



ZIA BLACKOUT CAAB probe body finds nothing so far

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The probe committee investigating the cause behind the two-hour blackout in Zia International Airport (ZIA) on Sunday is yet to throw light on the matter.

Meanwhile the Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry yesterday formed another probe committee in addition to the probe committee formed by the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB).

Both the committees have been asked to submit reports within the next two days.

The unprecedented incident at ZIA brought the international airport to a virtual standstill on Sunday night, besides raising serious questions about security at the airport.

The power failure was followed by a failure to operate the two power generators, only one of

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Corrupt Titans staff to return Tk 400cr

Task force probe finds most of 126 corrupt employees meter readers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One hundred and twenty-six staff of Titans Gas have promised to return to the government exchequer assets worth around Tk 400 crore that they amassed illegally, sources in the task force against corruption said yesterday.

Of those who have given their word, 118 are employees including meter readers, linemen and CBA leaders, while the rest are officers.

To avoid being charged with corruption, they are ready to return cash, land, factories, flats and cars they earned through illegal means,

added the sources.

Investigations have revealed how some of the meter readers of Titans Gas Transmission & Distribution Company Limited have become rich overnight, said a task force official seeking anonymity.

Working under the National Committee to Combat Serious Crime and Corruption, the task force has decided to send the dossiers on 10 employees and 13 officials to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) for further investigation. The decision came after those employees and officials

had denied the allegations brought against them after probe.

Of the 10 employees, meter reader Israfil Alam was a candidate in the 2001 election from Raninagar-Atrai while Azizul Haque Majumder, another meter reader, sought to contest the cancelled ninth parliamentary election from Noakhali-1 constituency.

Immediately after their deployment at Titans Bhaban on October 25 last year, the army-led task force against corruption took a number of measures to identify the corrupt officials and employees.

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POWER PLANT CASE

Seven lawyers appointed as Amicus Curiae

A Canadian lawyer in town to defend Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday said the court will decide about accepting the independent opinion of a chartered accountants' (CA) firm gave regarding installation of the 100-megawatt oil-fired barge-mount Khulna power plant.

A High Court (HC) bench yesterday appointed seven senior Supreme Court lawyers as Amicus Curiae (friend of the court) to assist the court voluntarily. They would assist the HC on a point of law during ongoing hearing of the rule issued following a writ filed by Sheikh Hasina challenging bringing the extortion case against her under the Emergency Power Rules (EPR).

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Govt eyes consensus on crucial issues

Plans to inspire political parties not to boycott JS, go for street confrontation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government plans to forge an understanding among political parties on pre- and post-election situation for creating a conducive atmosphere for sustainable democracy free from the recent political culture of parliament boycott and street confrontations.

Policymakers of the interim administration that is already working for holding the much-talked-about dialogue with political parties contemplate having a consensus among the parties on crucial issues so that after the general election they (parties) go on with the reforms to strengthen democracy, sources said.

At the talks with parties, the caretaker government might raise vital issues like the culture of parliament boycott, hartal and strike, making parliament effective by strengthening parliamentary bodies and continuing the anti-corruption drive. It is likely to pursue the issues to make the parties announce their stances on the issues, the sources added.

"Dialogue with political parties should address not only post-election but also pre-election situation. If the country goes back to pre-1/11 (January 11 last year) situation, it will not be a good sign," Adviser for Housing and Public Works Ghulam Quader

yesterday said without specifying any issues relating to the post-election situation.

Talking to reporters at his office, the adviser to the military-backed caretaker government categorically said the issues should be resolved if the dialogue with political parties is to succeed.

Education Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman yesterday said the caretaker government is making preparations for talks with parties. "We will announce the date for talks once preparations are complete," Zillur said, adding the government hopes it can make the talks fruitful.

Law Adviser AF Hassan Arif on

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GOVT HOUSE SALE SC clears way to proceed with Abbas case

UNB, Dhaka

The Supreme Court yesterday stayed the High Court order that had stalled the proceedings of a graft case filed against detained former Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas on charges of selling 18 abandoned government houses on a fake auction.

Responding to an Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) petition, a six-member bench of the Appellate Division passed the order, clearing the way for the prosecution to go ahead with the case.

Passing the order, the apex court also advised the parties to get the HC rule heard as soon as possible.

