

Verdict in tender snatching case against JCD men on June 11

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court is to deliver on June 11 the judgement of a Tk 400 crore tender snatching case filed against 11 Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leaders and activists.

Another Dhaka court yesterday fixed July 4 for the hearing on charge framing against Akter Hamid Paban, son of former chief whip Khandakar Delwar Hossain, and three others in connection with a carjacking case.

CASE AGAINST 11 JCD MEN

After completion of arguments from the prosecution and defence, Metropolitan Magistrate Mir Ali Reza yesterday fixed June 11 for the delivery of the verdict in the tender

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Proceedings of arms case against Huda stayed for 3 months

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday stayed for three months the proceedings of an arms case filed against former communications minister Nazmul Huda.

Dhanmondi police filed the case against Huda on March 8.

A division bench comprising Justice Khademul Islam Chowdhury and Justice M Asfaque Islam passed the stay order following a petition.

The court also issued a rule upon the government to explain why the case pending with the lower court should not be quashed.

Barrister Rafique-ul Huq appeared for Huda, now in jail.

Ctg mayor gets bail

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday granted Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury bail for three months, but kept the hearing on its rule on the mayor's detention order pending.

After hearing a petition, a division bench, comprising Justice MA Matin and Justice MA Hye, passed the interim order.

The court also asked the government to return the ailing mayor's passport to facilitate his tour abroad for better treatment.

On Sunday, when the mayor's bail petition was submitted to a division bench, it was referred to the chief justice for order, as the

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Prayer Timing		
May 23		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-05	4-40
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-40	6-45
Esha	8-00	8-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Int'l audit agency to monitor PSI firms

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

The government will appoint an international audit agency soon to monitor activities of pre-shipment inspection (PSI) companies.

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has taken this decision against the backdrop of demands from many businesses to discontinue services of PSI companies.

The businessmen allege that PSI companies harass importers and commit gross malpractice in valuation of imported goods.

"We have finalised a tender schedule for recruiting an international audit agency and hope that we can appoint such an agency within the next two months," said Rashid ul Ahsan Chowdhury, NBR member (customs).

He said PSI services should not be a permanent system for valuation of goods but the government cannot discontinue their services instantly as it has agreements with them until 2008.

Customs experts claimed that the government incur losses of Tk 15,000 to 20,000 crore or 20 to 25 percent revenue from customs sector alone each year due to PSI Companies' issuance of false CRF (clean report of findings), and corruption in connivance with a section of customs officials.

Ehsanul Haque, an electronic goods importer from Nawabpur in the capital, said if businessmen bribe inspection officials and customs officials, it is easy for them

to get reports as per their requirements. But if a businessman wants actual valuation of goods without bribery, both PSI officials and customs officials give whimsical valuation reports.

"Many businessmen continue to bribe both the customs officials and PSI companies to avert harassment and get imported goods cleared easily," he said.

Mir Nasir Hossain, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), said PSI companies were engaged with the aim of reducing discretionary powers of customs officials but they have failed.

Customs officials frequently challenge CRF of PSI companies and check consignments indiscriminately violating PSI rules.

According to PSI rules, customs officials can check up to 10 percent of goods on the basis of random sampling but they do not comply with the rules, Nasir said. "If the rules are not followed, why continue PSI services?"

The FBCCI chief went on, "We still do not oppose continuation of PSI services but we demand that the government ensure compliance with PSI regulations and reduce the service charges."

A high official of a PSI company said these companies cannot involve in any kind of corruption as their activities are strictly monitored by both businessmen and customs officials.

On harassment of importers, he said PSI companies do not harass anyone. Rather, customs officials harass businessmen, and initiatives taken earlier to stop this proved a failure.

The official further said many false and exaggerated allegations have been spread against PSI companies. He however said the NBR sometimes imposed penalties on these companies for their faults.

Seeking anonymity, he said if any unskilled audit firm is appointed to monitor PSI companies' activities, it would have a serious negative impact on this sector. "Financial audit and PSI audit are not the same. A highly efficient and internationally reputed audit agency can help eliminate misgivings about PSI services."

Following allegations from businessmen, the NBR had conducted a survey to find out irregularities of PSI companies but it found only three percent faulty CRF issuance.

The survey based on random sampling found 622 faulty CRF out of 47,148 issued by PSI company Cotecna during the last one year. And 341 CRF was found wrong out of 29,450 issued by Intertek Testing Services (ITS) company during the same period.

Moreover, it found 177 wrong CRF of SGS out of 32,420 and 291 wrong CRF of Bureau Veritas out of 18,841 during the last one year.

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4 killed as 2 buses collide in Jessore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Four people were killed and eight others injured as two buses collided at Shakor Matha near Churamon Kati bazar under Jessore Sadar upazila yesterday morning.

The dead are Nuri Begum, 45, Rebeka Khatun, 20, and Farzana Khatun, 10 of Chowgacha upazila, and Shima, 28, of Jessore Sadar upazila.

Police and witnesses said the accident occurred at around 9:30am when a Jessore-bound passenger bus collided head-on with a churamon kati-bound town service bus, killing one person on the spot and injuring 11 others.

Of the injured, two died on way to Jessore Sadar Hospital and the other succumbed to his injuries at the hospital soon after admission.

The injured - Ashrafur Islam, Shakinur Islam, Rizia Khatun, Luban, Rahima, Nurun Nahar, Shahinur Begum, and Shafiq - are undergoing treatment at Jessore Sadar Hospital.

Top JMB leader confesses to involvement in Prof Yunus murder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Operations commander of greater Rajshahi JMB Shahidullah Mahbub in a judicial statement yesterday confessed to his involvement in the murder of Rajshahi University Professor Mohammad Yunus.

