

## Seven lawyers

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Meanwhile, a leading Canadian lawyer and professor of McGill University, Payam Akhavan, arrived in the capital yesterday to work as a counsel for detained Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina and its President Member Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim.

The lawyer has already sought permission from the jail authorities to meet Hasina.  
"We have submitted the lawyer's application with his photo and signature to the jail authorities seeking permission to meet Sheikh Hasina," Hasina's special aide Dr Hasan Mahmud told the Daily Star. He said if the lawyer gets permission to meet the detained AL president, they will discuss the charges brought against her.

Sources said Hasina's US educated son Sajeed Wazed Joy hired the lawyer to start a legal battle to get his mother and his uncle Selim exonerated from the charges. The sources added that Joy will send a few more prominent lawyers from the US and Canada in the coming days for his mother and his uncle.

The ACC yesterday decided to issue notices on four persons including former deputy minister for food Asadul Habib Dula, and former BNP MP Dewan Salauddin, who were listed as graft suspects on the fourth list published on October 4, asking to submit their wealth statement.

Director General (Admin) Col Hanif Iqbal replying to a question regarding opinion of the CA firm said the charge sheet was submitted in the case according to existing rules and laws.

"The evidence produced in connection with the case was gathered through investigation and the matter is now in the court. The court will decide about the report," Hanif told reporters during a routine briefing at the ACC headquarters.

Contradicting the case filed against seven including Hasina by ACC on September 2 last year, Chartered Accountants and Management and Tax Consultants SF Ahmed & Co, in its opinion has recently said Wartsila-Summit group was the lowest bidder in the tender for installation of the power plant.

The ACC in the case accused that the then prime minister Hasina and six others through mutual understanding and use of influence helped Wartsila-Summit group win the bid depriving the lowest bidder -- New England Power Company (NEPC).

The CA firm reviewing the project's bid documents gave its opinion that NEPC was wrongly rated as the lowest bidder.

The Summit Industrial and Mercantile Corporation approached SF Ahmed & Co on September 13 to give its professional opinion on selection of the lowest bidder from among the bids received in response to Request For Proposal (RFP) for the Khulna plant and the government policy on import of fuel for it. The firm completed its report on September 18.

**EXTORTION CASE**  
Hasina filed the writ with the HC last year challenging the government move to bring the Tk 2.99 crore extortion case filed by businessman Azam J Chowdhury under the EPR.

The HC issued a rule on the government to explain why bringing it under the EPR should not be declared illegal. The hearing on the rule started last week.

The seven lawyers who have been appointed as Amicus Curiae are TH Khan, Mahmudul Islam, Mahbubur Rahman, Rafiqul Islam Mia, Mahbubey Alam, Monsurul Huq Chowdhury and Abdur Rab Chowdhury.

Azam filed the case against former cabinet minister Sheikh Fazlul Karim and Hasina accusing them of taking about Tk 2.99 crore in return for allowing him to set up a power plant during the AL rule in 1996-2001 on

## BNP rebels offer

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Delwar through a former lawmaker. However, pro-Khaleda faction has yet to give any decision about the proposal, but the sources said they are ready to accept all but five to six leaders of the pro-Saifur faction, if they want to return unconditionally.

Maj Hafiz recently told the media that there is no alternative to unity of the party and if necessary he was ready to relinquish his post. Besides, Saifur Rahman had an hour-long telephone conversation with Delwar on December 1 and proposed unity, but Delwar did not give a reply.

## NU question

**FROM PAGE 1**  
exam must be held," NU Vice Chancellor Prof Syed Rashidul Hasan told The Daily Star.  
Previously, NU postponed the exam two times due to the same reason.

September 13 last year.

Sheikh Rehana was also charged with taking a portion of the extorted money in the supplementary charge sheet. Rehana is being tried in absentia as she lives in London.

Dr Hasan, also the forest and environment affairs secretary to the AL central working committee, said the Canadian lawyer has been appointed as a counsel of Hasina and Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim.

"The lawyer will especially look into whether human rights and due process were maintained in trying Sheikh Hasina," Hasan said.

"We have received an application from him [Payam]. As he is a foreigner, the Ministry of Home Affairs will look into the matter and decide whether to give him permission to meet her," DIG Prisons Maj Shamsul Haider Siddiqui told The Daily Star last night.

He said they will send Payam's application to the home ministry today and will take necessary steps according to the rules and regulations.

Dr Hasan said if law is allowed to take its own course then the government should allow the lawyer to meet Hasina.

Prof Payam, who is an US attorney and an international human rights activist, will also assist Hasina's and Selim's panel of lawyers, said the AL leader.

