

Fresh probe ordered

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case and submit the report by April 15—the scheduled date for the next hearing of the case.

In the order, the court said further investigation is required as the time demands for it and to find out the real culprits.

The court observed that the previous two IOs did not investigate deep into the case or mention anything about who brought the firearms, the place of shipment and their destinations.

The order was made after Assistant Public Prosecutor (APP) Humayun Kabir Russell filed an appeal on November 19 last year, saying it could not be ruled out that the weapons and ammunition came from a ship at the outer anchorage of Chittagong port and then loaded on vessels.

It is important to know the names of all the vessels that were at the outer anchorage of the port at that time, their import manifests and Onward Customs Declaration they made in Singapore, the APP said.

Logs of the vessels should have been looked into and the speed of the vessels should have been figured out to know how much time they took to reach the outer anchorage of Chittagong port from Singapore.

A number of the hauled arms and ammunition went missing from the custody of the law enforcers. Two police sergeants were held in this connection and three of the missing firearms were recovered, said the APP in the appeal.

The previous two IOs made no investigation into these things, he observed.

Public Prosecutor (PP) Ahsanul Haq Hena said the previous two IOs did not investigate the case properly.

"The then government also cannot ignore their responsibility since the firearms and ammunition were offloaded on a restricted area of Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd jetty, which is under the control of the Ministry of Industries," said the PP while talking to The Daily Star yesterday.

Six sub-machine guns (SMGs) and 28 grenades were missing from police custody. Later, Rapid Action Battalion personnel held police sergeants Alauddin and Helaluddin to recover three of the missing SMGs from Feni and Barguna.

But, the investigation report did not mention anything about these, said the PP.

Two cases were filed with Karnaphuli Police Station following the recovery of the arms and ammunition while being offloaded from two engine boats on the Karnaphuli.

One of the cases was lodged under section 25/B of the Special Powers Act for smuggling arms and the other under section 19(ka) of the Arms Act.

The CID started investigating the cases on April 26 after Officer-in-Charge of Karnaphuli Police Station and IO Ahadur Rahman was

Fresh fighting

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clashes along the front lines in the north of the island on Saturday and Sunday.

Five government soldiers were also reported killed.

According to the defence ministry, 1,168 rebels and 62 government soldiers and police have been killed so far this year.

Casualty figures given by the government cannot be independently verified as journalists and human rights workers are not allowed to enter the battle zone.

The Sri Lankan government last month officially pulled out of a de facto truce with the rebels, who have fought for more than three decades for an independent ethnic homeland in the Sinhalese-majority island.

The conflict has claimed tens of thousands of lives.

Another Titas tycoon

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1995 and voluntarily resigned from the job in 1997.

Replying to a query, he said he made some properties through the profits from his import business in 10 years. He also supplies in-flight utilities to Bangladesh Biman, he said.

According to the task force investigation, Emdad has a six-storey building on 7 kathas of land at Banani in the name of his wife Sajadatul Mowla, a six-storey building on 5 kathas of land and a one-storey building on 3 kathas of land at Pallabi, and 15 kathas of land at Bashundhara.

He also owns a multi-storey factory for manufacturing food and 4 bighas of lowland at Savar, and land worth Tk 2.80 crore at Banani. He has a deposit of Tk 8 crore with the VIP Road branch of Oriental Bank and Protirakkha Sanchay Patra (defence savings certificate) worth Tk 1.35 crore at the Dhanmondi branch of Standard Chartered Bank.

Emdad and his wife have a huge amount of money in savings and current accounts with Standard Chartered Bank, while Emdad has a deposit of \$1.37 lakh (equivalent to Tk 93,16,000) at HSBC Bank, task force officials said.

Emdad, however, denied having any savings with these banks. He also said he does not have a

dropped for his controversial investigation.

Kabir Uddin Ahmed, assistant superintendent of police for CID Chittagong region, submitted the charge sheet on June 11, 2004, accusing 39 people in the arms case.

The Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court framed the charges on October 24.

Thirty-six of the 39 accused have meanwhile been released on bail while Hafizur Rahman alias Hafiz, Deen Mohammad and Firoz Ahmed are behind bars.

Hafiz is one of the prime accused in the case while Deen Mohammad, owner of Friends Syndicate of the Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd jetty, and Firoz Ahmed, owner of a trawler used for the smuggling, were Hafiz's close aides.

However, the home ministry did not take any confessional statement from Hafiz under 164 at that time.