Metropolitan Magistrate Jonendranath Sarkar recorded his statement on his return from Dhaka where he was interrogated at Taskforce Interrogation Cell under a seven-day remand.

Mahbub, also husband of Bangla Bhai's niece, was held from Bogra.

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Mobile court unearths fake cable factory

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A mobile court yesterday recovered a huge quantity of substandard cables from an illegal cable factory in the port city.

It also arrested the factory owner Asaduzzaman, a former Eastern Cables official, and awarded financial penalty of Tk 2 lakh, in default he has to suffer six months' imprisonment.

Acting on a tip-off, the mobile court raided RR Cables, housed in a semi-pucca (brick wall-tin roof) building at Bibirhat under Panchlaish Police Station, sources said.

The court found that substandard PVC cables and super enamel copper conductors were being manufactured at the factory using fake seal of Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI).

The factory, which does not have BSTI licence, had been marketing its products without going for any standard testing, sources said.

Chittagong Port Authority Magistrate Mohammad Munir Chowdhury led the drive with the help of police and BSTI and Eastern Cables officials.

Baghdad market bombing kills 25

AP, Baghdad

A parked car bomb ripped through a packed outdoor market in southwestern Baghdad yesterday morning, killing 25 people and injuring 60 others, despite a 3-month-old security crackdown meant to reduce violence in the capital.

The deadly blast occurred about 10 am in the Shia-dominated neighbourhood of Amil, damaging a nearby medical centre, turning buildings into charred husks and setting a line of cars on fire, police said.

The neighbourhood has seen an increase in violence in recent

weeks, and Sunni politicians expressed fears that Shia militiamen had resumed their campaign of sectarian cleansing in Amil and nearby neighbourhoods of southwestern Baghdad.

"There were four women around my stall when we heard a loud explosion, which threw me many meters away from my stall," said Fadhil Hussein, 32, who sells spices in the market and suffered shrapnel wounds in his back and head. "I found myself in a pickup truck with other people. Some of them were bleeding and yelling."

Sami Hussein, 25, was heading to the market with her 5-year old

son when she heard the blast, "followed by gray and black smoke, which engulfed the market and made me to fall on the ground."

She suffered shrapnel wounds in her face and legs. "I lost my son, and have no idea about his fate," she said. Medical officials at the hospital said her son had been killed in the explosion.

The blast came amid the US and Iraqi security operation meant to flush out insurgents and restore order to Baghdad. However deadly attacks targeting civilians and police have continued.

US military officials say that

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BNP govt deprived Khulna of development None of its commitments fulfilled, says Khulna mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mayor of Khulna City Corporation and a senior leader of the immediate past ruling BNP Sheikh Tayebur Rahman has alleged that none of the commitments made by the previous government for development of Khulna region was fulfilled by it.

Gas supply, setting up an airport and a deep-sea port, establishment of an IT village, development of Mongla port and reopening of closed mills and factories were the major pledges for development of the region, he mentioned.

Tayebur was talking to journalists after a meeting with Adviser for Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) Mohammad Anwarul Iqbal at the ministry's conference room yesterday.

"I had sent a number of letters to the ministries concerned about the committed projects but there was hardly any response," he said.

The previous government ignored development of Khulna since none of its cabinet members were from this region, the BNP leader said. But a lot of development projects were implemented

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Weight restrictions on rice-laden trucks crossing Jamuna Bridge to be eased

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to relax weight restrictions for trucks crossing the Jamuna Bridge to help increase food supplies to the city markets.

Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) Adviser Mohammad Anwarul Iqbal yesterday told the journalists that the decision came following discussion with the importers.

The businessmen said the cost of carrying food grains has shot up due to stricter weight restrictions for the goods vehicles on the Jamuna Bridge.

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LEARNING THE ROPES



PHOTO: STAR

Pramila, a Royal Bengal Tiger at Dhaka Zoo, eats meat as her adorable 19-day-old cub plays in front of her yesterday. Pramila gave birth to three cubs on May 4 this year. Zoo officials said the sex of the cubs has not been determined yet. The father of the cubs is Raja, a Royal Bengal Tiger of the same zoo.

Govt threatens legal actions against downlink of unauthorised TV channels

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to take legal actions against downlink and transmission of unapproved TV channels in the country.

The Ministry of Information issued a notification in this regard yesterday, said a government handout.

Following the decision, cable operators will not be able to transmit unapproved TV channels through downlink except the government permitted 12 local and 29 foreign TV channels.

Government permitted local TV channels are ATN Bangla, Channel I, ntv, Rtv, Channel I, Bangla Vision, Baishakhi, SN TV, Broadcast Islamic World Ltd, Desh TV Ltd, Diganta TV and Focus Multimedia Co Ltd.

Foreign channels are BBC World, CNN, Fox News, Sky News, The History Channel, ESPN, Hallmark, Discovery Channel, TNT Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon,

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Charge-framing against MK Alamgir May 27

Statements of 10 PWs recorded in graft cases against Aman, Mir Nasir, Mamun

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday fixed May 27 for the hearing on charge framing against detained former state minister for planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir in connection with a graft case.

Meanwhile, three other special courts recorded statements of 10 prosecution witnesses in three other graft cases filed against former state minister Amanullah Aman, his wife Sabera Aman, former state minister Mir Nasiruddin, his son Mir Helaluddin and controversial businessman Giasuddin Al Mamun.

CASE AGAINST ALAMGIR

After scrutinising the case docket and other relevant documents, Judge Shahed Noor Uddin of the Third Special Court - set up at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar MP Hostel - accepted the supplementary charge sheet and set May 27 for the hearing of the charge framing against him.

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