

Khaleda, Hasina

FROM PAGE 1
ACC Director General (Administration) Col Hanif Iqbal confirmed the press yesterday afternoon about the approval of the charge sheets.

Investigating officers of the cases filed the cases with Tejaon Police Station on December 9 had submitted their probe reports in March this year after two months' investigation.

ACC Deputy Director Sabbir Hasan investigated the case against Hasina while ACC Assistant Director Shahidur Rahman investigated the case against Khaleda. They will submit the charge sheets to the trial court soon.

According to the charge sheet in the case against Hasina, the accused in collaboration with each other awarded gas extraction work at Chhatak, Kamta and Feni gas fields to Niko by cheating to gain personal financial benefit.

The charge sheet also mentions that the work was given to Niko in an illegal way without floating tender, allowing it to extract 1794 billion cubic feet (bcf) gas from a reservation of 2,834 bcf, which caused the country a loss of Tk 13,630.50 crore considering the then price of each million-cubic-feet gas at Tk 75.9783.

The ACC also alleges that the accused cheated and abused power by showing the east part of Chhatak gas field—explored by Bangladesh but yet to be extracted—as marginal and abandoned.

The charge sheet will be submitted under sections 409, 109 and 511 of the penal code, section 15 of Emergency Power Rules (EPR) 2007, and section 5(2) of Corruption Prevention Act 1947.

The charge sheet in the case against Khaleda says the accused in collaboration with each other struck the anti-state 'joint venture agreement' by abusing power and through corruption, causing a loss of Tk 13,777 crore to the state and a loss of 1,744 bcfgas.

The charge sheet will be submitted under sections 409 and 109 of the penal code, and section 5(2) of Corruption Prevention Act 1947.

Sources in the ACC said Joint Secretary and Petrobangla Director (Finance) Yousuf Hossain was indicted in the case for distorting notes on the Niko deal, concealing information to get the deal approved, and trying to influence his department officials.

Shafiur and Moynul were charged with preparing the framework of understanding (FoU) so technically and signing it that helped Niko win the deal, while Giasuddin and Selim were indicted for being involved in bribery regarding the deal.

Selim told the investigators that he received Tk 3 crore from Kashem Sharif as bribe and gave Giasuddin Tk 1.80 crore from it.

Sources also said Kamal Uddin was indicted for his involvement with the whole process of awarding the deal to Niko.

The sources said the investigation report in the case against Khaleda proposed including the names of nine more persons in the charge sheet as they were also involved in the process.

Joint Secretary to the law ministry Noren Das is among them, sources added. But, he was not indicted as the law ministry was

105kg capsules

FROM PAGE 1
However, Sabbir Ahmed, chief chemical examiner of the DNC laboratory, said their tests were not complete and the official report could be ready by Sunday. However, "we initially found contraband drugs [in the seized capsules]," he added.

A case would be filed after receiving the test report that would allow the customs authorities to estimate the market value of the seized drugs, customs officials said adding that the drugs might be worth several crores of taka.

The narcotics were seized inside the ZIA in five bags, brought in by IIS citizen Zebunnessa, 65, of Bangladeshi origin. She fled the scene after arriving in Dhaka from Kuwait on a Kuwait Airways flight.

Police and intelligence agencies are now hunting for Zebunnessa, sources said.

Abu Taleb, deputy director of DNC, told The Daily Star, "Methadone is used for various purposes, including as an antidote to heroin and a pain killer. Methadone is not usually used in Bangladesh (for this purpose), but some NGOs have been trying to import it to use it as a heroin antidote."

"As a drug, it is far more powerful than heroin," he added.

CONTRABAND MEDICINES SEIZED
Customs officials on Tuesday seized huge quantities of contraband medicines worth about Tk 11.50 lakh and arrested two persons.

The arrestees -- Mohammad Sharif and Firoz -- were handed over to Airport police.

The consignment of 42,000 capsules, 10,360 tablets and 27 injections were smuggled in from Pakistan.

The involvement of civil aviation employees in the incident is being suspected and a case was filed with the Airport Police Station.

RMG workers

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Sheikh Mujib road for about two and a half hours, reported our Chittagong correspondent.

Police said around 500 workers of ExpoWorldwide 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.

The management earlier had assured them of paying their due salaries by yesterday morning.

The garment workers, however, lifted the blockade after 45 minutes and joined work as the factory owner promised them to pay their dues after 4:00pm following intervention of the labourers.

