

Tuku, family indicted for graft

UNB, Dhaka

Detained former state minister for power Iqbal Hassan Mahmood Tuku along with his family was indicted yesterday by a special judge's court for corruption.

The court fixed July 23 for commencing their trial on charge of possessing ill-gotten wealth.

On March 21, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed the case accusing Tuku along with his wife, son and daughter of amassing wealth worth over Tk 4.96 crore, "disproportionate to their known sources of income".

The detained family members of Tuku -- his wife Romana Hassan Mahmood, son Abed Hassan Mahmood and daughter Sarah Hassan Mahmood were brought before the court amid tight security.

All the accused standing in the

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DINKAL CASE Khaleda likely to appear in court today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Former prime minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is likely to appear before the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka today in connection with a case filed for not submitting service return of the Daily Dinkal Publications Limited for several years.

The court on June 12 issued summonses upon Khaleda, her elder son Tarique Rahman and nine directors of the daily to appear before the court today in person.

Court sources said they are likely to appear before the court if the summonses are served.

Abdul Mannan, deputy registrar (current charge) of the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms (RJSCF), filed the case under section 36 (5) of the Companies Act 1994.

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Bin Laden praises martyrdom in video

AFP, Dubai

al-Qaeda's fugitive chief Osama bin Laden, who has not been heard from for more than a year, appeared in an undated videotape posted on the Internet yesterday, in which he praises martyrdom. "The happy (person) is the one chosen by Allah to be a martyr," Bin Laden said in a short clip which was included in a videotape titled "Winds of Martyrdom", and carried by the Washington-based SITE Intelligence Group.

SITE said the footage was old, but did not give an estimated date.

The images showed the Western world's most wanted man, wearing an Afghan-style hat, military fatigues and a greying beard,

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Sheikh Selim denied bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday rejected bail prayer of detained former health minister and Awami League (AL) leader Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim in connection with an extortion case.

Meanwhile, proceedings of cases filed against detained former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar, former law minister barrister Moudud Ahmed and former BNP lawmaker of Demra Salahuddin Ahmed were adjourned.

CASE AGAINST SELIM

Metropolitan Magistrate ABM Abdul Fattah rejected the bail petition of Selim in a case filed against him and AL chief Sheikh Hasina in connection with extorting Tk 2.99 crore.

In the order, the court said the accused had earlier given confessional statements admitting his involvement with the extortion. So, his bail petition is rejected, the court added.

On June 13, Azam J Chowdhury, managing director of Eastcoast Trading Private Ltd, filed the case

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BB's monetary policy to help check inflation

Says IMF suggesting energy price adjustments

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) yesterday welcomed the Bangladesh Bank's contractionary monetary policy that has taken a lot of flak at home, and said it will help to rein in inflation.

It also suggested that the country should adjust the fuel and energy prices to those at the international level on a regular basis.

Jonathan C Dunn, the IMF resident representative, said they had advised Bangladesh on several occasions to take tighter monetary measures. He added, "Now we are encouraged to see that the central bank has adopted an appropriate policy."

Declining to term the policy strict, he said it should rather be described as cautious.

Asked if the Bretton Woods institution has pressured the government into taking the policy, he said, "The government is a sovereign entity. And our role is to give best advice to the governments where we [the IMF] operate."

He made the observations speaking to journalists at a question-answer session on recent macroeconomic developments, the June 22 IMF board meeting and other issues. The briefing was held at the Fund's office in the Bangladesh Bank Main Building at Motijheel.

Dunn noted that regular price adjustment to the international market is very significant for Bangladesh. The prices of gas, petroleum and electricity should be adjusted consistently so that the economy can be placed beyond losses.

About the Centre for policy Dialogue's (CPD) views that the current monetary policy won't be favourable for the economy and that the BB has accepted it following the Fund's recommendations, he said it is very surprising because the IMF's activities are spelled out in its board documents.

