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Another Titas tycoon tracked down

Ex-dy manager makes Tk 100cr wealth in 8-year job

KAILASH SARKAR

A former deputy manager of Titas Gas owns wealth worth over Tk 100 crore, including multi-storey buildings, import and food-manufacturing businesses, about 150 kathas of land, three luxury cars and bank balance of over Tk 10 crore, a task force investigation found.

Officials of the National Coordination Committee task force said Md Emdadul Haque amassed the wealth through corruption during his eight-year service at Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Co Ltd.

Talking to The Daily Star, however, Emdad denied all the allegations of corruption against him, saying, "I never took a taka from Titas Gas illegally."

The former Titas Gas official who now owns businesses also challenged the authenticity of the task force's information and said most of the properties mentioned are owned by his wife's father and uncles while he purchased some other properties with bank loans.

Hailing from Jhalakathi, Emdad joined Titas Gas in 1987. He left Titas and joined Petrobangla in 1995.

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This picture shows a multi-storey building at Banani in the capital owned by former deputy manager of Titas Gas Emdadul Haque, inset. He allegedly made Tk 100 crore in just eight years on the job.

Army to play important role in holding fair polls

Says Gen Moeen UNB, Dhaka

Chief of Army Staff General Moeen U Ahmed yesterday said the armed forces will play an important role in fulfilling the caretaker government's commitment to hold a free, fair and credible election within the shortest possible time.

"The caretaker government is fully committed to holding free, fair, credible and meaningful election within the shortest possible time."

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

ILLEGAL PLOT ALLOTMENT Charges pressed against Mirza Abbas, Lobi

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday pressed charges against detained former housing and public works minister Mirza Abbas, former BNP lawmaker Ali Asgar Lobi and a government official in a case filed against them for their alleged involvement in fraudulently allotting an industrial plot.

Meantime, a Dhaka court yesterday did not pass any order on the case.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

CTG AMMO HAUL Fresh probe ordered to find real culprits

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD, Ctg

A Chittagong court for the second time ordered further investigation into the cases filed in connection with the haul of 10 truck-loads of deadly weapons and huge quantity of ammunition at Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd jetty on April 2, 2004 to find out the real culprits.

Mystery shrouds over the identity of the smugglers while the destination and place of shipment of the huge cache of firearms remain unknown even though 46 months have passed since the haul.

The Court of Chittagong Metropolitan Sessions Judge ANM Bashir Ullah ordered the Chittagong Metropolitan Police commissioner yesterday to appoint an efficient and honest investigating officer (IO) to conduct further investigation of the case.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Hasina verdict not stayed by SC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division yesterday did not stay the landmark High Court verdict that declared illegal bringing the Tk 2.99 crore extortion case against former premier Sheikh Hasina under Emergency Power Rules (EPR) and also scrapped the case.

The Appellate Division also directed the government to file regular leave to appeal by February 19. As the Appellate Division did not stay the HC verdict, it is still in effect with the trial of the case being stalled, said Hasina's counsel.

The seven-member full bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Mohammad Ruhul Quamrullah yesterday also upheld the High Court's (HC) interim bail order for detained former power and energy secretary Dr Toufiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury in a Tk 3 crore barge-mount graft case in which detained former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and six others are also accused.

The full bench of Appellate Division also ordered the government to file regular leave to appeal by February 19.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

CA writes to G8 leaders for removing trade barriers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday wrote a letter to all leaders of the Group of Eight (G8) on behalf of developing countries, urging the most powerful nations to commit to removing trade barriers to allow access of all products from poorer countries.

Fakhruddin as the current chair of the Least Developed Countries (LDC) group also asked the G8 leaders to consider allowing freer global movement of labour when the eight heads of state meet in Tokyo in July.

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar A Chowdhury, in a press release, said the letter sought to "Sensitise the G8 leaders to the plight of the LDCs."

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

DRAFT VOTER ROLL RULES EC gets it out from law ministry

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Annoyed by the law ministry's delay in returning to the Election Commission (EC) the vetted draft electoral rolls rules, two of the commissioners yesterday rushed to the ministry and forced the officials there to release the file.

The EC's bold initiative finally cleared the way for promulgating the electoral rolls rules, which had been stalling for three weeks due to the law ministry's procrastination.

Returning to the EC Secretariat premises with the vetted draft rules in the afternoon, the two election commissioners --- Muhammed Sohul Hussain and Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hussain --- told journalists that publication of area wise draft voter lists had been delayed because the vetted draft had not been returned to the commission earlier by the law ministry.

"We went there to expedite the vetting of the draft electoral rolls rules because promulgation of the rules is urgent," Election Commissioner Sakhawat Hussain told reporters in his office.

Stressing the need for immediate promulgation of the rules, Election Commissioner Sohul Hussain said the entire job of the commission is to conduct a free and fair election.

In a bilateral meeting held in AL Acting President Zillur Rahman's residence, both parties demanded that the government holds dialogues with political parties as early as possible without imposing any condition.