He added that the foreign lawyer will stay in the country till February 1, and is likely to come again considering necessities and the environment prevailing in the country in the future.

Meanwhile, three other lawyers of Hasina -- Barrister Shafiq Ahmed, Advocate Abdul Mannan Khan and Advocate Shahara Khatun -- met Hasina yesterday in the special jail on the parliament premises where she is interned, and discussed the cases against her.

During the meeting Hasina demanded that the stalled 9th parliamentary election be held soon. Advocate Shahara Khatun told The Daily Star that the AL chief also instructed her party leaders to seek early polls. She also said the AL chief has expressed her sadness at the sufferings of the people caused by price hikes of commodities. "If Awami League was in power, we would have kept the price of rice at 16 taka a KG," Shahara quoted Hasina as saying.

**ACC Notices**  
The other two to be served with ACC notices are Hossain Ahmmed, deputy assistant director, Habiganj passport office, and Sayed Abdul Bashir, office assistant, sub-registry office, Habiganj.

With these, the ACC has so far served notices on 16 out of the 35 from the fourth list of graft suspects.

The ACC has also decided not to file non-submission case against AL president member Sajeda Chowdhury and informed her about the decision in a letter.

Meanwhile, the ACC yesterday approved submitting charge sheet against six including the Daily Janakantha editor Atik Ullah Khan Masud and his wife Shamima A Khan for amassing wealth beyond known sources of income and concealing information.

In the charge sheets, Masud and his wife would be accused of amassing Tk 54.58 lakh and concealing wealth worth about Tk 1.3 crore.

Charge sheet will also be submitted against former engineer AFM Manjurul Islam, his wife Akter Zahana Ruby, former deputy general manager of Bapex Nurul Islam and assistant manager of Bapex Alamgir Kabir.

## Australia

**FROM PAGE 16**  
"This contribution reflects Australia's strong commitment to Bangladesh, particularly in its time of need, and our concern for people suffering in the affected areas," he added.

Australia will contribute A\$ 4 million to the World Food Programme's post-cyclone response programme, which will provide rice, pulses, vegetable oil, iodised salt, high-energy biscuits, wheat and soya bean to families in urgent need.

This contribution is in addition to A\$ 1 million already contributed to WFP for its immediate cyclone relief programme.

Australia will also provide A\$ 1.5 million to Brac for provision of nutrition supplements to 16,000 pregnant women and nursing mothers for six months, rehabilitation of around 2000 destroyed and damaged schools, replacement of school supplies, and provision of water and sanitation facilities.

A further \$1 million will be provided to Unicef for micronutrient fortified blended food for pregnant and nursing mothers and infants.

## Ctg mayor

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Solaiman asked him to submit the copy during the next hearing.  
Both Mohiuddin Chowdhury and Mir Nasir were produced in the court. They shook hands and exchanged greetings.

The High Court in separate orders stayed proceedings of the Bijoy TV case on January 17 this year and the tax evasion case in November last year.

On May 27 last year, Abu Md Arif Siddique, deputy director of Anti Corruption Commission (ACC), Chittagong, filed the Bijoy TV case against Mayor Mohiuddin Chowdhury, Chief Engineer Mokhter Alam, former chief executive officer Imtiaz Hossain Chowdhury, Superintendent Engineer Md Shahidullah and Director of Theatre Institute of Chittagong (TIC) Ahmed Iqbal Haider on charges of launching the private TV channel illegally and spending Tk 1.40 crore from the CCC fund for this purpose.

Engineer Shahidullah died in police custody on July 7 last year. His name was dropped from the charge sheet.  
submitted to the court on November 21. Name of Ahmed Iqbal was also dropped from the charge sheet, as his involvement in the graft could not be found.

On September 16 last year, National Board of Revenue (NBR) here filed two cases against former minister Mir

Nasir and his son Barrister Mir Mohammad Helaludin for concealing information on wealth statement and evading income tax. Deputy Tax Commissioner Bhuban Mohan Tripura of Circle 13 of Tax Region-2, Chittagong filed the cases with the then court of Metropolitan Session Judge AKM Anwar Hossain.

The NBR in its investigation found that Mir Nasir concealed information about Tk 13.80 crore and evaded tax. On the other hand, Mir Helal concealed Tk 11.70 crore in the statement and evaded tax.

**US donates**  
**FROM PAGE 1**  
US government had supplied 6,500 PPE kits, 20 decontamination kits, and 4,000 rapid antigen kits to the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock in preparation for urgent response to avian influenza outbreaks.

