

Ex-state minister Aman

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prepare an appeal to be filed with the High Court against the judgment," he said.

Aman and Sabera were both present in the court when the judge pronounced the verdict. Aman was standing in the dock while Sabera was sitting in a wheel chair in front of the dock since she was ill. Earlier, the police brought the two to the court.

Judge Firoz started reading out the verdict at 2:30pm after examining the investigation report, depositions of 23 witnesses and statements of the two accused, and arguments of the prosecution and the defence. The verdict took around half an hour to complete.

On February 18, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) asked 50 corruption suspects, including Aman, to submit their wealth statements. Aman, who had been detained on February 4 by the joint forces, submitted his wealth statement through representatives.

On March 6, ACC Deputy Director Abdullah Al Zahid filed the graft case with Kafil Police Station alleging that there is a wide discrepancy between the incomes and expenditures of the former BNP lawmaker from Keraniganj.

Aman acquired properties, including houses and vehicles, valued over Tk 8.28 crore and he made the huge wealth through misuse of power and bribery, it said.

The ACC deputy director also accused Sabera of providing false information in her statement submitted to the ACC.

On April 29, ACC deputy directors Abdullah Al Zahid and Jibon Krishna Roy, investigation officers of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka.

In the charge sheet, they said Aman and Sabera acquired properties, including house and vehicles, valued over Tk 10 crore. The value was shown Tk 8.28 crore in the FIR. The charge sheet accused Aman of abusing power and taking bribes and Sabera of giving false

information in her statement.

The CMM court sent the case to the Special Court on May 6 for quick disposal.

The Special Court framed charges against Aman and Sabera on May 16. Earlier on May 10, the court ordered to send Sabera in jail when she appeared before the court in a hearing of the case.

After deposition of statements by Aman and Sabera on June 7 the court had fixed yesterday for delivering the judgment.

Prosecution lawyers including Mahbub Ahmed and Mir Ahmed Ali Salam were present to receive the judgment.

Expressing satisfaction over the verdict, the prosecution lawyers told the media that Aman has been convicted for three years' imprisonment under section 26(2) of the ACC Act that says if any person submits any written statement or provides any information that is false or baseless, then that person will be sentenced to a prison term of up to three years or a fine or both.

Aman has been sentenced to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment under section 27 of the ACC Act according to which a person would be convicted if he or she is found to have acquired wealth through dishonest means.

Sabera has been convicted under section 109 of the Penal Code for abetting her husband in committing the offences.

The conviction will be effective with the pronouncement of the verdict.

An ACC official said Aman's total wealth is valued over Tk 9.94 crore while according to his wealth statement submitted to the ACC his legal wealth is worth Tk 1.28 crore.

Aman's wealth to be confiscated includes four houses in Gulshan, Banani and Keraniganj, 36 flats in the capital, 80 bighas of land in Savar and plots worth 660 decimals of land at other places.

Shops of food

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theatres, petrol pumps and motor-car servicing centres and salons will also remain out of the restriction.

The clarification was issued to dispel the confusion that has been created in public mind about the categories of shops that would remain closed after 7:00pm under the rational use of electricity programme.

It said the attention of the government has been drawn to news, special reports, articles, editorials and letters published in a section of the print media that small traders are incurring losses or being harassed in the wake of confusion prevailing in public mind about the categories of shops that have been brought under the restriction.

With the issuance of this clarification, the government expressed the hope that the confusion about the shops that will remain open after 7:00 in the evening will be removed.

AKM Mohiuddin

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Sub-Inspector (SI) Mojibur Rahman of Rangabali Police Station Wednesday sent arrest warrants, issued earlier on different dates, of four cases filed with different police stations to the court of CMM Court, Dhaka.

The arrest warrants are of the Bangabandhu murder case, jail killing case, Abdur Rob Seraniat murder case and Mohammadpur 14-murder case.

In the petition, Mojibur also prayed for showing Mohiuddin arrested in those cases saying that the convict had been absconding abroad for long.

Mohiuddin was sent to condemned cell at Dhaka Central Jail on his arrival from the United States on Monday.

A trial court on November 8, 1998 sentenced him to death along with 14 other former and dismissed army men for killing Bangabandhu and 26 others. The High Court on April 30, 2001 upheld the punishment of 12.

