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Sircar drew Tk 28 lakh medical bill ignoring official objection

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar drew a medical allowance of about Tk 28 lakh from Parliament Secretariat giving a written undertaking in July last year as he approved the bill on his own, ignoring the secretariat's objections.

Using his power, Sircar submitted his medical bills for treatment abroad with the secretariat and he himself 'decided' to approve the payment. He would return the money if it is proved unlawful by any competent authorities, Sircar said in the undertaking.

"I have decided to pay the medical bill in good faith and on my honest understanding of law. I will obey any order of the Supreme

Court if anybody in future takes legal action against the payment," Jamiruddin said in the undertaking.



Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar

ing, a copy of which was obtained by The Daily Star.

The Speaker apparently came up with the 'guarantee letter', as the law did not allow him to approve the bill for his medical check-up in May last year during his two week-long study tour in Singapore and London with the financial support of Parliament Secretariat and a UNDP project for strengthening parliamentary democracy, officials in the Parliament Secretariat said.

The Speaker, the custodian of the Jatiya Sangsad, got the expenditure for his medical check-up approved through 'exercising' his power although the then prime minister Khaleda Zia did not approve it.

Clause 12 of the Special Medical Attendance Rules 1950 categorically says only the government can grant any amount of money to a person for his or her treatment.

"Nothing in these rules be construed as preventing the government from granting to any person to whom they apply any concession relating to medical treatment or attendance which is not authorised by these rules," says the rules.

But Jamiruddin Sircar claimed that by parity of reasoning the Speaker is the final authority to approve money through exercising Clause 12 of the Special Medical Attendance Rules.

A former speaker and a former comptroller and auditor general

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Advocate Hamid demands white papers on all past ministers, MPs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) leader and former Speaker Abdul Hamid yesterday demanded publication of white papers on corruption of all former ministers and members of parliament since the country's independence.

He also demanded that wealth accounts of all be revealed.

"White papers on corruption of around 2,100 former ministers, technocrat ministers and lawmakers of the last seven parliaments have to be published. Then it will be clear who is corrupt and who is not," Hamid told reporters at his residence in the capital.

Rejecting allegations of corruption against politicians in general, he said, "Some politicians may be

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Army chief for end to corruption culture

Places 7-point proposal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Army Chief Gen Moeen U Ahmed yesterday tabled a broad seven-point proposal for fighting corruption, which suggests simultaneous efforts for dismantling a 'culture of corruption' including a continuous anti-corruption drive, strengthening of law enforcement agencies, and the appointment of a parliamentary ombudsman.

Moeen hoped 'in the near future the interim government will introduce a Right to Information Act' and review the Official Secrets Act, so that 'corrupt officials cannot



Moeen U Ahmed

hide behind the cloak of secrecy and escape punishment'.

Moeen also said if one goes through the records, they will see the present government has already achieved what the previous governments could not in 36 years.

He made the comment when reporters asked him to evaluate the caretaker government's first six months in office, on his way out after speaking at the opening ceremony of a workshop for lawmakers on 'Curbing Corruption in South Asia', organised by the Global Organization of Parliamentarians

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PHOTO: STAR

The iron skeleton and bamboo scaffold are all that remain of the under-construction sunshade over the porch of East West Medical College and Hospital at Kamarpada on the outskirts of Dhaka after it collapsed yesterday.

2 die as under construction building part collapses

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two construction workers were killed and 13 others were injured when the under construction main entrance to East West Medical College and Hospital at Kamarpada on the outskirts of the capital collapsed yesterday afternoon.

The identities of the dead were confirmed as Ashikur Rahman, 35, and Ali Hossain, 40. Of the injured, two were identified as Shahidul Islam and Abdul Kader while the identities of the rest could not be known immediately.

Witnesses said that the under construction main entrance, SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

IMF presses for gas price hike

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has suggested that the government increase the price of natural gas before adjusting the prices of electricity, fertiliser and petroleum products.

"Higher gas prices will imply a need for further adjustment in electricity and fertiliser prices but reform of energy sector policy will be incomplete and distortionary unless adjustment of gas prices is included," an IMF report placed to the government recently said.

Finance ministry sources said the government's recent move to increase natural gas prices is in line with the IMF recommendations.

"The government will raise the natural gas prices and then adjust prices of fertiliser, electricity and different petroleum products," a ministry official said.

Asked about IMF's influence on the move, he said, "Yes, there are some suggestions from the IMF. But, our concern is to minimise huge losses of the state-owned enterprises."