The ACC moved the petition, seeking permission to appeal against the January 2 High Court order.

The High Court, following a writ petition, had stayed the further proceedings of the case and issued a rule upon the ACC in this regard.

On March 29 last year, the ACC filed the case with Motijheel Police Station against Abbas, former commerce minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, Harris

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Water Development Board re-excavates Shuvadya canal in Keraniganj on the outskirts of the capital yesterday since it is choked with industrial waste dumped by nearby garment factories.

BSMMU PRISON CELL 14 VIPs go back to jail in a week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 14 VIP inmates who are having treatment at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) prison cell are to be moved back to jail within one week.

The BSMMU authorities will gradually discharge VIP prisoners who can have treatment in jail.

Jail and BSMMU authorities made the decision yesterday after allegations were made in connection with undue overstay of VIP inmates at the prison cell depriving other sick prisoners of their treatment facilities. Several meetings were also held before this regard.

Sources said a number of the VIP prisoners at the prison cell have been carrying out their political and business activities and have also been meeting their relatives on regular basis.

Jail sources said out of the 19 VIP inmates at BSMMU prison cell, 14 are allegedly staying there even though they are not seriously sick. A number of the doctors also allegedly had a hand in their undue stay at the prison cell, the sources said.

Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG-Prisons) Maj Shamsul Haider Siddique told The Daily Star, "We are hopeful that we will be able to move back the prisoners whose treatment is possible in jail."

"We have talked to the VC (vice-chancellor) of BSMMU and the doctors concerned about this," he said, adding, "The process of taking them gradually back to jail may start within three to four days."

Prof Mohammad Tahir, vice-chancellor of BSMMU, told The Daily Star, "It is true that all 19 VIP prisoners are sick. But I have told doctors concerned to consider discharging those who can have treatment in jail."

The VC said, "Most of the inmates are suffering from various minor diseases, including blood pressure (high or low) and diabetes, which are not cent percent curable. Therefore, it is possible to continue their treatment keeping them in the jail."

"There are a number of other sick prisoners who need to get the treatment facilities here but they

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BALI MEET BEGINS Dhaka seeks int'l support to bring back siphoned off wealth

REZAUL KARIM, from Bali, Indonesia

Bangladesh has sought support from the international community in bringing back the wealth of the country siphoned off overseas by corrupt people.

The appeal was made by the Bangladesh delegation at the second session of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) that kicked off in Indonesia's Bali resort island yesterday.

Around 1,000 delegates from about 140 countries, eight state observers, seven UN agencies and other international organisations and 30 local and international non-governmental organisations are attending the conference at the Bali International Convention Centre in Nusa Dua.

The meet aims to find ways for bringing back billions of dollars in assets stolen by corrupt political leaders throughout the world.

Coordinating Minister for Political, Law and Security Affairs of Indonesia, Widodo Adi Sutjipto, inaugurated the conference on behalf of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

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Steps soon to reclaim plots given through irregularities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Housing and Public Works Adviser Ghulam Quader yesterday said steps would be taken soon to reclaim Rajuk plots allocated through irregularities.

Legal action will be initiated against officials who were involved in the irregularities, he told reporters after the task forces working at Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) briefed him about Rajuk management and irregularities in plot allotment.

The task forces are still looking into irregularities in plot allocation, the adviser said.

Four task forces led by Brig Gen

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Masterminds left out of Kibria murder probe

Allege slain leader's son, AL leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The masterminds behind the killing of Awami League (AL) leader Shah AMS Kibria are left out of investigation, putting the blame only on Harkat-ul Jihad al-Islami (Huji), the slain leader's son and other speakers alleged at a discussion yesterday.

Expressing dissatisfaction over the sluggish progress of the 2005 murder case, they said that the Huji could be involved in the killing, but their patrons were in the then BNP-Jamaat government.

"Everything will become clear if Khaleda Zia, Saifur Rahman, Motiur Rahman Nizami,

Lutfuzzaman Babar and Tarique Rahman are tried," AL leader Abul Mal Abdul Muhith said at the discussion held at Poet Sufia Kamal Auditorium of National Museum in the capital.

He delivered the memorial speech on Kibria titled "Foreign Policy of Bangladesh and SAMS Kibria."

Bangladesh Foundation for Development Research (BFDR) organised the programme on the occasion of Kibria's third death anniversary.