BNP reformists

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Maj Gen (ret'd) ZA Khan, an adviser to the BNP chairperson, said, "Reform proposals will be sent to all and decision will be taken through discussions if she [Khaleda] does not accept the proposal."

He said they are not against any person but want to bring changes to the party chairperson's power since it would be harmful for the party if the unilateral power of the chairperson remains.

Meanwhile, party chairperson's remark after visiting ailing party leader Nazrul Islam Khan on Wednesday that they will bring reforms through discussion with all, not a few leaders, made many BNP leaders angry.

"She could tell it from annoyance but reforms will be implemented through discussion with all," ZA Khan told reporters.

Asked about Khaleda's phrase "a few leaders", he said, "For some, ten people are a few people while for others 100 people are a few people."

Many BNP leaders met Bhuiyan at his Gulshan residence yesterday and discussed the much-anticipated reform proposals. Bhuiyan, however, did not make any comment to reporters.

In the last two weeks, he met senior leaders including party Standing Committee member M Saifur Rahman, Dr RA Gani and Shamsul Islam.

According to party leaders, the seniors want to bring reforms keeping Khaleda in place while others believe that reforms cannot be implemented if Khaleda remains in the top post of the party.

NBR asks

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Nahar, daughters Farhana Sharmeen and Farzana Sharmeen, sons Yeaseer Arshad and Iftekhar Arshad, Mizanur Rahman, Bazlur Rahman, Zillur Rahman, Harunur Rashid, son of Arshad Alam and Nazmul Islam, son of Serajul Islam.

Besides, the banks will have to provide the transaction reports of Qamrul Huda, brother of former communications minister Nazmul Huda, Fayek Iskander and Fasbir Iskander, sons of Shamim Iskander, Sayera Akhter, wife of former AL lawmaker Kamal Ahmed Majumder and their daughter Rashida Akhter.

Also on the list are former AL lawmaker Rafiqul Islam, his wife Morshedha Akhter, daughters Khadijatul Anwar Sony and relatives Anwara Begum, Alam Ara Begum, Nasimul Anwar, Nargisul Anwar, SM Habib, Khorsheda Khanam, Fakhru Anwar and Hasnatul Anwar.

The NBR also asked for bank transaction reports of businessman and publisher of the daily Samokal AK Azad and his brothers Motalab Hossain, Belal Hossain, Ismail Hossain, Azad's wife Saima Azad Sammi, sons Sakib Azad and Sajid Azad, and daughter Isha Azad.

Besides, the banks will have to provide the transaction reports of Syeda Arzuman Banu Nargis, wife of Jahangir Kabir Nanak, their daughter Syeda Amreen Rakhil, son Saimur Rahman, Don Advertising Limited, Don Printing Limited, Don Enterprise and Agrani Fashion Limited.

Also on the list are Mohammad Atikullah and his wife Farhana Mahnaz, son Orad Osman, daughter Parisha Muskan Mahnaz and Avsama Mahnaz, and A-1 Trade International, A-1 International, A-1 Printing and Packaging Limited, A-1 Housing Limited, Tele Banglanet Limited, Rupali Sweaters Industries, A-1 Attire, Promise Automobiles and Promise Network.

Red tape shoos

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Dhaka. Notably, there are 161 refuelling stations in the country.

Sources in the RPGCL said at least 55,000 CNG-run vehicles run in the capital, which refuel at the 91 stations. On an average, there is one refuelling station for over 600 vehicles.

Other sources said the actual number of CNG-run vehicles running in the capital varies from 1 lakh to 1.14 lakh. These vehicles have to queue up to get fuel. But the situation worsens in the wake of frequent power disruption in the capital.

They said once the RPGCL approves a plan, it requires approval of the Department of Explosives. There are numerous instances the Department did not consider the RPGCL-approved plans and suggested further modifications, they said.

Similarly, the RPGCL also asked the entrepreneurs to modify layout plans approved by the department, the sources added. The cycle continued when the department reiterated by bringing changes to the plans before final approval.

The department finally okays a plan in two phases -- first they inspect the spot before installation and then gives permission after the installation is completed.

The department officials admitted that differences of opinions between the RPGCL and their office are rife.

