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Khaleda, Hasina charged with Niko graft

18 more indicted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday approved the charge sheets in two graft cases against detained former premiers Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia and 18 others for awarding gas exploration and extraction deal to Canadian company Niko Resources through corruption and abuse of power.

Of the 18 other accused, eight have been indicted in the charge sheets while 10 were named in the first information reports (FIR) of the cases.

Former secretary of External Resources Division Dr AKM Moshir Rahman and former director of Petrobangla (mines and mineral and operation) Sayed Anwarul Haque have been named in the case filed against



Hasina besides those already named in the case's FIR.



Department, Meer Moynul Haque, former senior general manager of Bapex, Shafiur Rahman, former secretary of Bapex, Giasuddin Al Mamun, One Group managing director, and Selim Bhuiyan, chairman and managing director of

International Travel Corporation, have been indicted in the case filed against Khaleda.

The other accused in the FIR against Hasina are detained former state minister for energy Rafiqul Islam, former principal secretary to Prime Minister's Office (PMO) Dr SA Samad, former energy secretaries Dr Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury and M Akmal Hossain, former Petrobangla chairman Mosharruf Hossain, and Vice-President (South Asia) of Niko Resources Bangladesh Ltd Kashem Sharif.

The co-accused of Khaleda in the FIR are detained former law minister barrister Moudud Ahmed, detained former state minister for energy AKM Mosharruf Hossain, former acting energy secretary Khandaker Shahidul Islam, and Kashem Sharif.

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CA to address nation very soon on polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed is expected to address the nation "very soon", stating the government's stance on the upcoming elections, withdrawal of the state of emergency and political dialogue.

"The chief adviser will make these issues clear in his address to the nation," Communications Adviser Maj Gen (ret) Ghulam

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Court contempt ordinance okayed

UNB, Dhaka

The Council of Advisers at a meeting yesterday gave final approval to the Contempt of Court Ordinance 2008.

According to a provision of the ordinance, any objective report, information and comments made regarding normal activity of the court as well as constructive

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Cyclone Nargis nearly still

CA asks all to stay prepared

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Severe cyclonic storm Nargis is still almost stationary on the West Central Bay of Bengal and likely to be intensified further while moving very slowly towards the North Eastern Bay, with the possibility of crossing Bangladesh-Myanmar coast not before a couple of days.

A special bulletin of the met office said the eye of the tropical storm was about 1,000 kilometres (km) southwest of Chittagong port, 935km southwest of Cox's Bazar port, and 875km south-southwest of Mongla port yesterday evening, with a minimum wind speed between 90 and 120 kilometres per hour (kmph), within a 54km radius of its centre.