In the meeting chaired by Zillur, both parties also decided to have a meeting with the caretaker government to hand over state power to an elected government through holding of the stalled 9th parliamentary election in line with the electoral roadmap announced by the Election Commission.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

AL, Samyabadi Dal for dialogue at the earliest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) and Samyabadi Dal, allies in 14-party coalition, yesterday decided to help the caretaker government to hand over state power to an elected government through holding of the stalled 9th parliamentary election in line with the electoral roadmap announced by the Election Commission.

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SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



A bird perched on a silk-cotton flower sips honey from the blossoms that heralds the beginning of spring today.

Hannan Shah freed on bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brig (retd) Hannan Shah, adviser to former prime minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, was released from Narayanganj jail on bail last night following a High Court order.

The HC on Sunday granted him bail in a case he was accused of violating Emergency Power Rules (EPR) and also issued a rule upon the government to explain why the detainee should not be exonerated from the case.

"Hannan Shah was released at around 7:45pm," Deputy Inspector General (Prisons) Maj Shamsul Haider Siddique told The Daily Star last night.

Brig (retd) Hannan was earlier arrested at the Narayanganj jail.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Contract signed to purchase 5 lakh MT rice from India

STAR REPORT

The government yesterday signed a contract with India to buy 5 lakh tonnes of rice hours after it approved a proposal to that end.

In another development, local traders began importing rice through Benapole land port yesterday evening as India withdrew the embargo on rice export imposed on February 8.

The same day, in response to a proposal from Dhaka, Myanmar agreed to consider exporting 3 lakh tonnes of rice to Bangladesh every year, said a foreign ministry press release.

Meanwhile, local markets witnessed a rise in prices of coarse rice by Tk 1 a kg yesterday as the upward trend following the Indian ban continued.

Director General of the Directorate of Food Molla Waheeduzzaman, now in Kolkata leading a delegation, signed the contract with West Bengal Essential Commodities Supplies Cooperative Ltd for buying the 5 lakh tonnes of rice, said food ministry sources.

Earlier in the day, Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam said, "Import of 5 lakh tonnes of rice from India under a state-to-state agreement will be completed within 75 days of the signing of the contract."

He was talking to reporters after meetings of advisory committees on purchase and economic affairs.

The Advisory Committee on Purchase decided to procure 67,000 tonnes of rice from local importers at a cost of around Tk 200 crore.

It also approved import of 3.90 lakh tonnes of fuel from the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

SEAT CANCELLATION TO 12 Indian consumer body asks for Biman penalty

STAR REPORT

Delhi State Consumer Commission has asked Biman Bangladesh Airlines Ltd to pay Rs 4.5 lakh to 12 of its passengers for cancelling their seats back in 2004.

The seats were cancelled because, the airlines said at that time, they had not re-confirmed their booking 72 hours before departure.

Biman authorities yesterday said they were not aware of the latest development of the incident.

When contacted, MA Momen, managing director and chief executive officer of the national flag carrier, said, "I was not here in Biman when the incident happened. We will take necessary steps after getting all information in this regard."

Our New Delhi correspondent reports: The commission held Biman guilty of inefficiency in service and unfair trade practice as, it said, the passengers were denied seats even when they had reached the airport in time and the flight took off with several seats unoccupied.

The 12 passengers had bought Delhi-Bangkok-Delhi tickets from an agent of the airlines. They left the Indian capital for Bangkok on March 11, 2004 and re-confirmed their return tickets on March 13 at the airlines' local office, the commission said quoting them.

The passengers alleged that they were not provided seats for their return journey on March 17, 2004.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7


Sheikh Helal gets 7yrs for extorting Tk 1cr

Arrest warrant against ex-DAB leader Dr Zahid

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced former Awami League lawmaker Sheikh Helaluddin and his aide Munshi Saiduzzaman to seven years' rigorous imprisonment for extorting Tk 1.02 crore from a construction firm owner.

Another Dhaka court, meantime, issued arrest warrants against AZM Zahid Hossain, former leader of Doctors' Association of Bangladesh (DAB), his wife Rifat Hossain and Advocate Mujahidul Islam in a case filed for concealing information in his statement to the court.



SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Chittagong cops confess to robbery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

An assistant commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) and his two subordinates, who are on a two-day police remand for robbery, confessed to the crime yesterday.

Assistant Commissioner Abu Saleh Mohammad Mofazzal Haque of CMP Panchlala Zone, his bodyguard constable Ehsanul Islam and driver constable Abdur Rauf were arrested on Monday on charge of robbery at a businessman's house in the city's Amirbar area early Sunday.

Sources said a five-member team headed by Deputy Police Commissioner (headquarters) Manzur Morshed Khan interrogated the accused at Kotwali Police Station Monday night.

Mofazzal admitted during the grilling that two sources gave him information about robbing businessman Faruq Ahmed Chowdhury's residence.

He said his driver also spied on the house twice early in the day.

The interrogation team will further quiz the disgraced cops before the two-day remand expires this afternoon, sources said.

CMP Commissioner M Akbar Ali said there was not much to interrogate since the accused have already confessed everything, adding that their confessional statements were true.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

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