Jahidur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Khilgaon Police Station, said the factory owner paid the workers their due salaries in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, about 400 workers of Chowdhury Apparels in the port city's Ashkarabad area put up barricade at Dewanhat intersection at around 12:00noon demanding payment of three months' salary arrears.

Rina Akhter, a worker of the garment factory, said the authorities on three different dates this month had assured them of paying their salary arrears but failed on all the occasions.

The factory authorities at a meeting on April 23 assured them of paying their due salaries by yesterday morning, said Rina.

But the factory owner and other senior officials left the factory in the morning without paying the workers compelling them to demonstrate on the road, she added.

The barricade resulted in a long tailback stretching over four kilometres from Wasa intersection to Barik Building crossing.

On information, policemen from nearby Double Mooring Police Station rushed to the spot but failed to remove the barricade.

The workers lifted the barricade at about 2:30pm after Deputy Commissioner (DC) (Port) Habibur Rahman went to the scene and assured them of taking necessary steps in this regard.

Later, the factory authorities started paying the workers in presence of law enforcers and BGMEA leaders at about 4:00pm.

The factory owner and other senior officials left the factory in the morning without paying the workers compelling them to demonstrate on the road, she added.

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Cyclone Nargis

FROM PAGE 1
and the Office of Chief Adviser will remain partially open today and tomorrow during May Day and the weekend, with some officials and employees concerned assigned to monitor the situation of cyclone Nargis with readiness to take care of any emergency.

An order of special duties was issued for the staff of the chief adviser's office yesterday, with a roster of duties for 9:00am to 12 noon, and 4:00pm to 7:00pm.

Nargis, the first cyclonic storm since deadly Sidr, is likely to be intensified further, the met office said.

An official of the meteorological department said, "Probably it is going to hit Bangladesh-Myanmar coast," adding, it is still too far away to exactly predict the path.

The met office said it will be able to say today what will be the possible time and place of the landfall.

On Tuesday, the met office declared Nargis as a severe cyclonic storm after its wind speed had crossed 89kph. If the wind speed crosses 120kph, the storm will be categorised as 'very severe', and if it crosses 150kph it will be labelled as 'hurricane wind', met office sources said.

Maritime ports in Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been asked to keep hoisting distant signal no.2.

The met office warned that the sea will be rough over the North Bay while advising all fishing boats and trawlers to stay close to the coast until further notice.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transportation Authority in a news release last night asked all passenger launches to stop operating near coastal areas until further notice.

Over 3,000 people were killed in cyclone Sidr in November last year leaving over a thousand still missing. The cyclone with a wind speed of 210kph also caused damage to an enormously large amount of assets and crops leaving millions

of people without any livelihood, with many of them yet to rebuild their homes.

Meanwhile, panic gripped many people as soon as they heard about the oncoming cyclone, Nargis.

Our Khulna correspondent reported that people from all walks of life took shelter in schools and cyclone centres at Southkhali on Tuesday night fearing a strike by Nargis, recalling the horrors of dreadful Sidr.

Fishermen from the Bay of Bengal and officials and employees of the Sundarbans Forest Division also took shelter in safe places the same night.

School students of Southkhali did not attend their classes out of panic, and their classrooms were turned into shelters for panic-stricken people.

Most of the people are still panicked about Nargis as the sea remains very rough.

Meanwhile, coastguards and Bagerhat Red Crescent Society took all precautionary measures to face Nargis.

All upazila nirbahi officers of Bagerhat district have been asked to be ready for any emergency.

ACC forms
FROM PAGE 1
departments, in the submarine cable maintenance, Teletalk and the transport division of the ministries to determine the loss caused by graft.

ACC Director General (Admin) Col Hanif Iqbal told the journalists about the matter at a press briefing in the afternoon.

The commission has already sent a letter to the secretary of the ministry to extend cooperation to the task force through assigning an official, allocating a room for it as well as providing files and documents as per its demands.

The members of the task force are ACC Deputy Director Nurul Islam, Assistant Director Sayed Ahmed and Deputy Assistant Director Abdul Qader Zilani.

The British high commissioner earlier visited a voter registration centre at Syedpur Aliah Madrasa in Jagannathpur upazila in Sunamganj. Election Commissioner Sohul Hossain accompanied him.

Talking to locals, Choudhury said, the authorities have done a unique job with the task of registering voters with photos and it will help holding fair elections in the near future.

Later, Choudhury visited his ancestral village home at Probhakarpur and talked to villagers and relatives. He took a tour of the nearby Probhakarpur Government Primary School, where he had his elementary schooling.