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People gather at the site of a suicide attack on a military convoy at Matta, Pakistan yesterday. Suicide bombers killed around 60 people in a series of attacks after Islamic militants called for holy war over an army raid on a pro-Taliban mosque.

Costliest power plant starts July 23

SHARIER KHAN

Country's costliest power project--the \$120 million 70 megawatt (MW) third phase Mymensingh Power Plant of the Rural Power Company Ltd (RPCL)--will start commercial operation from July 23.

Along with the previous two 70MW simple cycle units, this plant built by German company Siemens will produce 210MW power. Siemens was awarded this project on an unsolicited negotiation in 2005 with the aim to complete it within that year.

Against load shedding of around 2000MW, this 70MW project is being viewed as a speck of sand. But at the same time, this is one of the very few projects to have successfully come into operation in the last six years.

The project is three to four times costlier than similar sized power projects of the Power Development Board (PDB). It took US company AES only \$170 million for the Meghnaghat 450MW combined cycle plant.

The installation of the third phase will convert the power plant into a combined cycle plant--from its existing gas-fired simple cycle one. This means the third unit will not need any additional gas supplies; it would use the steam generated by the two old power units to generate power.

It had begun test operations from May and has so far performed well. "Sometimes if the gas flow pressure declines, the overall performance of all the units the plant is affected. Otherwise the third unit's test performance is successful," said a RPCL high official.

Energy ministry Adviser Tapan Chowdhury will inaugurate the plant that would be operated and maintained by Siemens for the next two years. The RPCL will then take charge of Operation and Maintenance (O&M).

The cost of this plant has been very high because of corruption by the previous management of the RPCL that was dominated by one Captain Reza, chief of Lahmayer Intenational Pali Power Service (LIPPS) that took all the past O&M

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Nearly 20,000 people cross the Shitalakhya River daily from Bandar to Narayanganj on only three such motorised boats that are often crammed with passengers.

Mass hysteria affects 7 more students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven more students of Adiabab Islamia High School and College in Raipura upazila of Narsingdi fainted yesterday, raising the number of 'mass hysteria' victims at the institution to 84 since Wednesday, local journalists said.

"It is a type of psychological problem called mass hysteria. It usually affects the young and females and spreads among those who are staying at the same place," Principal of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) and Prof of Medicine MA Foyez said, adding that it usually spreads by seeing or hearing from close quarters.

"The children will be cured soon. It is not an incident of infection and there is nothing to be panicked," said Prof Foyez who is supervising the treatment.

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Health Adviser Maj Gen Dr Motiur Rahman examines a student of Adiabab Islamia High School of Narsingdi at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. A total of 84 students and teachers of the school are suffering from an "unknown disease".

COUNCIL MEETING BNP reformists review committee members

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Reformist leaders of BNP have started reviewing various organisational committees of the party to hold a council as soon as possible.

The main objective of this process is to verify and be updated about the current status of presidents, secretaries or convenors on the committees who will attend the council as councillors. These councillors will play a crucial role in bringing changes in the constitution of the party, said sources.

Meanwhile, Ashraf Hossain, joint secretary general of BNP yesterday told journalists at Mannan Bhuiyan's Gulshan residence that the party chairperson herself had endorsed corrupt people in the party.

Criticising Khaleda Zia for countless blunders when the party was in power, he strongly protested

Khaleda's remarks made during a teleconference with expatriate Bangladeshis in Australia on Saturday night.

During the phone conversation with the expatriates, the BNP chairperson said the ones speaking of reforms are corrupt and they do not have any commitment to the party. She also said that it was a mistake to elect Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan as the secretary general of the party.

Rebutting Khaleda Zia's allegation, Ashraf said she is the one who introduced corrupt individuals in the party -- the ones in jail now. She made some of them ministers even though they did not even have primary membership of the party.

