovery, both the company and the country need to look at the best way to use it... only then the country might consider exports," he pointed out.

He believes that the disagreement over the Magurchara blowout compensation claim between his company and the government will not affect the relationship.

"All legitimate claims have been paid. There is one outstanding claim by the environment ministry and we did our assessment through a third party initiative... There is now an ongoing discussion between Chevron and the Ministry of Environment on this matter," Fawthrop pointed out. "This is just one disagreement. We have resolved many issues over the last nine years."

Andrew Fawthrop's advice to his successor is that he should work closely with the government and all stakeholders in an onshore area. "We have a strong national workforce to depend on and we should continue our corporate responsibility programmes (CRP)," he said adding that such programmes are not just important for the communities, but also for the sustainability of the oil company. He noted that Chevron's CRP is continuously being evaluated and it has been receiving very strong feedback.

"It takes time to make a community comfortable about a foreign company. Now people smile at us and shake hands," he added.

BIBIYANA

The Bibiyana field is Chevron's biggest stake in Bangladesh. With an initial assumption that this field has a reserve of 2.4 trillion cubic feet (tcf), Chevron set up a gas processing plant of 600 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) capacity. Its contract with Petrobangla outlines a supply of 500 mmcf.

Chevron invested a total of 250 million US dollars to develop the field that started gas production from March this year at the rate of 200 mmcf. It is now producing around 300 mmcf from five wells with 2000 litres of condensate. Chevron expects to produce 600 mmcf by August.

Fawthrop noted that all the drilling at Bibiyana will be completed by June this year. "Then we will prepare a new [reserve assessment] model -- which will take three to four months. Then we will have a good idea about the proven reserve of this field," he said adding, "We believe Bibiyana is bigger than 2.4 tcf. After we get new information, we can sit with Petrobangla to discuss further development plan for the field."

The launching of the Bibiyana field now gives the chance for all the gas fields of the country to temporarily shut in one by one to run detailed analysis programme. "Later this year, we will shut in the Jalalabad and Moulavibazar fields to run detailed analyses of the size of the fields," he added.

Before Bibiyana came into operation, the gas fields could not afford to rest for a day even for such an important work, which would immensely help improve gas supply management of the country.

The Jalalabad field has been operating for eight years and the one in Moulavibazar for two years. According to Petrobangla, Jalalabad

has a proven reserve of 1.1 tcf and Moulavibazar 0.4 tcf.

Fawthrop said after completing a seismic survey in Block 7, Chevron is now analysing the data to detect potential drilling sites. This means Chevron will 'absolutely continue to stay in Bangladesh'. "Chevron dismisses quitting from Bangladesh," Fawthrop asserted.

COST ISSUES

It is often said that gas produced by international oil companies is very costly, but Chevron's gas from Jalalabad costs only 98 US cents per unit and the prices for gas from the fields of Moulavibazar and Bibiyana are also projected to be around a dollar in the long run.

Fawthrop claims that with 90 percent of Chevron's workforce being local, the company's operating cost is among some of the lowest in the country. "Our fields were operating at more than 99.6 percent efficiency last year," he said.

Explaining why Chevron's Bangladesh operation is cost effective he said, "Chevron runs three fields and one exploration block from one office. This contributes to low cost operation."

Besides, as Chevron's Jalalabad field's cost recovery phase is over, the cost of its gas has become very cheap.

The Moulavibazar field was developed at a very low cost of 42 million dollars and only a small part of the investment remains to be recovered. "Our daily cost may be higher than that of Bapex. But we implemented this project very fast and made ourselves competitive with Bapex," he pointed out.

Chevron also relinquished all areas under blocks 12, 13 and 14 except for the three producing gas fields.

"We are very pleased with our performance," Fawthrop said adding, "We don't believe in unnecessary spending to make our cost recoverable investment higher. We believe that profit is better than cost recovery."

Lauding Petrobangla's technical expertise, he emphasised continued training of all technical and auditing staff to keep them updated on the latest global practices.

Abul Hossain

FROM PAGE 16

February 2, 2007. However, he deposited 90 bullets of the pistol to the same police station on February 14 and took a receipt for that from the station.

Sub-inspector Jahirul Islam of the police station on February 16 lodged a case under Arms Act and had an arrest warrant issued against him charging him with possessing ammunition illegally.

Abul Hossain Khan was granted an ad interim bail by the High Court till the filing of the charge sheet which was submitted on March 23, 2007. The court accepting the charge sheet summoned the accused before the court on March 30, 2007.

As Abul Hossain failed to appear before the court, the court framed charges against him on April 10, 2007 and continued the trial of the case in Abul Hossain's absence. It had fixed yesterday for examining witnesses.

Abul Hossain, a former lawmaker from Barisal-6 constituency, surrendered before the court yesterday and prayed for bail.

Judge ATM Musa ordered him to be sent to jail as the case was filed under non-bailable section of the Arms Act and listed under Emergency Power Rules.

The court also recorded the statements of four witnesses, including three policemen's testimonies, yesterday and adjourned the proceedings till tomorrow. According to the rules, the trial has to be completed within 45 working days.

The same court is also trying him in connection with misappropriating corrugated iron sheets which were meant for relief only.