In the country's largest arms haul, the joint forces seized 10 truckloads of 10,000 arms, including SMGs, AK47 assault rifles, rocket propelled grenades (RPG) and RPG launchers, 2,000 grenades and 31 lakh bullets.

The arms and ammunition included 690 7.62mm SMG T-56-1 and 2,792 magazines for them, 600 7.62mm SMG T-56-2 and 2,400 magazines, 400 9mm automatic carbines and 800 magazines, 100 Tommy Guns and 400 magazines, 150 40mm T-69 RPG launchers and 840 RPGs, 2,000 launching tubes (Ugo rifles), 150 aiming devices for the RPG launchers, 4,000 7.25x25 ball pistol bullets, 7,39,680 bullets for T-56 pistols, and 25,020 NV grenades.

A number of political bigwigs of the then ruling BNP were then suspected of having links with the arms haul.

Trains ordered

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bridge were wobbly or loosened.

Earlier, in the first week of January 2008, a report submitted by Tofazzal Hossain, Wahiduzzaman, Abul Kalam Azad, all assistant directors of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority, and Nur Sadique of Marga Net One Ltd, the operation and maintenance operator of the bridge, noted that vibrations caused by trains and heavily loaded vehicles have led to the development of the cracks.

Following the report, two engineers of the bridge authority—Liakat Ali, executive engineer, and Abu Sufian, superintendent engineer—visited the site on January 23. They also expressed similar views on the matter.

The government is planning to appoint consultants by the end of this month to identify the actual reasons behind the cracks and other defects. The government would repair the bridge as per recommendations of the consultants.

The government is also considering taking legal steps against Hyundai Engineering & Construction Co Ltd, the South Korean contractor that built the bridge.

Dr Muhammad Mahbubur Rahman, the communications secretary, told journalists at his office on Monday that the issue of the bridge was discussed at a recent board meeting of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority.

"We are thinking about taking legal steps against the construction firm that constructed the bridge and we are consulting the law ministry to see if legal steps can be taken," he added.

Sources at the bridge authority said Hyundai has claimed that the design and the construction of the bridge had no flaws and therefore, they would not bear the responsibility for the cracks that developed on the bridge.

defence savings certificates now.

The investigation found that Emdad also has three latest model cars and he went abroad around 50 times during the last seven years.

Emdad told The Daily Star that he could not complete the construction of the six-storey building at Banani because of lack of money while his father-in-law and his brothers own the six-storey building at Pallabi.

He also said he does not own the one-storey building at Pallabi while 15 kathas of land at Bashundhara has already been sold out.

On the food-manufacturing factory at Savar, he said, "The project is funded by Janata Bank."

Emdad, however, admitted his ownership of 80 kathas of land at Savar and said he bought it at a low price "for the next generation."

He said he visited his two brothers in London only five-six times. He has two cars—one for the Janata Bank project and another is seven years old, he added.

Earlier, the task force found Titas Gas sales assistant Abdul Kadir Mollah to be the owner of wealth worth Tk 2,100 crore.

A total of 135 staff of Titas Gas have admitted their involvement in corruption. Of them 124 have refunded their illegally earned properties worth over Tk 350 crore.

Sheikh Helal

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Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

HELAL MAILED

Judge Mohammad Shafiq Azam of Special Tribunal-12 gave the jail sentences to Helal and his assistant private secretary (APS) Munshi Saiduzzaman in their absence.

The court also fined the two Tk 1 lakh each, defaulting on which will earn them additional six months in jail. The punishment will be effective from the day of their arrest or surrender, the court said.

The judge acquitted Shaheen Chaklader, Khorsheed Alam Prokash and AHM Kamal Hossain on the charges.

Earlier, the prosecution and the defence completed their arguments and the court recorded statements of 13 prosecution witnesses.

According to the prosecution, construction firm Reza Construction Ltd won a Tk 28 work order at Roads and Highways Department on May 8 in 2000. Aide Saiduzzaman demanded Tk 2 crore from the firm on Helal's orders, threatening that the work order would otherwise be cancelled.

The firm later paid Helal and his APS Tk 1,02,40,000 in cash and by cheque on different dates from 2000 through 2006, the case statement said.

Mohammad Mamtaaz Uddin filed the case with Shahbagh Police Station on May 21 last year. The investigation officer pressed charges against five people on July 3.

The former lawmaker is implicated in two more criminal cases.