"She gave supreme authority to some people who were nothing in the party" and they were involved in corruption and irregularities

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Govt to amend umbrella act for universities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Faced with strong criticism from public university teachers and the mass media, the caretaker government has taken initiative to amend the draft of the much talked about 'umbrella act' comprising unified rules for regulating the academic and administrative activities of public universities.

In a meeting with the representatives of University Grants Commission (UGC), the Ministry of Education yesterday directed the UGC to amend the draft of 'umbrella act' by July 31, ministry sources said.

After receiving the draft amendment of the umbrella act, the ministry will arrange meetings with vice chancellors of public universities

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High-profile Lankan team arrives today

ASHFAQ WARES KHAN

A Sri Lankan delegation comprising five ministers will arrive today on a bilateral visit, with Dhaka likely to focus on ways for Bangladeshi companies to tap deeper into the growing pharmaceutical export market in the strife-torn island nation.

Dhaka will also hand over a relic of Gautam Buddha's hair on Wednesday as a gift to Colombo as a gesture of 'friendship and goodwill.'

The visit will end a long hiatus in high-level bilateral visits. The last visit by a Sri Lankan head of state or the foreign minister was during the Dhaka Saarc Summit in 2005.

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama will lead the delegation, which will go to Chittagong to receive the hair of Buddha from a Buddhist monastery.

"We (Bangladesh) will mostly talk about trade with a focus on the promising pharmaceutical sector," said a foreign ministry source, adding that Bangladesh has been running a trade-surplus with Sri Lanka for the past three years, a trend most welcome by Dhaka as it runs a deficit with most other South Asian countries.

Currently, Dhaka-Colombo trade stands at around \$15 million.

The foreign ministry official also said that the already robust pharmaceutical trade can grow in size further if Sri Lanka can simplify its procedures for foreign companies, as Bangladesh offers some of the cheapest prices.

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18 killed in series of attacks in Iraq

AFP, Baghdad

Eighteen people were killed in attacks across Iraq yesterday, including at least four civilians who died when a car bomb exploded in central Baghdad, security officials said.

The Baghdad car bombing, which took place in the mixed Jadriyah neighbourhood near the city centre, injured another 15 people, according to security officials who said the toll would probably rise.

Meanwhile in the northern Iraqi Kurdish region gunmen killed seven Iraqi border guards and a civilian in an ambush on the Iranian frontier near Penjwin, a security official said.

"At 9:00 am (0500 GMT) one of our patrols came under attack from

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economic feasibility study to build the hydropower plant in its Rakhaine State to supply power to Bangladesh.

He said three locations are being considered as potential sites for the plant. But among those, a site in Lemro River of Rakhaine State is most prospective, as there is a potential for building a 500-600 MW plant. This site is approximately 100 km from Bangladesh.

Kabir said both the countries would examine all the possible options as to which could be the basis for such a big-venture plant. "Either it could be a government-government joint-venture project or a private-public joint venture between the two countries."

But, he added, everything will be decided after the feasibility study.

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Looting case filed against Mahi, Mannan

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Liberal Democratic Party (B Chowdhury) secretary general Maj (ret'd) MA Mannan, Mahi B Chowdhury and nine others were sued yesterday for looting valuables from office of a rival faction.

Abu Mohammad Amrul Haq Toni, vice president of Democratic Krishak Dal -- a front organisation of LDP's Colonel Oil faction -- filed the case against them with the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka.

Upon hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate ABM Abdul Fattah directed officer in charge of Ramna Police Station to take action against the accused after investigating the matter.

The nine other accused in the case are Saju Kamal, Shahidullah Shahid, Jahangir Alam Biplob, Nazmul Karim Bachchu, Wazed Ali Chowdhury Pervez, Obaid Ali Mridha, Shohag, Jahangir Alam and Noman.

In his complaint, Toni alleged that on July 12, a group of thugs led by Mannan and Mahi went to their party office at Moghbazar at

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Prayer Timing		
July 16		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-54	6-58
Esha	8-15	8-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		