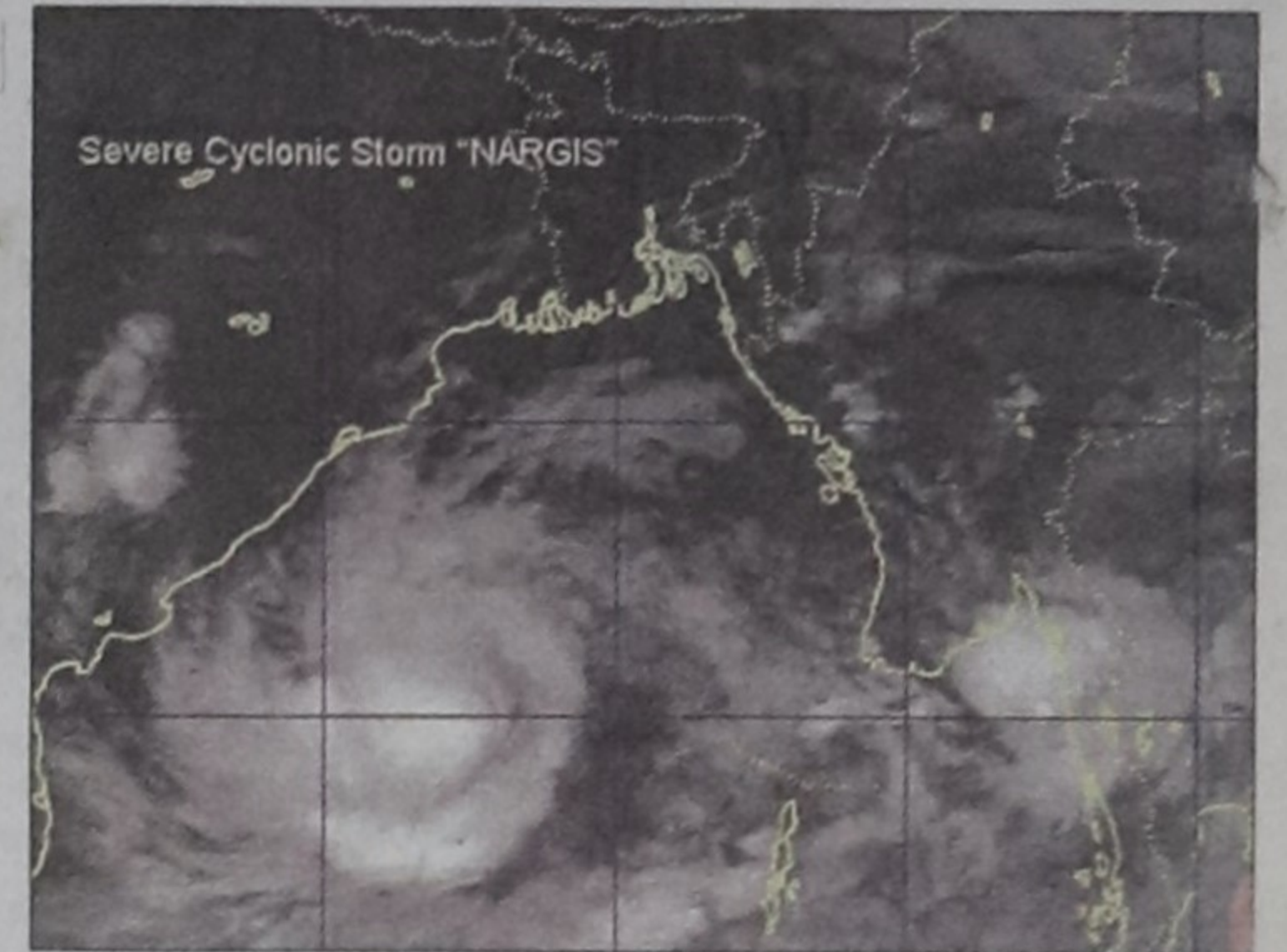
Meanwhile, the council of advisers to caretaker government yesterday took a close look at oncoming Nargis, with Chief Adviser (CA) Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed directing all concerned to take precautionary measures for any emergency while closely monitoring the storm, reported UNB.

Chairing a meeting of the council of advisers, the CA ordered to follow the standard operating procedure for disaster management, with deputy commissioners

concerned being asked to remain alert.

UNB also reported that the government took special measures

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A satellite image of Cyclone Nargis shows its present state in the Bay of Bengal.

4 JMB cadres get 26yrs for bomb attack on Ctg court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A court here yesterday sentenced four members of outlawed militant outfit Jama'at ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) to 26 years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) each for bomb attack on the court of the then Chittagong Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) Akram Hossain in October 2005.

Judge Shafiqul Karim of Chittagong Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal gave this judgement.

The four convicts are JMB Chittagong regional commander Javed Iqbal alias Mohammad, activists of Tangail JMB branch Shahadat, Abul Malek alias Laltu and bomb expert Jahidul Islam alias Mizan alias Bomb Mizan. Of them, Mizan is absconding.

JMB chief Abdur Rahman and JMB military chief Ataur Rahman Sunny were dropped from the trial as both were executed following an earlier verdict, sources said.

JMB activists Laltu and Shahadat on October 3 in 2005 hurled a bomb at CMM Akram

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Hasina misquoted on Dr Kamal's money-whitening Power plant case hearing adjourned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained former premier and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday claimed she was misquoted regarding black money whitened by Dr Kamal Hossain. "I did not mention the amount specifically as Tk 102 crore. But I know a lot more against him," Hasina said.