"The US mission will continue to collaborate on avian influenza initiatives as well as to provide ongoing support for the reconstruction efforts after Cyclone Sidr," the release said.

**Govt eyes**  
**FROM PAGE 1**  
Saturday categorically said political parties would have to pledge to the people before joining talks with the government that they would not go back to pre-1/11 situation.

Political parties however strongly criticised the law adviser's comment, saying they will not sit for talks with the government on conditions.

Issues concerning pre-election situation that might be raised at the talks include reforms in political parties to ensure financial transparency and practice of democracy within the parties, nomination of honest and efficient candidates for polls, code of conduct for the parties after withdrawal of the state of emergency and creating a congenial atmosphere for free and fair election might be raised, sources in the government said.

Meanwhile, the caretaker administration is yet to finalise the dialogue agenda though the advisers are hinting that some crucial issues will come up at the talks.

Earlier, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in his January 12 address to the nation said the government would initiate steps soon to hold talks with the parties. The council of advisers at a special meeting on January 10 decided to go for dialogue with parties but since then the advisers did not formally discuss ways to begin the talks.

The council however met twice during this period but it did not discuss the issue of dialogue with parties.

Once the talks between the Election Commission (EC) and political parties are completed, the government will proceed with its plan for dialogue with parties. Most of the reform issues will be resolved by the EC move, sources said.

"So, some major issues will be discussed at talks between the government and political parties," said a source in the interim administration.

Since restoration of parliamentary democracy following the mass upsurge in 1990 against military ruler HM Ershad, the last three parliaments witnessed frequent boycotts by the then opposition parties while the ruling parties ran the House as per their wishes ignoring the opposition demands.

As a result, the opposition parties took to streets with series of agitation programmes that included hartal and strike demanding resignation of the government. The ruling parties did not make the House effective by not allowing parliamentary bodies to play their due role in ensuring accountability of the government and transparency of parliament's functioning.

## 5 US soldiers killed in northern Iraq

**AP, Baghdad**

A roadside bomb killed five American soldiers yesterday in the northern province described as one of al-Qaeda in Iraq's last strongholds, just days after a massive house explosion and suicide attack killed 40 people in the provincial capital.

The military did not immediately provide more details on Monday's bombing in Ninevah province. On Sunday, Iraqi army reinforcements moved into positions near the provincial capital of Mosul, 225 miles northwest of Baghdad, ahead of a planned offensive announced by Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

US commanders describe Mosul as the last major urban center with a significant al-Qaeda presence since the terror network has been driven from its strongholds in the capital and Anbar province.

The US military, which a military spokesman said earlier this month was the last urban safe haven for al-Qaeda-led insurgents, has said Iraqi security forces will take the lead in Mosul, a major test of Washington's plan to, at an undetermined date,

shrink the American force and leave it as backup for Iraqi security forces.

Meanwhile, the situation in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, rocked by blasts blamed on al-Qaeda, is "worse than imagined," the defence minister said as troops braced for an assault on the jihadists.

The Iraqi Red Crescent, meanwhile, said the toll from one of the blasts, in which a building was obliterated and about 100 houses destroyed, was higher than reported by the Iraqi authorities, with 60 people killed and 280 wounded.

"The situation in Mosul is worse than imagined by far," Defence Minister Abdel Qader Jassim Mohammed told a news conference late Sunday after touring the flashpoint city.

Speaking at the army's Nineveh province command centre in Mosul, Mohammed was highly critical of the Iraqi military's deployment in Mosul.

"The forces are scattered. We are working to unify the command. The military units are distributed in Mosul in a way that means they haven't studied the area," Mohammed told reporters.

**Bali meet begins**  
**FROM PAGE 1**  
"We hope the international community will lend its full support to us in getting back the ill-gotten wealth kept in foreign lands. Bangladesh is committed against corruption and expects that the international community would provide it support in creating a corruption-free Bangladesh," Abul Hasan Manzoor Mannan, commissioner of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), said during the general discussion. He is leading the 8-member Bangladesh delegation.

The caretaker government acceded to the UNCAC within the first month of assuming office, the ACC commissioner told the conference adding that the implementation of the convention would help Bangladesh bring down corruption as well as get back the state wealth siphoned abroad.

Officials from different civil society organisations of Bangladesh, including the Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), are also participating in the conference.

"Corruption is a communicable disease, within and across countries. In some places, like a pandemic, it is out of control," Antonio Maria Costa, executive director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, observed at the inaugural function.

"Let me invite you (participants) all to be as perseverant and as conclusive as peers who attend this conference to decide and set targets so as to curtail the poisonous emissions of bribery, graft and greed that overheated public and private administrations," Antonio Maria Costa added.