The high commissioner later visited Sylhet Heart Foundation Hospital and inaugurated a privately owned 5-star hotel on 'Upashahar Road in Sylhet city.

Ahad Uddin, a non-resident Bangladeshi (NRB), and his sons own the Tk 125-crore venture named Hotel Roseview. The leading NRB and his sons own seven restaurants in the Surrey area in the UK.

SSC structured
FROM PAGE 16
The system will be introduced in Madrasa equivalent to SSC and technical education system from 2011 and in HSC and equivalent Madrasa and technical education-related public examinations in 2012.

The National Curriculum and Textbook Board and the Dhaka Education Board will jointly prepare a question bank.

The latest announcement would take effect immediately, the handout said.

CA to address
FROM PAGE 16
Quader told reporters yesterday afternoon.

Asked when the address might take place, he only said "very soon".

He was talking to reporters at the Secretariat after briefing Fakhrudin on the outcome of five advisers' recent meetings with political parties in the lead up to the formal electoral reform dialogue between them and the government.

Yesterday the advisers were scheduled to submit their report to the chief adviser on the recommendations of the political parties, civil society, business community and union parishad representatives.

Quader, LGRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal and Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman met with the chief adviser yesterday morning for briefing him before finalising their report of the 22-day pre-dialogue talks starting on April 7.

Adviser Zillur told reporters around 1:30pm that they would submit the report to the chief adviser later in the day.

Replying to a query, Quader said they and the political parties have reached consensus on several issues during the pre-dialogue talks.

"The necessity of political parties' reform was perceived," he said, adding that there was no disagreement during the informal talks.

Asked about the parliamentary elections and the state of emergency, Quader said, "The chief adviser will talk about these—the government's stance on elections, the state of emergency—in his address to the nation."

The advisers wrapped up the pre-dialogue talks on Monday.

Bangladesh, UK

FROM PAGE 16
"I believe time will judge the success and failures of my tenure," he added saying, "The UK-Bangladesh relation is in a high position now. Trade rose by 20 percent while aid got a 50 percent rise during the last few years. These will go up further."

"Yet there had been enough scopes for investments here in Bangladesh, but things remained unexplored for unknown reasons. Now the time has come to wake up and to unveil things. A UK-based organisation has recently identified 14 important sectors for investment in Bangladesh," Choudhury added.

Every year, about 6,000 Bangladeshi students go to the UK for education and it is on the rise, the envoy said adding that a 5-year-long special programme styled 'English in Action' will be introduced soon for teaching English to college and school students in Bangladesh. The 100-million dollar project will improve the standard of English here, he hoped.

The Working Holiday Maker (WHM) scheme had not been suspended, it was rather paused as 8000 applications were filed in just a week, the high commissioner said. The programme was launched by the UK government for temporary migration of young professionals from countries including Bangladesh last year.

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End monopoly
FROM PAGE 16
logical reason for rise of MS rod price by 55 per cent in the last four months, which forced the construction sector to come to a standstill.

Sources pointed out that a cartel of about 20/22 businessmen control the market of MS rod.

The April 17 meeting formed the probe body to find out the 'unexplained reasons' for abnormal price rise of the major construction material, which adversely affected the Annual Development Programme and the country's economy. It was asked to submit its report with recommendations by April 30.

The committee members visited several ship-breaking yards in Chittagong and talked with scrap ship traders, re-rolling millers and rod traders before finalising its report.

"Since the business mainly depends on import, the probe committee has asked for immediate steps to ensure competition to break any monopoly that leads to control on the whole market," Hossain Zillur said yesterday.

Besides, a taxation policy-related recommendation suggested steps for keeping the price rational.

The adviser said, "We won't accept any irrational explanations

or demands by any party in this regard. But we're dealing the matter with a professional approach. We will not impose price forcibly or target any individuals." He hoped the steps will have a positive impact on the market and price of MS rod will come down and remain stable.

Asked about the steps, Zillur said he would disclose those to the media next week.

The April 17 meeting decided to commercially open up the business of scrap materials and the ship-breaking industry to create a competitive market.

The adviser that day said steps would be taken to import the "60 grade finished rods" for making the market competitive.

Some businessmen said rod prices will not come down if supply of raw materials cannot be ensured at a reasonable rate. They stressed breaking the cartel in ship-breaking industry to keep rod prices at a reasonable level.

The government recently fixed the highest price of MS rod at Tk 62,000 a tonne as the price rose to Tk 75,000 in early April from Tk 50,000 in January. Most shops selling MS rod remained closed in the wake of drives by law enforcers to implement the government decision. And this further deepened the crisis.