The AL chief claimed this as she reached the Special Court-1 of Judge Firoz Alam in the morning that later adjourned the charge-framing hearing against her in the barge-mounted power plant case till May 6.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court

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ARREARS RMG workers block road in Dhaka, Ctg

STAR REPORT

Several hundred garment workers yesterday blockaded the DIT road at Rampura in the capital demanding payment of their salary arrears.

Hundreds of vehicles remained stranded on the road for about an hour due to the blockade.

Meanwhile, garment workers yesterday put up barricade at Dewanhat intersection in the port city for payment of salary arrears disrupting vehicular movement on Sheikh Mujib road for about two and a half hours, reported our Chittagong correspondent.

Police said around 500 workers of Expo Worldwide staged a sit-in on the DIT Road at about 10:45am as the factory management did not pay them two months' salaries and overtime bills.

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A farmer carries harvested Boro paddy on a bullock-driven cart in Savar yesterday. The farmers are getting a higher yield of Boro this season.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Rivers dying because of unchecked industrialisation

Experts say at discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unsupervised industrialisation is destroying the country's rivers, and to turn the fatal tide there has to be an effective river protection authority with power to penalise industries if they contribute to river pollution, experts said yesterday.

The experts gave the opinion at an open discussion titled 'Mitigation of Pollution of the River Buriganga and Its Peripheral Rivers Turag, Tongi Khal, Balu, Shitalakha and Dhalewsari', organised by the Committee for Mitigation of River Pollution under the auspices of the Office of Deputy

Commissioner of Dhaka.

Keynote speaker Dr Kamal Abdul Naser, convener of the committee, said more than 3,000 units of industries for textiles, metals, chemicals, rubber, pharmaceuticals, cement, leather, pulp, paperboards, fertilizer, food processing, and petroleum refining in the city area are discharging the most polluted waste water into the rivers.

Those industrial units are discharging more than 1.3 million cubic metres of waste water into the rivers everyday compared to the daily discharge of 5 million cubic metre household waste water.

In a power-point presentation,

some short-term, mid-term and long-term recommendations and work plans were suggested for turning the tide.

Major short-term recommendations include making effluent treatment plants (ETP) mandatory for all industries, banning establishment of brickfields within 200 metres of a river, establishing sewage treatment plants, identifying polluters, and having effective punitive measures against the polluters.

Mid-term recommendations include establishing central effluent treatment plants (CETP) in

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CNG-RUN BUS Govt forms committee to re-fix fare

UNB, Dhaka

In the wake of a raise in CNG price, the government has formed a three-member committee to recommend the rates of CNG/diesel-run bus fares.

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) requested the passengers to commute at previous fares until the government reviews the recommendations to be placed by the committee for re-fixing the fares.

A deputy director of BRTA has been made convener of the committee that will put forward the recommendations after gathering proper information and data. Two

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OMS extended for 10 days in 36 districts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to extend the Open Market Sale (OMS) programme for 10 more days in 36 districts and five city corporations of the country.

The OMS programme in Dhaka City Corporation area ended yesterday, but direct sale of rice from food directorate trucks will continue till May 10, food directorate officials said.

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Announcement

We publish upcoming Saturday in Law and Our Rights pages an article by Cherie Blair QC, wife of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and a human rights advocate, titled "The Role of the Judiciary and Lawyers in Promoting the Rule of Law and Protecting Rights."

HC seeks to know when EC holds polls

Asks it to inform court through affidavit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday asked the Election Commission (EC) to inform the court through affidavit when it would complete preparation of the voter list and hold the next parliamentary election.

The directive came during the hearing on a rule of a writ petition filed by barrister Masood R Sobhan on January 27 saying the commission has no authority to delay the general election beyond the stipulated 90 days.

Following the writ petition, an HC bench comprising Justice Shah Abu Nayeem Mominur Rahman

and Justice Shahidul Islam issued the rule on the EC to explain why it shall not be directed to hold the general election within 90 days.

The HC had also asked the commission to explain why its failure to hold the election within 90 days since dissolution of parliament in October 2006 shall not be declared unlawful.

The EC, the EC secretary, the chief adviser and the law ministry represented by the law secretary were made the respondents.

The court adjourned the hearing until May 7.