84 more fake students

FROM PAGE 1

they are not providing the admission papers of two suspected students, whose guardians might be influential.

The university probe committee was formed on October 10, 2006 in the wake of allegations of inconsistencies in the admission papers of 11 students of 2004-2005 sessions of public administration department.

The committee found 30 fake admission cases in the public administration, economics and international relations departments in 2004-2005 sessions and submitted a report to the syndicate. The committee later found 46 more such cases.

Suspecting more cases of fraud in admission, the deans of all faculties and directors of all institutions were directed on March 15 to check the students' admission papers and submit reports within a month.

The latest findings at IR department and social welfare institute were the outcome of that direction.

The university probe committee found involvement of two consultancy firms with the admission fraud and sent their names to the law enforcement agencies for taking legal actions, sources said but they did not disclose the names of the firms for the sake of investigation.

The university authorities sent show-cause notices to the 76 students of different sessions identified to have followed fraudulent process in admission asking why their

Nazmul Huda's brother held with pistol

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested Kamrul Huda, younger brother of detained former minister barrister Nazmul Huda, with a pistol and two rounds of bullet in Mymensingh on Saturday night.

Kamrul was arrested from a microbus, which was stopped by the Rab members at 10:30pm in front of Brac office at Raghunathpur on Dhaka-Halaghat highway as part of their routine checking.

Kamrul's friends managed to flee. Rab recovered the Italian-made pistol and bullets from a bag found inside the microbus and took Kamrul for questioning.

During the interrogation, Kamrul identified himself as younger brother of Nazmul Huda. He also said he was absconding since the arrest of his elder brother.

Rab later handed Kamrul over to Halaghat police, who produced him before a first class magistrate court with a five-day remand prayer. The court granted three-day remand.

The joint forces arrested former communication minister Barrister Nazmul Huda from his Dhanmondi residence on February 4 on graft charges.

Khaleda sick

FROM PAGE 16

condition however could not be known.

Meanwhile, BNP on Tuesday announced that its chairperson along with some of her family members would go to Singapore for treatment and return by the end of the month.

After taking all preparations for going to Singapore the BNP chairperson cancelled her scheduled trip twice, once reportedly because of sudden deterioration of her physical condition, and the second time because of an extortion case being filed against her younger son Arafat Rahman.

Chittagong Test

FROM PAGE 16

Rain is also expected today which will make action uncertain at the venue.

"The weather report we received from the met office clearly suggests that there will be more rain. Another spell of rain will be enough to make the ground unfit for the fourth day," informed curator Shaiful Alam.

India were well placed at 384 for 6 after Sachin Tendulkar and Sourav Ganguly caressed centuries. Wicketkeeper-batsman Mahendra Dhoni was batting on 36 off only 35 balls having hit six boundaries while Anil Kumble, who is suffering from mild cold, accompanied him with just one run.

The third and final one-day match was also abandoned at this venue for rain on May 15.

8,000 chickens

FROM PAGE 16

culling drive since bird flu broke out in the district and it was continuing as of filing of this report, M Moniruzzaman, upazila nirbahi officer of Damar, confirmed that the number of chickens culled would be 8,000.

Earlier, in Jaldhaka Upazila around 6,000 fowls were culled in two separate drives on May 10 and 17.

Official sources said one Sakhawati Hossain of Kazipara of Damar municipality brought samples of some of his dead chickens to the Upazila Livestock Office.

The samples were sent to the Regional Research Centre in Gaibandha and then to Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute (BLRI) in Savar, Dhaka on May 16 for testing. District livestock office sources said the BLRI identified bird flu in those chickens.

Polls within 2008

FROM PAGE 16

Fakhruddin said the Election Commission will have to apply modern technology in preparing voter ID card and voter list with photographs.

Responding to the envoy, the chief adviser said his government is "determined to hold the general election in a free, fair and credible manner."

The CA's Press Secretary, Syed Fahim Munaim, who briefed on the meeting, quoted the envoy as saying that the Canadian government "fully supports" the present caretaker government and will continue its support.

It was Barbara's first courtesy call on Fakhruddin since his assumption of the office of chief adviser of the caretaker government on January 12.

Appreciating the interim government's performance, the envoy said she will go to Canada next month and keep her government posted about the present Bangladesh government's performance and its outcome.

Referring to her travel to various countries, she said those countries are also very supportive to the caretaker government.

The high commissioner mentioned Canada's offer to help in electoral process and close contact with the Election Commission and UNDP in this regard.

She said she is "impressed" with performance of the CEC and the Election Commission.

About reform, the CA said the present government is trying to appoint competent persons to various institutions, which has already been reflected through appointing the CEC and chairmen of the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Public Service Commission.

On corruption, he said, "Everyone would get due process flow."

Advisory council

FROM PAGE 1

caretaker government shall consist of the chief adviser at its head and not more than 10 other advisers.

A Law Commission source said the wording of the constitutional provision is clear. "There are no ambiguity here and thus no room for any other interpretations," the source pointed out.

In its report, the commission cites article 106 which says if there arises a question of law of such nature and public importance that it warrants the opinion of the Supreme Court, the president may refer it to the Appellate Division.

However, this could prove quite precarious since the apex court might not necessarily give an opinion in favour of the government, noted the source.