He listed three tasks for the convention, namely, to share the experiences or reports about what have been done by UNCAC member countries in fighting corruption, to discuss which additional measures are needed like technical assistance and to support the quick development of a solid peer review mechanism.

According to a United Nations (UN) and World Bank (WB) report the global flows from criminal activities, corruption and tax evasion are estimated at between \$1 trillion to \$1.6 trillion a year.

**Abbas**  
**FROM PAGE 1**  
Chowdhury, political secretary to former prime minister Khaleda Zia, three former secretaries and a number of high officials of Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) and Power Development Board (PWD).

According to prosecution, the accused in connivance with each other sold 18 abandoned government houses on a fake auction at prices much lower than the market ones.

The houses, located in the city's posh areas like Gulshan, Banani, Dhanmondi and New Eskaton, were sold bypassing an open auction, causing a loss of Tk 127.64 crore to the national exchequer.

Advocate Anisul Huq appeared for the ACC while Barrister Rafique-ul-Huq for Abbas.

## Pak Sidr aid

**FROM PAGE 16**  
in separate letters to the Pakistani high commissioner to Bangladesh and the food secretary. Following directives from the food ministry, the food department received the containers holding the undamaged rice. The other containers holding the damaged rice were sealed off the same day.

It is suspected that the rice containers might have got water drenched during the passage by sea.

The containers of damaged rice might be opened in presence of representatives from authorities concerned, including the shipping agent for a decision in this regard, sources informed.

## Reclaim plots

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Nizam Ahmed, assigned to investigate institutionalised corruption in Rajuk, have been working since June 1.

The task forces already recommended expediting the function of "One Window Cell", an expert committee that issues development permits to land developers, and reviews certain conditions for them.

"Whether the condition that requires land developers to have at least 85 percent land while starting a project is practical," was discussed at the briefing, housing ministry sources said.

Since the One Window Cell, comprising representatives from different utility providers and Dhaka City Corporation, works very slowly, the task forces' recommendation to expedite the process led to formation of a sub-committee to this end, the source mentioned.

"And of course, they recommended raising the quality of staff at Rajuk," the source said.

Discussing various irregularities in plot allotment, members of the task forces urged the government to initiate probe into incidents of misinformation and hiding information in the process.

Many people received plots hiding information of having a housing plot in Dhaka City Corporation area and even after having one government plot, they said.

The task forces also asked for looking into documents concerning power of attorney given to land developers by plot recipients. Land developers start their business before they get necessary documents from the plot recipients, an official told this correspondent. Recommendations have been made to look into this, he added.

**DU Arabic dept**  
**FROM PAGE 16**  
university and Madrasa Board, which is illegal as per the university ordinance.

The Syndicate finalised their appointment on June 5 last year. But the appointment process was stalled following allegations of violating university ordinance.

Selection committee's subject expert Prof Dr Md Abubakar Siddique of Arabic department issued a 'note of dissent' while a Syndicate member resigned expressing resentment over the decision.

According to the university ordinance, if any honours student studies at any other institution simultaneously his or her admission and degree will be cancelled.

Sources said the authorities completed the appointment process through doubtful interpretation of rule claiming that the particular rule is not applicable to these candidates.

DU Vice-chancellor Prof SMA Faiz said the attorney general recommended that there was no legal complication over their appointment as the university's 'dual degree' rule is not applicable to them.

Following allegations from a number of teachers, we reviewed the legal aspects of the appointment very carefully. At last we found out that the candidates were harassed without proper reason," he added.

**WB initiates move**  
**FROM PAGE 16**  
bank's fund for post Sidr recovery. The deal was signed by Economic Relations Division Secretary M Aminul Islam Bhuiyan and WB Country Director Xian Zhu.

With yesterday's deal WB's total contribution rose to \$370 million for post Cyclone Sidr rehabilitation including re-allocated funds, budget support, and livelihood support.

Asked of WB's assessment of the caretaker government's economic performance, Patel said, "We think the economic management has been done very well."

## Kibria murder

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Presiding over the discussion, BFDI Chairman Professor Kabir Chowdhury said that an effort is on to limit the culprits in the killing only to the Huji, whereas the main perpetrator behind it was the BNP-Jamaat alliance government. The investigators are not linking the BNP-Jamaat men to the incident, he added.

"We hoped that the investigation would progress smoothly during the period of the caretaker government, but that did not happen. Therefore, questions arise if there are people in the government favouring the Jamaat," Professor Kabir Chowdhury said.

He also observed that at times, sympathy for the militants and the fundamentalists is noticed in the government itself. He asked the chief adviser to be careful of such elements.

