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REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XVIII No. 20

DHAKA SUNDAY FEBRUARY 3, 2008

www.thedailystar.net

HASINA'S EXTORTION CASE Plaintiff now accused in another case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tajul Islam Farook who filed a Tk 3 crore extortion case against detained Awami League chief and former premier Sheikh Hasina in April last year is also accused in a case.

The case was filed for selling two luxurious vehicles he had bought taking loan from Bangladesh Finance and Investment Company (BFIC) breaching the deed of agreement and aiming at embezzling those.

Farook's wife Sultana Akhter was a guarantor of the loan and is also an accused.

BFIC Legal and Recovery Officer Emdad Ullah filed the case with Motijheel Police Station on January 21 under sections 420 (cheating), 406 (breach of trust) and 109 (abatement) of the Bangladesh Penal Code following recovery of one vehicle.

Besides, charges were also brought against Tajul for not SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

ONE-YEAR IN OFFICE

EC trails behind roadmap schedule

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The reconstituted Election Commission (EC) completes one year of operation today but is yet to begin a few major tasks, including publication of the draft voter list and holding polls to different local government bodies within January as per its electoral roadmap.

The EC also could not complete some tasks that were supposed to be finished by this time. For instance, the dialogues with the political parties on electoral law reforms and institutional reforms were not held during September-November last year according to the EC roadmap.

The commission is also yet to formulate rules it was empowered to do last August for legalising the

Issues	Timeframe	Present status
Dialogue with political parties	To complete by Nov '07	Yet to be completed
All legal amendments	To be done by Feb '08	Would be done By March
Publication of draft voter list	To begin from Jan '08	Yet to start
Polls to local govt bodies	To begin from Jan '08	Yet to start

ongoing procedure for preparing the voter list with photographs and publication of its draft.

Sources in the EC Secretariat, however, said the rules will be formulated this week and the publication of the draft voter list will begin sometime this month.

Announcing the roadmap on July 16 last year, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda said there is no scope to deviate from the timeframe as deviation from one component would create pressures on others.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

CA talks to villagers about their problems

UNB, Mithapukur, Rangpur

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed took a walkabout near Rangpur town yesterday, enquiring villagers about their everyday problems.

The chief adviser got out of his car at Baldipukur bus stoppage in Pairaband union on his way to Mithapukur upazila where he met a cross-section of the society.

Fakhruddin asked them about the prices of essentials in the area. The villagers told him that rice is selling at Tk 28 per kg and potato at Tk 10.

Farmers said they are facing scarcity of urea and potassium fertilisers. "If these are sold in the open market, it would be easier for us," said many of them.

The chief adviser, however, said open-market sale may increase fertiliser price, but the farmers maintained that they would at least be able to buy "without harassment."

Fakhruddin assured them that fertiliser would not be a problem as the government has taken adequate steps to supply it to the farmers on time.

Govt unveils plans for the North

UNB, Rangpur

The Council of Advisers at its first meeting here yesterday gave a nod to the caretaker government's 14-point programme for the rapid socioeconomic development of the country's northern region, especially Rangpur.

The programmes include close and round-the-clock supervision for ensuring the Boro production in the coming season, formation of a committee headed by an adviser to resolve Monga problem, setting up of a full-fledged university in Rangpur, activating the airports of the region and taking measures to export more manpower from there.

The meeting was held at Rangpur Circuit House with Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in the chair. The meeting started at about 12:00 noon and lasted for three hours.

This was the first-ever meeting of the Council of Advisers held outside the capital. It was attended by all advisers, special assistants to

the chief adviser and secretaries concerned.

The programmes also include construction and maintenance of roads, railways, bridges and embankments, making Birol, Banglaband and Sonar Hat land ports functional, taking steps to increase employment and expand businesses, ensuring healthcare services and expanding inland tourism.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, the chief adviser said the specific decisions were taken after detailed discussions and directives have been given accordingly.

Responding to a question, he said meetings of the Council of Advisers will be held in other districts of the country gradually.

About holding the meeting in Rangpur, the chief adviser said there are some regional issues that need to be dealt with regionally, otherwise these problems will remain unaddressed.

Asked if the next government SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Huji carried out grenade attack in Sylhet

CID tells journo

UNB, Sylhet

Outlawed outfit Harkat-ul Jihad Al Islami (Huji) carried out the grenade attack on an Awami League meeting at Hotel Gulshan Centre in city's Taltala on August 7, 2004, police said.

CID Inspector Jubair Ahmed told the journalists yesterday that during interrogation, Huji leader Mufti Hanann and his brother Mofijur Rahman Ovi had confessed to their involvement in the grenade attack.

Shahriar Sahedul Haque Bipul, Humayun Kabir Himu and Fahim were involved in the attack.

Of them, Bipul is now in custody while others are on the run, said Jubair.

Publicity Secretary of city AL Mohammad Ibrahim was killed and 30 others were injured in the attack.