Conservation of Nature -- IUCN, said everybody actually knows what to be done to mitigate river pollution.

"What we need is to establish a powerful body which can implement decisions to save the rivers," he said.

Prof Muzaffer Ahmad urged the government to mark the areas of river banks which were encroached upon by dumping soil into the rivers, and to remove those parts of the banks to give back the rivers their original shapes and sizes.

Professor Nazrul Islam, chairman of University Grants Commission, said there are 38 river related government bodies. He suggested establishing one powerful body instead, to save the rivers.

Professor Abdullah Abu Sayeed said only a few industrialists are polluting the rivers, adding, "Their days will end soon."

Brig Gen Hakim of the Bangladesh Army suggested formation of a river engineering brigade in the army.

Nayeemul Islam Khan, editor of a vernacular daily the Amader Shomoy, said a movement dedicated to saving rivers needs to be formed.

Among others Dr Riazuddin, director (technical) of DoE, Engineer Abul Kashem of BIWTA, Reba Pal of Water Partnership Bangladesh, river navigability expert Commodore (retd) Shafiqur Rahman, and environmentalist Mihir Biswas also spoke.

1b people in Asia

FROM PAGE 16
increased investments in agricultural infrastructure such as irrigation systems, farm to market roads greater support for rural finances," he added.

The ADB predicts inflation in Asia will hit 5.1 percent in 2008, its highest level in ten years due mostly to the rise in food and fuel costs.

"We believe this is the greatest policy challenge which we face," Nag said.

The food price rises are blamed on higher energy and fertiliser costs, greater global demand, droughts, the loss of rice farmland to biofuel plantations and price speculation.

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on Tuesday ordered a top level task force to take on the global crisis caused by rising food prices and urged key producer nations to end export bans.

Nag said the problem was more the inability of the poor to buy food rather than a lack of supply.

"Supply is tight no question about it. Stocks are the lowest in decades but I think we should be very focused that we need to look at the price issue which is keeping a lot of people in a very vulnerable range," he said.

Based in Manila, the ADB is owned by its 67 member countries -- 48 from the Asia-Pacific region, and 19 from elsewhere around the world.

Last year it approved 10.1 billion dollars (6.5 billion euros) in loans, 673 million dollars in grant projects and technical assistance amounting to 243 million.

UN OFFICIAL WARNS AGAINST 'KNEE-JERK' RESPONSE TO BIOFUELS

The senior UN official charged with heading up the new task force on the global food crisis warned Wednesday against a "knee-jerk" response to the growing use of biofuels, AFP adds from Geneva.

"I think we should avoid a knee-jerk response," UN under-secretary general for humanitarian affairs John Holmes told reporters.

Holmes was tasked by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to coordinate a new task force to tackle the crisis of soaring food prices, which have sparked fears of malnutrition and political unrest in many developing countries.

Billions of dollars have been poured into developing ethanol and biodiesel to help wean rich economies from their addiction to carbon-belching fossil fuels, the overwhelming source of man-made global warming.

Heading the rush are the United States, Brazil and Canada, which are

Students clash
FROM PAGE 16
When policemen obstructed them, the students started pelting the law enforcers with brickbats leading to a 45-minute-long clash.

Police lobbed eight rounds of tear-gas canisters to disperse the agitating college students who damaged two passenger buses and two private cars during the clash.

Later, the students returned to the campus and gathered at the college Shaheed Minar.

Another clash between the students and law enforcers ensued after the students started hurling brickbats at policemen near Chandrima market.

Later, the agitating students claimed down as the college authorities after holding an emergency meeting announced that they will request the government to meet the demands of the students.

The students have placed several demands including putting up a speed breaker in front of the college, not allowing any policeman to enter the college without prior approval from the authorities concerned and ensuring medical treatment for the teachers and students injured in Tuesday's clash.

The meeting also formed a five-member committee led by Rukhsana Quadri, a teacher of the college, to inquire into Tuesday's violent incidents.

Five platoons of police were deployed in front of the college in the morning.

Lankan troops
FROM PAGE 16
been fighting government troops since 1972 for a separate state for minority Tamils.

However, the LTTE accused the military of shelling a civilian settlement in the north on Wednesday killing a 52-year-old man and critically injuring a 32-year-old woman.

"Two hours of incessant shelling was directed at the civilian settlements and it is lucky that more people were not killed or injured," the LTTE peace secretariat said.

The Tigers also said unidentified gunmen shot dead a Tamil medical student in Jaffna on Tuesday night.

The latest figures raised the number of