Kibria's son Dr Reza Kibria said that there is neither any effort to catch the masterminds of the incident nor any endeavour to find out about the source of grenades used in killing the former finance minister.

An ill attempt is there to put the whole blame on the Huji, he said, adding "If such is the case, I outright deny the investigation report now." The Huji might be involved in the killing, but their patrons are not being mentioned, Dr Reza added.

Paying tribute to SAMS Kibria's role in diplomacy and economy, Muhith in his memorial speech said as a diplomat in Washington in 1971, Kibria expressed his loyalty to Bangladesh government and contributed immensely in creating opinions in favour of Bangladesh in the US.

Kibria was very knowledgeable about economic diplomacy and played a strong role in various international initiatives as a Bangladeshi representative in Geneva, Muhith said.

He said Kibria also contributed actively in the process of forming Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation).

BFDI Director General Monayem Sarker also spoke, while Kibria's widow Asma Kibria was present at the programme.

## Corrupt Titas staff

**FROM PAGE 1**  
As part of the efforts, they asked all Titas staffers to submit wealth statements.

On the basis of newspaper reports and their own investigation, the task force prepared a list of 250 employees and as many officials for questioning them about how they had accumulated wealth inconsistent with their legal sources of income.

So far 209 employees have been quizzed and of them, 118 were found to have amassed a fortune through corruption. As 10 others have denied allegations of corruption, the task force has decided to refer their cases to the ACC.

The sources said the rest were primarily proved not to have been involved in corruption.

Out of 250 officials on the list, 79 have been questioned and of them, eight have pledged to return their ill-earned wealth to the exchequer.

Evidence of graft has been found against 13 other officials. But since they deny having done anything wrong, their files would be sent to the ACC.

Kamal Uddin, a former director general of Titas, told newsmen that the Titas Bhaban yesterday that he would return Tk 2 crore to the state coffers.

Now a coordinator of a Petrobangla project, he observed that 80 percent officials and employees of Titas Gas Transmission & Distribution Company Ltd are corrupt.

**ZIA blackout**  
**FROM PAGE 1**  
which was started some 30 minutes after the blackout.

"We have worked the whole day but are yet to come to a conclusion in this regard," Abdur Rafiq Dewan, head of the probe committee, formed by Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB), told The Daily Star last night.

He however said that the probe committee had come across some primary reasons that may have caused the power outage but declined to give any further details on the continuing investigation.

Mahbub Jamal, special assistant to the chief adviser who is in charge of civil aviation and industry ministry, yesterday spent almost the whole day at ZIA and Balaka, head office of Biman Bangladesh Airlines Ltd.

He held talks with different officials on the matter.

Sources at the airport say that the power supply to ZIA snapped due to a power trip in the circuit breaker of the ZIA feeder lines.

There are about 10 to 13 feeder lines and 13-power sub-stations in ZIA through which power is distributed in this area.

CAAB chairman Air Commodore Sakeb Khan Majlish had initially said on Sunday night that the outage occurred due to a power failure in a grid of the power supply authority.

Desco provides power supply to ZIA.

## Pakistani hostage

**FROM PAGE 16**  
my information is that negotiations have been successful," village police chief Mohammad Ayub told AFP by telephone.

The incident comes amid a tide of violence in Pakistan since the assassination of former premier Benazir Bhutto that has raised fears for the country's stability ahead of key elections on February 18.

The school is near the north-western border with Afghanistan, where Pakistani forces have been locked in fierce fighting with al-Qaeda and Taliban Islamist militants for the past three weeks.

Police said the militants holed up at the school, about 250 kilometres west of Islamabad, after they abducted a health worker in the village and drove off with him, police said.

Police gave chase and in the ensuing shoot-out one militant was killed and a policeman was wounded, while the medic escaped, senior local police official Shakirullah, who goes by one name, told AFP.

District police chief Dar Ali Khattak said the militants had "all types of weapons like rocket launchers and grenades."

Militants in northwest Pakistan have increasingly resorted to kidnappings and hostage-takings to press their demands for Islamic Sharia law and an end to military operations in the region.

Pakistani forces on Sunday said they had seized control from the militants of a key road tunnel that links the district where the school is located to the main northwestern city of Peshawar.

But a soldier died in fierce fighting that continued on Monday in the nearby tribal area of South Waziristan, where Pakistani officials say the key suspect in the murder of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto is hiding out.

Islamist warlord Baitullah Meshud denies any involvement in her killing but fighting in his mountainous fiefdom has escalated since the killing of Benazir Bhutto on December 27.

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