

Task force starts monitoring Titas activities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The army-led Task Force against Serious Crimes and Corruption yesterday started monitoring the activities of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd amid allegations of corruption and irregularities in the organisation.

Led by Lt Col ATM Hasan Ahmed, the task force team came to the head office of Titas at Karwan Bazar at around 10:15am and held a two-hour long meeting with the high officials of the public utility body. The team left the building at around 12:45pm.

The team also set up a complaint box in front of the main entrance and established a temporary camp on the first floor of the building.

The public utility body came under the task force's supervision as part of the government's drive against institutionalised corruption in the second phase of the ongoing anti-graft campaign.

Titas officials told the reporters that the task force team came yesterday finding some past irregularities and corruption in the organisation.

The task force team gave a written statement without any signature to the Titas officials, which was later distributed among the journalists.

In the statement, the task force said that they received allegations

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Talks with EC Resentment in AL over large dialogue team

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some of the Awami League (AL) leaders, who were chosen for dialogue on electoral reforms with the Election Commission (EC), yesterday spoke against making the committee big and proposed to drop their names from it.

The party's central working committee will hold its adjourned meeting on November 1 to address the displeasure, which may see the 21-member team slashed down to five- to seven-member, sources said adding that the new one may add in some fresh faces.

The EC asked for 10 representatives from the AL.

Some of the committee members, who met to review the EC's draft reform proposals and prepare a set of recommendations, said they would not join the talks but promised to work on preparing the party's statement, to be placed before the commission.

Questioning the size of the dialogue committee, the AL's Organising Secretary Mahmudur Rahman Manna said there is no

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Delwar makes his big show with ex-MPs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday held a meeting with a number of party's former lawmakers, first such meeting since his appointment as secretary general on September 2.

The meeting apparently was a show of strength against expelled secretary general of the party Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, sources said.

Bhuiyan earlier claimed that more than 100 former lawmakers of the party and most of the party's executive committee members are beside him.

Bhuiyan also held a meeting with party's executive committee members and former lawmakers on September 15. Over 50 out of the 251 executive committee members and 63 former lawmakers had attended the meeting with Bhuiyan in the chair.

However, only 40 former lawmakers attended the meeting at Delwar's NAM flat in the capital yesterday afternoon and expressed their support for detained BNP chief Khaleda Zia and newly appointed Secretary General Delwar Hossain.

Asked why only 40 former lawmakers attended the meeting when BNP had around 220 lawmakers (including MPs selected for

Huge Yaba haul in city

One of drug barons held; VoIP equipment also found

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) suspects Amin Huda, arrested early yesterday at his Gulshan office with 130,000 Yaba tablets, is one of the top barons of the drug business in Bangladesh.

This is the largest ever Yaba haul in the country.

During a raid, the elite crime busters also arrested Huda's close aide Ahsanul Haque Hasan, 34. The Rab also seized over 5,000 Yaba's alternative drugs ice pills, ice pill preparing chemical, foreign liquor, phensidyle, over Tk 46 lakh and currencies of six other countries.

Illegal voice over internet protocol (VoIP) equipment estimated to be worth over Tk 5 crore was also seized from Manticor Technology Ltd office. Rab said Huda had long been running illegal businesses under cover of this office.

Huda is manufacturing Yaba tablets in Bangladesh since 1999-2000, said a source in Narcotics Control Department (NCD) asking not to be named. He learned the technology from an expert named Neogate, who visited Bangladesh from the New York in the US, he added.

The source also claimed Huda had a close link with Hava Bhaban regarding other businesses.

Soon after his arrest, Huda told



PHOTO: STAR

A huge quantity of Yaba tablets and foreign liquor on display at Rapid Action Battalion Headquarters in the capital yesterday. The elite force also arrested two in this connection.

The Daily Star has no illegal businesses. The Uganda-born claimed to be an Australian national, but could not show any documents to validate his claim.

The Rab has also recovered his

Bangladeshi passport, which could not be verified immediately.

Rab officials said Huda is a nephew of controversial businessman Aziz Mohammad Bhai. The officials of Manticor Technology

Ltd also corroborated the Rab statement.

Huda remained tight-lipped when The Daily Star asked him about his relationship with Bhai.

