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## 20 more top graft suspects getting ACC notice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has started serving notices on 20 more corruption suspects, including Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil, Sylhet Mayor Badruddin Ahmed Kamran, Rajshahi Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu and leading businessmen Abdul Awal Mintoo, asking them to submit their wealth statements.

Meanwhile, former prime ministers Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina yesterday received the ACC notices for submitting their wealth statements.

ACC secretary Mokhles ur Rahman yesterday told reporters that BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia herself received the notice at her cantonment residence yesterday afternoon while prison authorities handed over the notice to Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina after receiving it from the ACC on Tuesday.

The 20 top corruption suspects, who are going to be served ACC

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## 14,000 workers to lose jobs

Govt decides to shut 4 jute mills

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to shut down four state-owned jute mills and retrench 14,000 workers from 22 mills including these four as part of its three-year reform programme to revive the country's jute sector.

Under this programme Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) will resume operation at its 18 mills from this month, said Geetara Safiya Choudhury, adviser to the jute and textiles ministry.

The ministry has sought Tk 200 crore from the finance ministry for these mills to procure jute from this month. Geetara said at a press briefing at her jute ministry conference room yesterday.

She said the ministry has also sought Tk 138 crore to get cash credit from different commercial

banks through issuing government bond and guarantee.

The ministry found People Jute Mills in Khulna, Karnaphuli Jute Mills and Forat-Karnaphuli Carpet Factory in Chittagong, and Kaomi Jute Mills in Sirajganj non-viable to run and they will be closed permanently to sell out them to private entrepreneurs.

The adviser said a total of 6,000 workers of these four mills will be retrenched. Another 8,000 workers will be retrenched from the rest 18 mills to bring down the work force of the mills by 50 percent. Then the necessary workers will be recruited on a daily basis to save a huge amount of money as labour cost.

Geetara said a total of Tk 1,367 crore will be given to the workers as golden handshake benefit, gratuity, provident fund, lay off benefit, notice pay, overtime and pending

wages. She hoped that the money would be available from the government's privatisation and special funds.

Under its reform programme the jute ministry has formed a high-powered taskforce comprising representatives from the jute and finance ministries and BJMC to oversee the jute procurement activities.

The adviser informed that an investigation revealed gross misconduct in procuring jute for the state-owned jute industries.

The ministry has a target to procure 55 lakh tonne raw jute from 58 procurement centres across the country for the 18 mills.

The ministry has initiated steps to sell 120 acres of BJMC's 1,200 acres of land to generate funds for the industries.

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## Khaleda demands Hasina's release

BNP leaders unaware of her statement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Setting a rare example, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday demanded immediate release of her arch political rival Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina, and regretted failure of the administration to protect her [Hasina] dignity while being taken to court.

"I am deeply disheartened to see that being a former prime minister, chief of a political party, daughter of a national leader, an aged woman as well as a distinguished citizen of the country, she [Hasina] faced a disgraceful and indecent situation on the court premises," Khaleda said in a statement, signed by Maruf Kamal Khan, deputy press secretary to the former prime minister.

BNP leaders however said they are not aware of any such statement.

"It [indecent situation] hurt all conscious people and destroyed the image of the government both

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Policemen on guard at the sub-jail on the Sangsad Bhaban premises prevent relatives of Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina from visiting her yesterday.

## WHEAT SCAM 3 cops among 5 jailed for bribery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday sentenced three police officers to seven years' rigorous imprisonment for taking Tk 14.92 lakh in bribe to suppress the seizure of a huge amount of substandard wheat at Fatullah in January this year.

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## Due legal process will be followed in Sigma's case Dhaka assures UNsecygen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The foreign ministry yesterday assured that the legal proceedings against the detained Sigma Huda, a UN Special Rapporteur and wife of former BNP minister Nazmul Huda, would follow due process.

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## Market products in Lanka aggressively Says SL minister to improve Dhaka-Colombo ties

ASHFAQ WARES KHAN

Bangladesh will have to aggressively market its products in Sri Lanka and improve connectivity at the earliest to increase the paltry annual trade of \$35 million, said Sri Lanka Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama.

Bangladesh government is undergoing a 'homegrown' experiment as a solution to address fundamental issues for the greater good of the country and its people, Bogollagama said in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star on Tuesday.

It is a process that countries must go through phases to reform and correct fundamental issues to strengthen democracy and rule of law, the Lankan foreign minister said adding, "Bangladesh is on their way to addressing its issues."

Asked to comment on Dhaka-

Colombo relation, Bogollagama said, "There are a lot of scopes for further growth in our relationship."

Mentioning that both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have 'liberal economies' and are members of Sagre and Bimstec, the Lankan foreign minister identified a number of areas for growth.

"From developing our trade relationship, we can also enhance people-to-people connectivity, air connectivity and our sea-routes," he said.

Bogollagama suggested aggressive marketing of Bangladesh products that could be exported to Sri Lanka to improve trade relations between the two countries.