CASE AGAINST ZAHID
Judge Mohammad Azizul Haq at Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court issued arrest warrants against Zahid, his wife and Mujahid after scrutinising the case docket and other relevant documents.

On February 7, Helal Uddin Sharif, assistant director of Anti-Corruption Commission and investigation officer of the case, submitted charge sheet against the three at Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, showing 23 people as prosecution witnesses.

The IO prayed for warrants for their arrest and attachment of their property as they have been in hiding since the case was filed.

ACC Assistant Director Nasruddin lodged the case with Ramna Police Station on October 3 last year, alleging that Zahid hid information on over Tk 2.12 crore. His wife Rifat and lawyer Mujahid were accused of helping him in the offence.

The court fixed tomorrow for next hearing of the case.

Khulna mayor

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higher position.

Taher has since been in hiding. Tayebur, who was arrested in Dhaka on November 2 last year, has already given confessional statement in the case under Section 164 of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPc).

Gen Moeen

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time and the armed forces will have to play an important role in reaching the goal," he said.

Addressing as chief guest the 6th certificate-awarding ceremony of the Military Institute of Science and Technology (MIST) at Mirpur Cantonment, General Moeen urged the certificate recipients to use their intellectual attainments for development of the country with patriotism, honesty and sincerity.

A total of 176 students, including 51 military officers, were given certificates. Of them, 45 students from civil engineering department, 35 from computer science and engineering Department, 43 from electrical, electronics and communications engineering department, 26 from mechanical engineering were awarded BSc in Engineering, while 27 students from management studies department were awarded MBA degree.

Among others, Chief of Naval Staff Vice-Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam, Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal SM Ziaur Rahman, Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division Lt Gen Masud Uddin Chowdhury, Commandant of MIST, senior military and civil officials were present.

CA writes

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global economic leadership to the problems confronted by the LDCs."

"The chief adviser asked for market access benefits for all products from LDCs without discrimination," Itefekar said, adding that the CA had also called for liberalisation of movement of people across boundaries.

Fakhrudin asked for firm commitments on special and differential treatment for LDCs at the ongoing Doha round of talks.

The chief adviser also laid stress on environmental vulnerability of most LDCs due to global warming and climate change and vulnerability to shocks from global economic downturns.

The G8 comprises the United States, Russia, Japan, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Canada.

Sustainable democracy

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and the separation of judiciary from the executive has been accomplished as per directive of the constitution.

Preparation of voter list with photograph is being implemented smoothly under the supervision of the recast Election Commission, he mentioned.

The head of the caretaker government gave a four-point directive to all members of Ansar and Village Defence Party (VDP) for playing a more vibrant and effective role in building up the country.

As per the directives, Ansar-VDP will have to be more sincere in preventing crimes and ensuring security in economic activities at the grassroots level, as they have scope and opportunity to make more contributions to establishing good governance at grassroots level and establishing reliable and cordial relations with the people and the government.

The directives also include ensuring security of public life through strengthening the local government and building up the Ansar-VDP as a well-kin force for alleviating poverty, expansion of social security network and intensifying efforts to involve members of Ansar-VDP more effectively in facing disaster.

The CA said all citizens of the country will have to make best efforts from their respective position to turn the beloved motherland into a modern and developed country.

He praised the activities of Ansar, Battalion Ansar and VDP in maintaining law and order, curbing crimes and terrorism, and contributing in socioeconomic development.

Presently, about 30,000 Ansars are playing courageous role for ensuring security of life and property at airports, seaports, industries and other important establishments, he said.

Through this, he added, it was possible to ensure suitable environment for production and investment, which is playing a positive role in keeping the wheels of economy running.

The CA expressed his firm belief that over 43 lakh trained male and female members of VDP can launch revolution in the field of socioeconomic development in 80,000 villages of Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, another army team from Dighinala raided Kamukkapara of Dighinala upazila in Khagrachhari and recovered two foreign-made single barrel breech loading gun, a grenade, 100 bullets and some documents, sources said.

The criminals managed to flee before the army raided the place, they said adding that the team destroyed the den.

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loading gun, a locally-made single barrel breech loading gun, a grenade, SMG magazines and at least 2,000 bullets of different types of firearms at the den before destroying it.

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Illegal plot allotment

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detained former premier Khaleda Zia's petition to produce her before the court in connection with the Niko graft case.

Earlier on February 7, the court passed the same order after defence lawyers submitted a petition for Khaleda's appearance before the court in connection with the Gato graft case.