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MAGURCHHARA BLOWOUT, PHULBARI LEASE ACC finds 'no merit' in Khaleda case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has decided not to take into cognisance the allegations against former premier Khaleda Zia regarding the compensation for Magurchhara gas field blow-out and leasing out Phulbari coal zone to Asia Energy.

The ACC yesterday also tasked one of its assistant directors to conduct primary enquiry into the wealth and properties of Jatiya Party (JP) Secretary General Ruhul Amin Hawlader.

The anti-graft body has taken the decision about allegations against Khaleda as the preliminary enquiry found that the allegations have no merit.

"As enough documents and evidence were not found for preparing a first information report (FIR) against the former prime minister, the enquiry officer in his report suggested not to proceed further in this regard," said ACC Secretary Mukhles Ur Rahman at a press briefing at the ACC headquarters yesterday.

ACC Deputy Assistant Director Farid Uddin Ahmed submitted the report before Eid-ul-Fitr, saying no evidence or information was found to prove the allegations brought against Khaleda.

"The commission does not

proceed with allegations lacking merit," the ACC secretary said.

Official enquiry about 11 graft suspects is going on, Mukhles said, adding that unofficial enquiry about the 24 persons on the fourth ACC list of graft suspects is also being conducted.

It was alleged that Khaleda played "dubious" roles in realising the compensation for the Magurchhara blow-out caused by negligence of US company Occidental in 1997 and leasing out Phulbari coal zone to Asia Energy. Her actions in these matters violated the law and the country incurred huge financial losses at the expense of benefiting a few individuals.

According to an investigation report on the Magurchhara blow-out, awarding of the gas blocks to Occidental itself was highly controversial. The blow-out on June 14, 1997 caused a loss of Tk 3,900 crore.

The ACC is also investigating into allegations of awarding gas fields to Niko Resources involving both the BNP chairperson and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina. The commission is likely to publish the investigation report in November.

Meanwhile, the anti-graft body initiated the primary enquiry

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Thai firms keen to assist in elevated expressway

UNB, Dhaka

Thailand is interested to cooperate with Bangladesh in constructing elevated expressway in the capital to ease traffic congestion.

Thai companies are also interested to work with Petrobangla in offshore gas exploration in Bangladesh, Thai Ambassador in Dhaka Suphat Chitranukroh informed when he paid a farewell call on Chief Adviser Fakhrudin Ahmed at his office yesterday.

The envoy further told the chief adviser that the Thai communications ministry would assist in constructing the elevated expressway using the vast experiences of construction of their elevated highways.

The chief adviser said he will follow it up as Bangladesh wants to expedite construction of the elevated expressway.

The Thai envoy also apprised the chief adviser that many Thai companies are interested to relocate their industries in Bangladesh availing the opportunity of cheap labour force and investment-friendly atmosphere.

Welcoming the idea, the chief adviser said it will be a win-win situation for both the countries. He lauded the successes of Thailand in horticulture, agriculture and

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Talks with Yangon mulled to tackle Yaba menace

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

Government high-ups now mull initiating diplomatic moves to get help from countries concerned especially Myanmar to address the crisis arising out of use and trade in Yaba, a drug containing morphine and amphetamine.

The idea of diplomatic move followed recent raids by law enforcers that unfolded a gloomy picture of youths from the elite class either using the drug regularly or trading in it or doing both.

Interestingly, one week into launching the drive against use and trade in Yaba, price of the drug has risen four fold to Tk 1,200 per pill although the drive is still going on in full swing.

Law enforcers, especially the elite force Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) that are conducting the countrywide drive since October 18, have discussed requesting government high-ups to take up the issue at diplomatic level to address the crisis more effectively.

official sources said.

High-ups both in the government and Rab also had informal discussion in this regard.

Rab is now working on a concrete proposal to be placed before the home ministry for initiation of the diplomatic move. "The home ministry will forward the proposal to the foreign ministry so that it can take steps in this regard," a Rab source said.

The drug is smuggled into the country by air and land routes mainly from Thailand, Myanmar and Nepal.

Major supply of the drug comes regularly from Myanmar as we share around 271 km of border with that country -- 208 km of land border and 63 km of river border-- Rab sources said.

In case of a decision on taking up diplomatic moves, the proposal is likely to be sent to Myanmar first to help Bangladesh fight the new drug crisis.

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Voter list to be flawless

Says CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday said that the Election Commission (EC) would prepare a voter list free from flaws and acceptable to all.