Executive Director of CNG Association of Bangladesh Nurul Alam cited two such instances -- one in Chittagong and the other in Sylhet -- where this conflict hampered launch of two stations.

A number of entrepreneurs said the government encourages CNG-run vehicles mainly on environmental grounds. The requirement of an extra approval from the Department of Environment is then totally unnecessary, they argued.

If someone wants to upgrade from petrol pumps to CNG stations, why they should obtain 'no objection certificates' from the Deputy Commissioner's Office, they asked.

Like the DC office, at least eight more agencies including the Fire Service and Civil Defence, Rajuk or municipality, R&H, metropolitan police seek similar documents.

Though the DC office gives clearance to use the land further approval is needed from the R&H and Dhaka Metropolitan Police, they added.

A prospective entrepreneur also needs R&H approval for the strip of land that is needed for drive-in and drive-out of the CNG station. Even in case of upgrading existing fuel stations, which already use the strip of land, the approval is needed once again.

The entrepreneurs expressed their dissatisfaction saying if no

permission is required for other private construction, there is no reason it should be applicable only for CNG refuelling stations.

A communications ministry review committee with representatives from the departments concerned was supposed to settle the problems regarding establishment of CNG refuelling stations.

But the committee failed to bring any positive change as the members did not have the authority to approve anything on behalf of their departments.

The RPGCL does not have any statistics regarding how many vehicles are being converted every day across the country. But industry insiders said owners are increasingly converting their vehicle due to repeated price hike of petrol and diesel.

They also said around 150 vehicles on an average are being converted every day. If the trend continues there would be tremendous pressure on the existing CNG stations and a severe CNG crisis is likely in a few months.

Some of the entrepreneurs also expressed their dissatisfaction over the RPGCL's dual role. It runs CNG conversion workshop and refuelling stations while being a regulator in the sector at the same time. A competitor in the market cannot assume the role of a regulator, they noted.

Contacted, RPGCL Managing Director Abdul Wadud said: "We don't compete in the market; we have only a CNG conversion unit and a filling station, which are used mainly on training purpose."

"The RPGCL does not have any plan to expand its businesses and unlike other business enterprises it provides most of service free of cost, even the forms and constancy are free," he claimed.

He also said as of April 2007, 316 companies got permission for setting up new CNG stations. Of those, 150 are on operation and 66 opened Letter of Credit in the banks which are likely to start operation within next six to eight months. The rest are in the pipeline, he added.

Admitting the existing conflict regarding approval, he said this would be solved if the departments and agencies sit together and jointly gave permissions.

Contacted, Communications Secretary Mohammad Mahbubur Rahman said they would soon shift all responsibilities to the energy ministry and take measures to simplify the procedures.

He expressed the hope that the energy ministry would start a one-stop service for launching CNG stations to speed up the entire process.

73 NAM flats

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buildings located in the city's Manik Mia Avenue and Nakhalpara. Of them, 324 flats were allocated to the lawmakers of the eighth parliament and the rest were allotted to the members and officials of the Special Security Force and the Anti-Corruption Commission.

The flats are equipped with air-conditioner, television, refrigerator, computer, table, chair and other necessary furniture.

At present, the flats of 34 former lawmakers and ministers are lying vacant, as they are facing trial. Some other flats, belonging to the former lawmakers now on the run, are also unoccupied.

Although the flats had been used by the MPs themselves or by their relatives, no representative of the MPs or their relatives handed over the charges of the flats to Parliament Secretariat.

Since there is no parliament at the moment and no possibility of holding elections soon, the government is thinking about renting out the vacant flats to the government officials for their temporary accommodation.

Dhaka, Delhi

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Dhaka in 2003 and in New Delhi in 2005.

Following the talks, a MoU between Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institutions (BSTI) and the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), is expected to be signed which was recently approved by the council of advisers.

According to the MoU provisions, BSTI and BIS would standardise quality controls to allow the BSTI to perform tests and certify Bangladeshi goods for export to India.

These are the first steps to remove non-tariff barriers, long demanded by Bangladesh to expand its market in India, and especially stressed by Iftekhar during informal bilateral talks in April.

The MoU would end practices such as the system of testing Bangladeshi export goods by the BIS, not the BSTI.