ABBAS-LOBICASE

ACC Deputy Director Afzal Hossain, who is also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet against them to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, showing 23 people as prosecution witnesses.

The other accused in the charge sheet is senior special assistant secretary of establishment ministry, now officer on special duty (OSD), Mahfuzul Islam.

The IO prayed for issuance of arrest warrant against Mahfuz and the order to attach his property as he has been absconding since the case was filed against him.

ACC Deputy Director Syed Iqbal Hossain filed the case with Shahbagh Police Station against Abbas, Lobi, and Mahfuz on July 15 last year.

In the case statement, the trio was accused of illegally allotting an industrial plot in collusion with each other in Tejaon Industrial Area for a business organisation, Pacific Chemicals Ltd, owned by Lobi. It was mentioned that the accused exercised their influence in allotting the 19.44 katha plot ignoring government rules.

Without having no-objection certificates from the Board of Investment and the Department of Environment, the plot was allotted as an industrial plot.

NIKO CASE
Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Golam Rabbani placed the petition in the case file but did not give any order.

The lawyers appealed to the court to pass an order so that Khaleda is produced before the court since it was the scheduled court day (monthly court day during a case investigation) of the case. However, the court asked the investigation officer (IO) of the case to submit the probe report by March 12.

In the petition submitted yesterday, defence lawyers said Khaleda was arrested on September 3 last year in Gato graft case and shown arrested in Niko graft case on December 30 and since then she was not produced before the court.

There is no provision in the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPc) to detain any person in jail custody for a long time, they said.

The prosecution argued that investigation into the case is going on and it is not a mandatory provision to produce any detained person before the court on scheduled court dates.

Dr Toufiq

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Division of the SC headed by Chief Justice Mohammad Rihul Amin vacated its earlier stay order on operation of the HC bail order following a petition by the government.

Meanwhile, hearing on charge framing in the graft case against Hasina, also Awami League chief, resumes at a special court today.

Earlier, the hearing was adjourned on February 7 following a time petition by the prosecution lawyers.

The HC had granted interim bail to Toufiq on Feb 3 following a writ petition in which he challenged bringing the case under the Emergency Power Rules (EPR).

The court had also issued a rule on the government asking it to explain why bringing the case under the EPR should not be declared illegal.

Toufiq was sent to jail on Jan 16. The prosecution lawyers on February 7 sought time in the case on the ground that they needed the time for preparations to participate in the hearing on charge framing.

The previous day, the HC delivered the landmark judgment declaring illegal bringing of the Tk 2.99 crore extortion case against Hasina under the EPR.

Hasina was produced before the Special Court-1 of Judge Firoz Alam on February 3 for charge framing in the case.

Anti-Corruption Commission Deputy Director Sabbir Hasan lodged the case with Tejaon Police Station on September 2 last year, accusing Hasina and six others of using their influence through mutual understanding to help a foreign company and its local partners win a deal for setting up a large-mount 100MW power plant in Khulna, depriving the lowest bidder.

Hasina's co-accused at the time were Toufiq, former Power Development Board (PDB) chairman Nour Uddin Mahmud Kamal, Managing Director of Summit Industries and Mercantile Corporation Private Ltd Aziz Khan, its Director Farid Khan, United Group Chairman Hasan Mahmud Raja and its Director Abul Kalam Azad. Another accused was included in the charge sheet later.

AL, Samyabadi Dal

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common positions on the issues to be discussed at the dialogues, based on 14-party's 31-point charter for electoral reform proposals.

Briefing journalists after the meeting, AL Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed said they want to help the caretaker government in bringing an end to the prevailing political, economic and social crises through the dialogues.

He said both parties reached a consensus on raising at the dialogues the issue of releasing all AL leaders detained under the ambit of the ongoing anti-graft drive including its President Sheikh Hasina and General Secretary Abduljalil.

He demanded that the caretaker government holds a free, fair and credible election and hands over power to elected representatives.

Samyabadi Dal General Secretary Dilip Barua demanded that the government holds the dialogues immediately without slapping it with any precondition. He also asked the government to hold the parliamentary election as early as possible, and demanded a specific timeframe for it.

Tofail said his party will sit again with leaders of other components of 14-party coalition to finalise a common agenda to be discussed at the dialogues after the dates for it are fixed.

AL leaders Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Amir Hossain Amu, Abdul Razzaq, Suranjit Sengupta, Kazi Zafulah and Syed Ashrafur Islam were present while Samyabadi Dal was represented by Abu Hamed Shabbuddin, Lutfur Rahman, Beren Saha, and Harun Chowdhury among others.