"There were 1.22 crore fake voters in the previous voter list. This time we will prepare such a voter list the nation can take pride in," the CEC said.

He was addressing a view exchange meeting at Sultanganj union in Kamrangirchar as the chief guest. It was organised as the Kamrangirchar pilot project for preparing voter list with photograph and delivering the national ID card kicked off yesterday.

Meanwhile, work on the pilot project for preparing voter list with photograph and national ID card also started yesterday at Dania in Shyampur and Uttarkhan of the city. The CEC said that the EC has taken it as a challenge to enrol the floating and extremely poor people in the nearby areas of the city corporation.

Earlier the voter list was prepared on the information of

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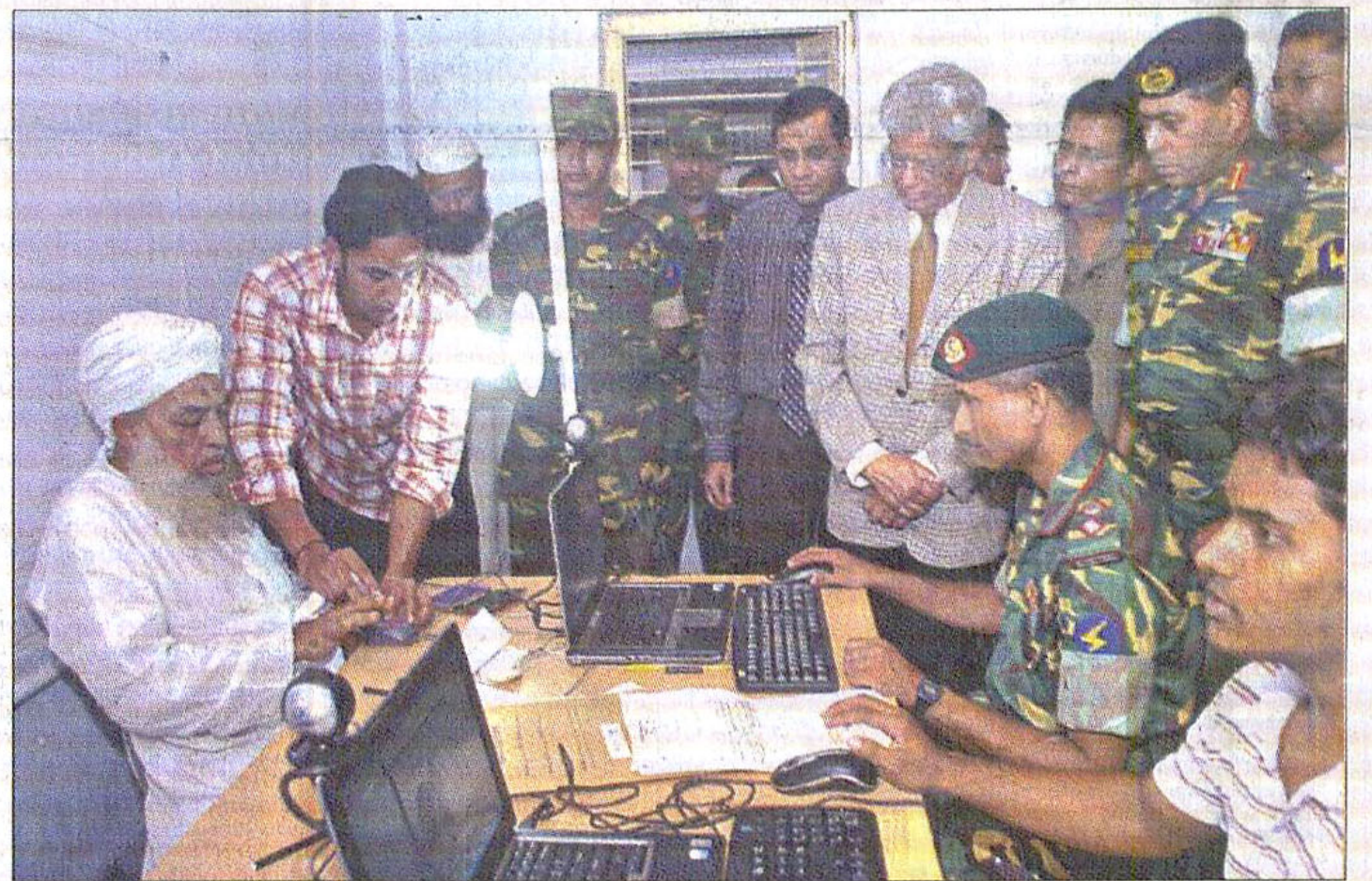


PHOTO: STAR

Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda, centre, sees voter list and national ID card preparation under a pilot project at Kamrangirchar in Dhaka yesterday.