Following a response to the rule, petitioner Masood himself moved

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Worry over possibility of political instability

ASHFAQ WARES KHAN

Influential Western diplomats are increasingly concerned about the nation's return to political instability ahead of polls because of a lack of preparations by major parties and confusion surrounding the fate of two detained former premiers.

The concerns persist despite the breakneck speed of voter registration with photograph because of what they say is a heightened sense of "political uncertainty".

Both the newly appointed US ambassador James F Moriarty and British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury echoed these concerns over the last week.

They have both said "credible and participatory elections" would

be "extremely difficult" under the state of emergency as it would prevent parties from campaigning.

Speaking separately with The Daily Star, several diplomats said they fear the country might plunge into the political despair of the pre-1/11 due to growing uncertainty surrounding the next general elections.

None of the interviewed diplomats however believes the situation is at a 'crisis point', but they have identified hurdles on way to ensure acceptable elections.

They said the government and political parties both need to engage in dialogues to clear the air and build confidence of the electorate and gain assurances of participation by major parties.

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Historic May Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The historic May Day will be observed today in Bangladesh as elsewhere in the world with a vow to establish the socio-economic rights of the working class.

Known as International Workers' Day, the May Day commemorates the killing by police on May 1, 1886 of several demonstrating workers at Haymarket in Chicago, USA, who demanded the 12-hour workday be reduced to eight hours.

Today is public holiday.

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Holiday

The offices of The Daily Star will remain closed today on the occasion of May Day. Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow.

ACC forms task force to find graft in telecom ministry, depts

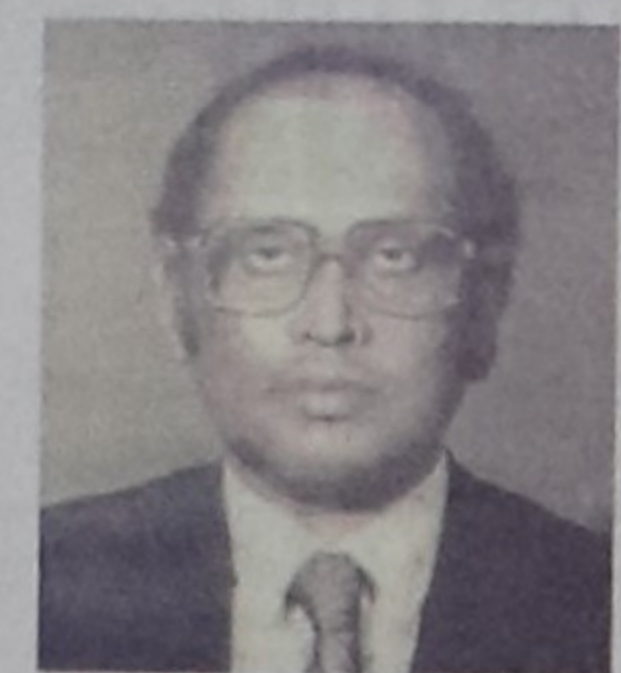
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday said that a three-member task force has been formed to look into the corruption in post and telecommunications ministry and its different departments.

Meanwhile, former law secretary Alauddin Sarder and former chief engineer of Roads and Highways Department (RHD) Fazlul Huq submitted their wealth statements to the commission in the last two days.

The task force team will investigate the corruption and irregularities in the tender processes of the ministry and its relevant

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Death Anniversary

23rd Death Anniversary of Pioneer Industrialist of the country Late Seraj Uddin Ahmed

Today, 1st May, is the 23rd death anniversary of late Seraj Uddin Ahmed, founder chairman of Elite Group of Industries Ltd. He was a former president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries, former chairman of Tea Traders Association of Bangladesh (TTAB) and founding member of the AB Bank Board. To mark his death anniversary a Quran Khani followed by ziafat will be held at his house in Gulshan and Elite House, CDA Avenue, Chittagong after zohr prayers. Friends, relatives and well-wishers are requested to attend the ziafat.

AB Bank Limited

AB Bank



Wholesale vegetable traders cross the slimy waters of the polluted Buriganga every day to bring in fresh produce to the capital city.

PHOTO: STAR