Bangladesh has also demanded the removal of para-tariff barriers, which raises the price of Bangladeshi exports in India due to Indian customs surcharges, additional charges, internal taxes and charges levied on imports, and decreed customs valuation.

The Secretary-level talks, including Menon's call on foreign adviser Iftekhar, are expected to re-energise deals on joint-border patrolling and border demarcation issues between Dhaka and New Delhi.

The official talks are also expected to bring up the two multi-billion dollar investment proposals from two Indian business giants, Mittal and Tata.

High-level government sources, however, say the government does not plan on taking decisions on the Tata and Mittal investment plans, but wants an elected government to take the decision.

Acting Foreign Secretary Tuhid Hossain will lead the Bangladeshi delegation at the official talks, to be held at the State Guest House Padma.

2 ex-Jamaat MPs

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The lawmaker allegedly had the CI sheets sanctioned in favour of the foundation for building a bus terminal.

"The CI sheets should have been used for which it was sanctioned. If somebody keeps them for other purposes, it is a violation of the law. Also the CI sheets should have been sanctioned following the rules of Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation," said Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Pabna Abdul Hakim.

CASE AGAINST TAHER
A criminal case was filed against former Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher, his brother Syed Ekramul Huq and 33 other Jamaat leaders and activists on Wednesday night, UNB reports.

Police said Abdul Khaleq, a sawmill owner of Sharshadi in Chouddagram upazila of Comilla, filed the case with Chouddagram Police Station. Chouddagram upazila Jamaat Ameer M Shahjahan, General Secretary Shahabuddin are also among the 35 accused.

In his complaint, Khaleq said Ekramul Huq at the behest of Taher, came to his sawmill along with his accomplices and demanded Tk 5 lakh from him.

As Khaleq refused to pay the money, Ekramul and his accomplices attacked the sawmill and looted Tk 25,000 in cash, three motorcycles, valuable timbers and furniture on June 18, 2001.

The complainant further stated that the Jamaat men abducted him at gunpoint and took him to Taher's house where they threatened him not to file any case against them.

The former Jamaat lawmaker is now in jail on charges of corruption.

Memorial opens

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"For 36 years I could address my father as 'Abba'. The Pakistani Army stopped my calling him 'Abba' again... they made my mother mentally ill. We knew the hard way how the absence of one person plunges a family into helplessness," Abul Ahsan said in his reaction to The Dhaily Star.

It is not only Abul Ahsan, lakhs of people of the country lost their fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters, but the farce is the killers--the Pakistani Army and their local collaborators--wanted to obliterate the traces of genocide.

"No, this cannot go unpunished. Pakistan's propaganda denying the genocide of 1971 cannot go on," said Akku Chowdhury, the trustee of Liberation War Museum, during his welcome speech.

He said the excavation of the killing field and its preservation will make the golden days as well as the days of bloodshed memorable forever inspiring the next generation to call for putting the war criminals on trial.

After eight years of the excavation, the Liberation War Museum has built a triangular memorial at the torture chamber and at the mass grave keeping the structure of the pump house intact. Museum Trustee and Architect Rabiul Hossain designed the memorial based on the concept provided by another Trustee Mofidul Hoque while artists Rafiqunnabi and Muniruzzaman adorned it with a mural.

Dr MA Hasan, who conducted the forensic tests of the skulls and bones recovered, said most of the skulls were severed from the body with sharp weapons and some bore marks of being striking heavy weapons.

Hasan, also the director of War Crimes Fact Finding Committee, said Mirpur in Dhaka is the place where many more killing fields could be found.

Citing from research reports, he said there are over 5,000 killing fields across the country. Seventy percent of those are in the low-lying areas, as the killers killed and dumped the bodies in those places in order to hide their crime, he said, demanding initiatives to identify and preserve killing fields.

Liberation War Museum Trustee Mofidul Hoque in his closing speech said this museum would try to keep a collection of the information and the history of all killing fields in the country.

"This will intensify the demands for the trial of war criminals," he said.

Illegal occupants

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occupants from the land belonging to the defence ministry. But the eviction drive was suspended on humanitarian ground. The eviction drive was also suspended several times earlier on the same ground, the statement pointed out.

Some very sensitive institutions like National Defence Council (NDC) and Army Staff College are located in the area. Besides, the occupants are also creating disturbances in establishing a direct road between Mirpur and Ashulia through the area, the statement added.