Maya, family charged with hiding wealth Arrest warrant against Hasnat



Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday pressed charges against former state minister for shipping Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya and his four family members in a case for concealing Tk 5.08 crore in the wealth statement submitted to the ACC.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday issued arrest warrant against Awami League (AL) leader and former chief whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah in a tax evasion case.

Besides, the ACC yesterday pressed charges against detained former BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu in two cases for mis-

appropriating relief materials.

MAYA CASE

ACC Assistant Director Towfiqul Islam, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet against Maya and four others to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court showing 40 people as prosecution witnesses.

The other accused are Maya's wife Parvin Chowdhury, their two sons Sajedul Hossain Chowdhury Dipu and Rashedul Hossain Chowdhury and Dipu's wife Subarna Chowdhury.

The IO prayed for issuance of arrest warrant against the accused and a court order to attach their properties, as they have been absconding since filing of the case.

The IO dropped the names of Maya's son Rifat Sayeed Chowdhury and Rashed's wife Farhana Chowdhury from the charge sheet as their involvement was not found during the probe.

In the charge sheet, the IO mentioned that the charges brought against the accused were primarily proved and they should be tried.

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AUG 17 BLASTS 2 JMB men get 10yrs 4 militants charged with Dhaka blasts

STAR REPORT

A Sylhet court yesterday sentenced two Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) activists to 10 years rigorous imprisonment in connection with blasting bombs at two places in Sunamganj on August 17, 2005.

Meanwhile, Detective Branch (DB) of Police pressed charges against four JMB activists in two cases filed in connection with bomb blasts in Tejgaon and near Dhaka Sheraton Hotel on August 17, 2005.

Sylhet Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal Judge Dipyoman Sarker fined the two convicts, Abdul Aziz alias Hanif and Salehin alias Salahuddin, Tk 5,000 in default of which they have to suffer a year more in prison, our staff correspondent in Sylhet reports.

Sunamganj Police Station Sub-inspector Jashim Uddin Faruque filed cases after bombs went off at six places in Sunamganj on August 17, 2005.

Later, Sub-inspector Moinul Islam of the same police station submitted charge sheet against the two JMB militants for the blasts at the Bar Library building and central Eidgah Maidan.

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Jamaat now denies its anti-liberation role in 1971

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh yesterday said they did not work against the Liberation War in 1971 and claimed that there is no war criminal in the country.

"In fact anti-liberation forces never even existed," Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid told reporters coming out of the talks with the Election Commission (EC) on electoral reforms.

According to newspaper reports, speeches and statements of those accused of war crimes, and the finds of different probes including the People's Enquiry Commission, Mujahid, who was president of East Pakistan Jamaat Chhatra Shanga (Islamic Students' Organisation) in 1971, helped the occupying Pakistani army carry out massacre, looting and rape.

Only two days before the war ended, he led the killers of renowned academics, litterateurs, doctors, engineers, journalists and other eminent personalities with a view to leave the nation intellectu-

ally crippled.

Senior Jamaat leaders Abdus Sobhan, Moulana Delwar Hossain Sayeedi, Abdul Kader Molla and Muhammad Kamaruzzaman who were in the delegation to the EC yesterday have been charged with war crimes.

Jamaat Amir Matru Rahman Nizami was the president of Jamaat Chhatra Shanga (Islamic Students' Organisation) in 1971. Al-Badr Bahini was set up under his direct supervision. He became the commander-in-chief of the paramilitary force designed to eliminate the freedom fighters, reads the report of the People's Enquiry Commission, a body formed in 1993 with eminent citizens to investigate into the activities of the war criminals and the collaborators.

Since the independence Jamaat had been constitutionally banned in Bangladesh till 1976.

Asked about the growing demand for declaring the anti-liberation forces and war criminals disqualified from contesting the national elections, the Jamaat

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