The former finance minister was killed in a grenade attack at a rally in Habiganj on January 27, 2005.

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BNP rebels offer olive branch

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pro-Saifur faction of BNP has given a proposal for unity to pro-Khaleda faction of the party, a highly placed party source said yesterday.

According to the source, in the proposal pro-Saifur faction said if necessary the two groups should be unified under the leadership of Khaleda and Khandaker Delwar Hossain. Saifur Rahman and Maj (ret'd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed are even ready to relinquish their posts of acting president and general secretary respectively.

However, there are differences of opinions within the pro-Saifur faction as one of its powerful leader Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and his followers are against the move.

The sources also said a few days ago, the proposal was sent to

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Bird flu spreads for poor watch, awareness

RASHIDUL HASAN and MAHBUBA ZANNAT

Poultry farm workers at Rajshahi in Savar are not provided with face masks or gloves for their protection. The farms do not have footbath at entry and exit points. Disinfectants are not used properly either.

"I didn't know that it's crucial to spray disinfectants two times a day. That's why I usually spray it every other week," said Liakat Ali, owner of a local poultry farm that is rearing 3,000 chickens.

"Even though my farm is registered (with the government), none of the government livestock officials came to me and asked me to improve the bio security system here," added Liakat.

Rajan, whose family owns Sharif Poultry Farm at Savar, said the government officials come to visit the farm only when they repeatedly inform them of sickness of the chickens.

Among the poultry farms visited by the correspondents, only Shah Ali Poultry at Gabtoli appeared to be following bio security measures. Iqbal, an employee of the farm, said, "11,700 fowls were culled last year following the spread of Avian influenza in the farm. It has been 105 days since we started to rear 12,000 birds, but no official has visited the farm yet."

The government last year

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US donates bird flu gears

UNB, Dhaka

The United States has donated 10,000 sets of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to Bangladesh as combat gear for strengthening avian influenza prevention and control.

Each PPE set consists of coveralls, shoe covers, a respirator, goggles, an apron, and inner and outer gloves.

"Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is critical in protecting government livestock officers and reducing possibilities of contamination as experts cull flocks, collect samples for verification of the H5N1 virus, and bury the infected poultry," said a news release here yesterday.

The Department of Livestock Services received the donation on Sunday.

Prior to this shipment of PPE, the

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Students protest NU question paper leak

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Students of Dhaka College and Eden Girls College yesterday staged demonstrations and blocked Mirpur Road for three hours protesting an alleged question paper leak of compulsory English for honours part two under National University (NU).

They also chanted slogans against the NU vice-chancellor and demanded his resignation.

However, NU authorities vowed that the exam will be held today and told examinees that the leaked question papers, which were available at different photocopy shops, were not copies of the original question paper.

"I heard the rumour of question paper leak. Students should not spend time behind the rumour because the rumour is not true. The

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Hearing of case against Ctg mayor suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong Divisional Special Judge's Court yesterday suspended the hearing of Bijoy TV graft case against city Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury as defence lawyers submitted the certified copy of the High Court order that stayed the proceedings of the case until April 16.

The same court fixed February 14 for next hearing of a tax evasion case against former state minister Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin, ignoring the request of the defence lawyer who pleaded for suspension of the case proceedings mentioning a High Court stay order.

As Nasir's lawyer could not place the certified copy of the stay order before the court, Judge SM

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DEATH ANNIVERSARY

WE PRAY TO ALLAH FOR OUR LATE CHAIRMAN SHAH ALAM CHOWDHURY WHO HAS LEFT US LAST YEAR ON THIS DAY. WE REMEMBER HIM EVERY DAY IN EVERY STEP FOR HIS CONTRIBUTION IN OUR SUCCESS. HE WILL REMAIN IN OUR HEART FOREVER. MAY ALLAH GRANT HIM PEACE IN HOLY ZANNAT.

ON BEHALF OF EMPLOYEES AND WORKERS OF
TAMISHNA GROUP
TAMISHNA YARN DYEING, TAMISHNA FASHION WEAR, ETAFIL SEWING THREAD

Former state minister Mir Nasir Uddin, left, and Chittagong City Corporation Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury wave to the crowd at a court building in Chittagong yesterday as they were taken there for hearing of cases against them.