ME summit

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freeze on the transfer of funds owed by Israel to the Palestinian Authority," she said.

Housing Minister Meir Sheerit said he was worried that little concrete would come out of the four-way talks in Egypt, but added that he was heartened by Abbas's new tough approach to Hamas after 15 months of uneasy power-sharing.

"I am not very optimistic because the results of previous summits organised in Sharm el-Sheikh have been disappointing," the Israeli minister told army radio.

"This time Abu Mazen (Abbas) seems to have finally decided to get tough against Hamas while the Arab leaders cannot allow the creation of a 'Hamastan' that will threaten all countries in the region."

The summit talk came after the Palestinian president delivered a withering attack against the Islamist movement Hamas for its armed seizure of the Gaza Strip last week and ruled out any dialogue with the "traitors".

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nals," he said, urging the caretaker government to take initiatives with the help of UN to try war criminals for crimes against humanity.

Hafsa Helal Malobika, granddaughter of martyr Abu Taleb, hoisted the flag to inaugurate the memorial site. She said she was happy to do it and added, "But I want justice for my grandfather."

US nuclear envoy visits N Korea

AP, Seoul

The chief US nuclear envoy made a rare trip to North Korea yesterday in a surprise bid to accelerate international efforts to press the communist government to abandon its nuclear weapons program.

Assistant US Secretary of State Christopher Hill's trip came ahead of the expected resumption of six-nation talks next month following the resolution of a key financial dispute that had blocked progress.

The trip is Hill's first to North Korea, as well as the first by a US nuclear envoy since the latest crisis with the North over its nuclear development began in late 2002.

APTN footage showed Hill arriving at Pyongyang's airport in a small jet in a steady downpour. His five-member delegation was met by Ri Gun, the North's deputy nuclear negotiator.

"We want to get the six-party process moving," Hill, standing under an umbrella, said in the APTN film. "We hope that we can make up for some of the time that we lost this spring and so I'm looking forward to good discussions about that."

Hill and Ri were shown walking together and chatting in a friendly manner.

"We're all waiting for you," Ri said. In response, Hill said he "got the message on Monday and we had to work fast to find an airplane," suggesting the visit was hastily arranged and based on a North Korean invitation.

North Korea, which carried out its first nuclear test explosion in October, promised in a landmark agreement struck in February with China, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the U.S. that it would shut down its bomb-making nuclear reactor at Yongbyon by mid-April.

Progress was stalled by the financial dispute between Pyongyang and Washington involving \$25 million in alleged North Korean illicit funds. That dispute was resolved in recent days, and although North Korea still hasn't shut the reactor, it invited U.N. monitors next week to discuss a shutdown.

Last year, North Korea openly invited Hill to visit the country, but Washington did not accept the offer.

"I think the US is trying to keep North Korea from dragging its feet any longer" now that the banking dispute is resolved, said Nam Sung-wook, a North Korea expert at Korea University. "Unless something is done right now, North Korea could stall for time on another pretext."

tions across the Gaza Strip where pictures and effigies of the Palestinian president were burned.

Abbas strongly defended his decision to dismiss the Hamas-led national unity government last week and swear in the emergency cabinet that Hamas has dismissed as an illegitimate lackey of Israel and the United States.

"Our main objective is to prevent the chaos from spreading to the West Bank," he said, adding that the new government of technocrats led by US-educated prime minister Salam Fayyad was the "clear answer to the coup."

Israeli Foreign Tzipi Livni telephoned Fayyad on Wednesday to open dialogue with his government after the 15-month hiatus while Hamas were in power.

Abbas called for an international conference to be convened to oversee the relaunch of talks with Israel, like the Madrid conference of 1991 that helped pave the way for the secret talks that led to the 1993 Oslo autonomy accords.

"We call for negotiations to resume ... and in the framework an international conference the details of which we will agree" with the Israelis, the president said.

It was unclear whether Abbas planned to raise the idea at next week's planned regional summit.

The exodus to Israel of the last foreigners in Gaza continued on Thursday with the evacuation of around 30 American Palestinians, largely women and children.

"There's no freedom here. There's no security for our lives," said one woman who called herself the head of an American-Palestinian friendship association.