Sylhet City Mayor and city AL President Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran, who attended the SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

LINE REPAIR

Gas supply in city disrupted

UNB, Dhaka

Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Limited suspended gas supply to a major part of Dhaka city for 48 hours from last midnight for repairing the main gas-transmission line at Daudkandi in Comilla.

For suspension of gas supply, about a third of the capital city, particularly the southeastern part, is being directly affected as people of the area are looking for alternative sources of energy for cooking and other purposes.

The affected areas include Postagola, Zurain, Jatrabari, Dhalpur, Bibirbagicha, Gopibagh, Kamapur, Khilgaon, Basabo, Shahjahanpur, Badda, Rampura, Ulan, Tejgaon Industrial area, Mohakhali, Gulshan, Nayatola, Madhubagh, Santinagar, Siddheswari, Motijheel, Wari, Gendaria, Nawabpur, Sadarghat, Sutrapur, Banglabazar, Bakshibazar, Islampur, Hazaribagh and Azimpur.

Apart from the city areas, gas supply in some adjoining areas, including Sonargaon, Meghnaghat and Ruppang in Narayanganj, Gazaria in Munshiganj, Daudkandi, Homna and Titas in Comilla, and Banchharampur and Kachua in Chandpur came to a halt.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



PHOTO: STAR

Motorists queue up for CNG at a gas station at Kalyanpur in the capital yesterday as the capital is to experience interruption in gas supply for 48 hours from today.

No unity meeting as Saifur falls sick

He asks Khaleda group to accept reforms, rebels

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

M Saifur Rahman, acting chairman appointed by the standing committee, yesterday urged the pro-Khaleda leaders to accept intra-party reforms, reinstate those expelled, and shun the practice of selling nominations in the interests of a united BNP.

In a day or two, he and Khandakar Delwar Hossain, secretary general appointed by Chairperson Khaleda Zia, might meet to discuss different issues relating to reconciliation.

Insiders say despite efforts a meeting between the two stalwarts could not be held last night as the former finance minister was feeling sick.

The faction led by Delwar, meantime, remains rigid in their stance against return of the expelled leaders including Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan.

Sources said Delwar-Saifur meet would seek to get rid of these roadblocks.

Talking to reporters earlier in the day, Saifur said, "I told them [Delwar-led group] that reforms have to be accepted and those

expelled reinstated."

He added, "I'm one of the founding members of the party and I would never do anything that might break it up."

Nominations must not be given in return for large sums of money, observed the former finance minister.

"Reforms are not about Awami League or BNP. It is a national agenda," he noted adding that a lot of institutions here are in immediate need of reforms.

Pro-Khaleda leaders maintain that they have no objection to Saifur and others coming back into the fold.

A former lawmaker close to Delwar told The Daily Star, "We have no problem with Saifur and others returning, but the fate of Bhuiyan and his followers rests on the chairperson."

Most of those in Saifur-led faction want to reunite keeping aboard all including Bhuiyan and Ashraf Hossain, who were expelled from the party by Khaleda Zia but reinstated as members by the standing committee.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Release Hasina to make polls credible

Zillur asks govt

UNB, Dhaka

Acting Awami League (AL) President Zillur Rahman yesterday demanded immediate release of all political detainees, including party chief Sheikh Hasina, to make the next parliamentary polls credible.

"We're demanding release of all political detainees, including our great leader Sheikh Hasina immediately. We want to see a free, fair and credible parliamentary election," Zillur said.

The acting AL chief was addressing a press conference at the party's Dhanmondi office in the morning.

AL Relief Committee for Sidr victims, led by party president member Abdur Razzak, arranged the press conference to present statistics on relief materials, including cash, distributed by the party among Sidr victims in the country's southwestern districts.

Zillur also urged the caretaker government to lift the state of emergency soon, saying their fight for democracy will continue until their demands are met.

He thanked the AL leaders and activists both at home and abroad for their outstanding efforts to help the Sidr affected people.

"Soon after the November 15 SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Lift emergency, declare polls date soon

21 EU MPs urge govt

UNB, Dhaka

A group of European Parliament members urged the caretaker government to lift the state of emergency and announce an election date as soon as possible.

In a joint statement, they expressed concern over recent political developments in Bangladesh as well as health condition of detained former prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

"As members of the European Parliament we are ready to support further cooperation with Bangladesh as a long lasting development partner, if the present government restores civic and political liberties and arranges as soon as possible free and fair democratic elections under the presence of international observers," they said.

Some 21 members of European parliament issued the statement on January 22, which was released by Awami League office yesterday.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

TAGORE'S STOLEN NOBEL PRIZE

Prime suspect's aide held in city



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A close associate of Indian national Jibon Singh, a prime suspect in stealing the Nobel Prize medal of poet Rabindranath Tagore, was arrested at Azimpur in the city early yesterday.

A team of Criminal Investigation Department (CID), led by Additional Superintendent of Police Abdullah Aref, caught Mohammad Hossain Shiplu after a three-hour sweeping raid in the area.