Energy Adviser Tapan Chowdhury told newsmen on Monday that the government has no alternative but to increase the prices of gas and petroleum. "We are yet to chalk out any plan for adjusting petroleum prices, but a proposal regarding the prices of

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BNP might split without reforms

Khaleda's advisers believe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Differing with the BNP chairperson, several of her advisers advocated for reforms and said the party might tear apart without reforms.

Khaleda Zia, the party chairperson, recently alleged that a group of leaders, who joined BNP from other parties, are conspiring to destroy the party under the guise of reforms. She also termed the initiative undemocratic and unconstitutional.

Meanwhile, pro-reform BNP leaders decided that they would propose to amend Clause 70 in the constitution of the country to help lawmakers play a more effective role in parliament. BNP secretary

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Rab captures 2 top JMB leaders

One is convicted killer of Jhalakathi judges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two top leaders of the banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) including one of the condemned killers of two Jhalakathi judges, and three JMB members have been arrested in a series of raids by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in Dhaka and Mymensingh.

The arrestees are condemned killer and a member of JMB's

reconstituted Majlish-e-Shura Asadul Islam alias Arif and another Shura (highest policymaking body of JMB) member Anwar Hossain alias Faruq, Mymensingh regional commander Shafiqul Islam alias Rakib, Sagar Hossain alias Sayem and Saiful Islam.

Arif is one of the seven condemned killers of two Jhalakathi judges in the district town on

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Nine of a family commit 'suicide'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Nine members of a family, including three children, allegedly committed suicide by jumping under a train at Kashore near the outer signal of Mymensingh Railway Station yesterday.

The dead were identified as Hena Begum, 60, wife of late Anwar Hossain, their daughters Mobi, 40, Aktari Begum, 35, Murshida, 30, and Shabnam, 10, sons Arif, 26, and Rahat, 18, and Mobi's son Mollah, 8

and daughter Mariam, 10.

The reason for committing the mass suicide could not be known as of filing of this report at 8:00pm yesterday.

Police said all the nine family members of late Anwar Hossain, who converted to Christianity, jumped in front of a Mymensingh-bound running train from Jagannathganj Ghat at around 3:15pm, according to UNB.

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JMB has no link to May 1 rly station blasts

Arrested Shura member says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained reconstituted Majlish-e-Shura member of outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) Asadul Islam alias Arif yesterday said the JMB had no links with the near-simultaneous bomb blasts at three railway stations on May 1.

Intelligence Wing Director of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) Lt Col Asif Ahmed Ansari corroborated this and said that no substantial evidence was found linking JMB with the blasts.

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Massive plan to improve traffic system in capital

SHEIKH SABIHA ALAM

The government is seriously considering construction of 56 new roads and introduction of a rapid transit system in the capital by 2024 for quick modernisation of Dhaka's current shabby transport system, according to Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB).

The initiative is a part of a massive Strategic Transport Plan (STP) to modernise Dhaka's transport system, for which the government is planning to spend at least 5.5 billion US dollars by 2024 in implementing a number of development

schemes.

STP will be implemented in four five-year phases. In the first phase which will end in 2010, the authorities will complete the designs and construction of six new major roads to create the much needed east-west connections in the city.

Between 2010 and 2024, the government plans to construct 50 additional roads as a part of a city highway network to meet the needs of the commuters of Dhaka and its nearby towns - Narayanganj, Munshiganj and Tongi, the number of whom has been estimated to reach 36 million by 2024.

At the same time the government plans to construct a city subway train system and elevated expressways. But these capital-intensive schemes will get lesser priority.

Although STP was designed as a 20-year plan in 2004, the basic documents of the plan was only finalised late last year. The plan now aims at achieving the 20-year goal within the next 17 years, DTCB sources said.

A high-powered 12-member committee headed by Communications Adviser Maj Gen

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Tigers fail in rains

BISHWAJIT ROY from Kandy

Rain ruined almost the entire first day of the third and final Test between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka here yesterday, but the sun did come out for a while and it was good enough time for the visitors to experience a repeat of their all too familiar top-order collapse in trying conditions at the Asgiriya Stadium.

The groundstaff were in the limelight for almost all day as the big covers were being rolled in and out as a mind-boggling play between rain and was sunshine taking place at the picturesque venue surrounded by green hills.

Only 29 overs could be bowled and Bangladesh reached 72-4 with captain Mohammad Ashraful (4) and Tushar Imran (6) at the crease

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The second branch at Narayanganj

The 38th branch of Dhaka Bank opens today at the port city.

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