Oil, gas prices

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"We've only coal as alternative energy source," he said, adding that the government could not yet take decision in this regard as the coal policy is yet to be finalised.

Replying to a question, the adviser said they have not had any discussion on adjusting the energy prices. "It might be her (Hua Du's) general view."

He said the government will consider adjustment of the energy prices in appropriate time.

More than one-fourth of ADB's financial assistance to Bangladesh since 1973, about \$ 2.48 billion, has been in the energy sector. Yet only 38 percent of the population has access to electricity and about 7 percent to natural gas, according to ADB figures.

The power sector has received about \$1.7 billion to improve the capacity of power supply, and another 23 technical assistance grants totalling about \$14.6 million.

ADB assisted Bangladesh in developing major gas fields (Titas, Habiganj and Bakhrabad), major transmission systems, and most of the distribution networks across the eastern part of the country, with over \$676 million in loans and \$5 million in technical assistance grants since 1975.

Contract signed

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The decision to import refined petroleum from the UAE, a new source of fuel for Bangladesh, was taken to ensure smooth supply of diesel to farmers for irrigation during the ongoing winter crops cultivation, meetings sources said.

The Advisory Committee on Economic Affairs approved the proposal of the energy ministry for the import of fuel without any tender, also to take place under a state-to-state deal.

"The Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation has estimated that the cost of 3.90 lakh tonnes of refined petroleum is Tk 2,082 crore," a meeting source said. Of the fuel, 3.30 lakh tonnes are diesel.

Earlier, the purchase committee approved the fuel ministry proposal to purchase 5.67 lakh tonnes of rice at a cost of Tk 1,596 crore.

Talking to the reporters, Mirza Aziz hoped that the import of rice from India would help boost the government stock.

As per the approved proposal, 5 lakh tonnes of rice would be imported from India at the cost of Tk 1,396 crore.

Average purchase rate of the rice has been fixed at \$399 per tonne. Starting from this month, the shipments will reach the country in phases by road, sea, river ways and railways.

As per the proposal, this bulk import would take place without any tendering process as there is an agreement signed between the two governments to this effect, officials said.

In addition, the government will procure 25,000 tonnes of rice from a local importer at the cost of \$402 per tonne and another 42,000 tonnes from 13 importers at the cost of \$420-\$430 per tonne.

The purchase committee also approved two other proposals placed by the industries ministry for importing a total of 20,000 tonnes of phosphoric acid for two BCIC (Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation) fertiliser factories in Chittagong at the cost of Tk 102 crore.

The local traders heaved a sigh of relief following the withdrawal of the ban on rice export by the Indian government yesterday.

Customs authorities at Benapole and Indian Petrapole check posts issued 52 gate passes for shipments of rice. Until evening, a total of 280 tonnes rice entered through the Benapole land port.

India however put a condition that rice export is allowed only for those who opened letters of credit (L/C) at over \$500 per tonne, reported a correspondent from Benapole.

According to an order of India's Director General of Foreign Trade, the L/Cs opened at below \$500 has been cancelled making uncertain

Hannan Shah

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gate on February 7 just as he was released on bail in another case—in which too he was accused of violating EPR.

Hannan Shah has been in and out of jails since mid-last year. On May 14 last year he and his son Shah Rezaul Hannan were arrested in Dhaka in an extortion case. Later another case was filed against them.

Both father and son were released from Kashimpur jail on July 22 after the High Court granted them a interim bail for two months in both cases.

He was then arrested on November 7 last year for violating EPR.

On January 30, the High Court declared his detention illegal and the Appellate Division upheld the HC decision on February 3. He was then released on Feb 7 when he was rearrested at the jail gate on fresh charges.

Biman penalty

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2004 and their plea to accommodate them on the next flight was also rejected. So, they had to buy fresh tickets from Thai Airways to return to India.

Biman argued that denying seats to the passengers was well within the rules and norms under the Warsaw Convention that regulates liability of airlines.

It contended that according to the rules, if reconfirmation was not received 72 hours before the departure of a flight, reservation stands cancelled, and the airlines would be free to allot seat to any other passenger.

But the commission said had that been the case, the airlines should have re-allotted the seats to some other passengers after it cancelled the reservations. There were many unoccupied seats on the flight and there was no reason for Biman to deny the 12 passengers seats even if their tickets had been cancelled on technical