CID sources said they had information that Jibon Singh is hiding in Bangladesh under the shelter of Shiplu and that both the men are

members of an international artefact-smuggling syndicate.

Indian police also informed their Bangladesh counterparts that they believe that the stolen medal is in Bangladesh, said the sources.

Officials said Shiplu admitted to having met Singh once but he did not know Singh's present whereabouts. They have already petitioned to a Dhaka court for a 10-remand for Shiplu, hearing on which will be held today.

Rab discovered link between Shiplu and Singh after India's CID officials wrote to Bangladesh police in November.

The law enforcers conducted several raids in the city that month in search of the medal, which was stolen from Uttarayan Complex of Vishwa Bharati University at Shantiniketan in March 2004. The high-profile heist also included a watch, a bangle and citations belonging to the great poet.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Election officer held with drug

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

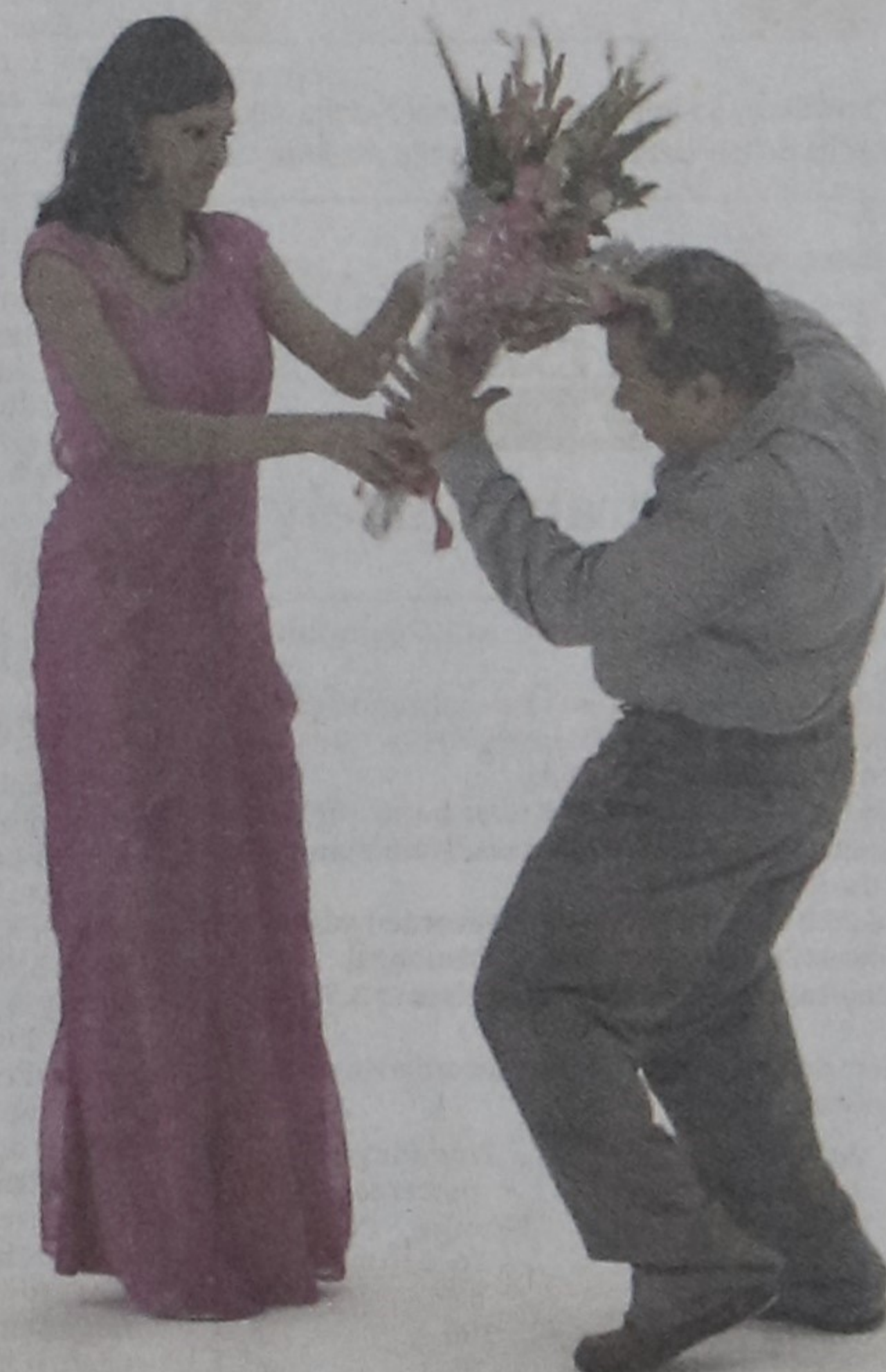
Rab members arrested three persons including an upazila election officer with half a kilogram of cocaine at Banshbaria in Naogaon on Friday night.

The arrestees are Porsha Upazila Election Officer SM Nasir Uddin, 44, and narcotic peddlers

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

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