"The local pharmaceutical industry can have a major input in this regard and cement can also have a strong influence. Food items and commodities can significantly

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Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury hands over Buddha's hair to his Sri Lankan counterpart Rohitha Bogollagama at a Buddhist monastery in Chittagong yesterday.

## Buddha hair relic handed over to SL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cg

Hair relics of Gautam Buddha were handed over to the representatives of Sri Lankan government at a festive ceremony at Chittagong Buddhist Monastery yesterday, marking a historic moment of sharing an invaluable possession as a token of fraternity between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Sangharaj Dharmasen Mohasthab, the supreme patriarch of the Buddhists in Bangladesh, handed over the hair relics (kesho dhata) to Udayagama Sri Buddhaxmita Thero, chief of Asigiri Chapter of Sri Lanka, through the government representatives of the two countries.

Responding to the gesture of religious and brotherly tie, Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama also handed over a footprint of Buddha as a gift to Bangladesh.

Religious Adviser Maj Gen (ret'd) Dr ASM Matur Rahman and Foreign Adviser Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury represented Bangladesh while Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama, Trade and Marketing Development Minister Bandula Gunawardena and Religious and Moral Upliftment Minister Pandu Bandarnaike, received the relics on behalf of Sri Lankan government.

Addressing the ceremony, the

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## None allowed to visit Hasina

Tofail, Razzak meet acting AL chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The jail authorities did not allow Sheikh Hasina's family members and lawyers to meet her at the special jail yesterday to discuss the Anti-Corruption Commission's notice for submitting her wealth statement.

The Awami League (AL) sent a letter to the home ministry yesterday morning seeking permission for eight lawyers to meet the detained party chief to provide her

with necessary legal aid but it did not get any response as of 8:00pm.

Meanwhile, after three days of Hasina's arrest, reformist AL leaders Abdur Razzak and Tofail Ahmed last night met the party's Acting President Zillur Rahman and expressed their firm determination to be united under the leadership of Hasina in her absence.

Expressing their concern over the arrest of the party chief, they told Zillur that there were

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## Protests go on against arrest

Hartal in Rangpur today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Protest against the arrest of Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina and demand for her immediate release continued for the third consecutive day across the country yesterday.

A number of people in Rangpur, mostly activists of AL and its front organisations, yesterday called a half-day hartal for today protesting Hasina's arrest.

Different organisations and eminent personalities criticised the arrest of the AL chief and asked the government to release Hasina on bail immediately.

A total of 112 cultural activists

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## MCCI critical of monetary policy

Asks govt not to hike fertiliser, energy prices

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) has criticised the central bank's recently announced monetary policy, saying it will push up inflation and lending rate.

The chamber urged the government to ensure that administered prices of fuels, utilities and fertiliser

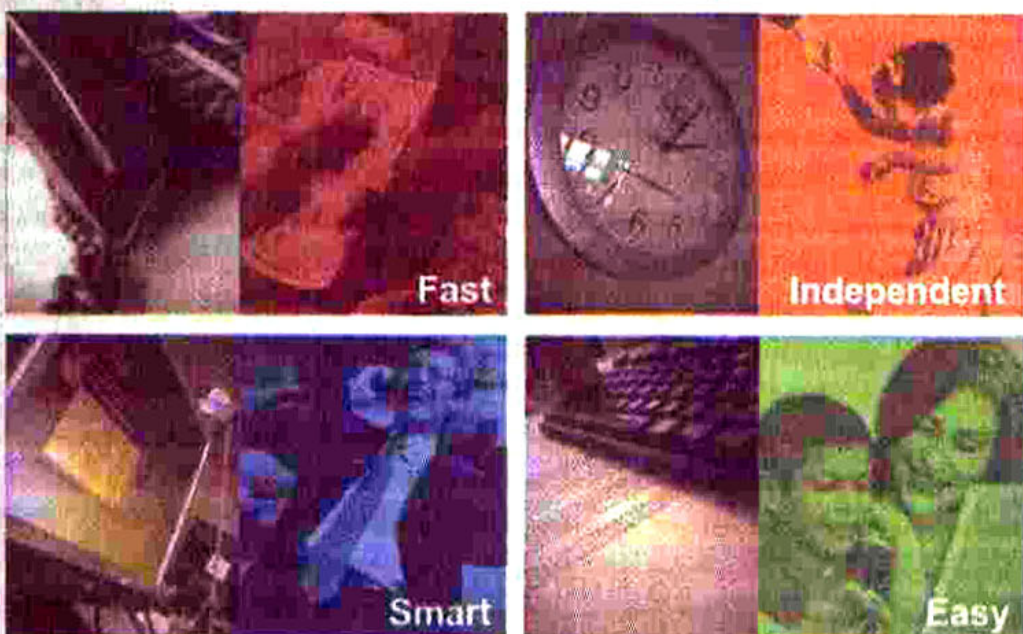
ers are not increased, as higher prices will aggravate the inflationary situation.

"It is for such price increases, the inflation rate was higher in the rural areas than in the urban areas," the MCCI said.

In a statement yesterday, the MCCI urged the central bank to consult the leaders of private sector

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