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Cases similar, actions different

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami against whom warrants of arrest were issued in connection with the Gato graft case are still staying at homes although dozens of political leaders including Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia were arrested prior to or hours after lodging cases.

These leaders, presumably blessed by a section in the government, may take the opportunity of the government's 'soft stance' and not surrender to the court before May 22, the date for hearing of the case.

A Dhaka court yesterday morning issued the arrest warrants against 12 persons. Earlier Tuesday night, charges were pressed against them along with former premier Khaleda Zia and 11 others.

Police claimed at 9:00pm yesterday that the court order was yet to reach them.

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GATCO GRAFT CASE

Court orders arrest of 'absconding' Saifur, Bhuiyan, Nizami

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued arrest warrants against 12 'absconding' accused in the Gato scam case, including former ministers M Saifur Rahman, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Matu Rahman Nizami, MK Anwar, M Shamsul Islam and Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury.

Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court directed the court's officials instantly to send copies of the arrest warrants to police stations concerned, asking

the law enforcing agencies to report to the court about implementation of the order on May 22.

The judge also fixed May 22 to produce the arrestees including Khaleda Zia and the fugitive accused, including Saifur and Mannan, of the case before his court.

Following the court's order, two of the accused -- Anwar and Shamsul moved to the High Court for anticipatory bail to avoid the arrest, but they failed to get bail after surrendering to the higher court.

Expelled BNP Secretary General

Bhuiyan and Jamaat-e-Islami chief Nizami are preparing themselves to be detained any time, sources close to them said.

The other accused, former finance minister Saifur, who is also the top leader of the pro-reform faction of BNP, is now in Singapore for treatment. Another former minister, Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, has been in hiding since the army led joint forces began its crackdown on corruption suspects.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and her younger son Arifat

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Farm sector top priority of govt

Says CA; opens Boro harvest in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

The present caretaker government will give the agriculture sector top priority in the upcoming budget since the sector must be developed and strengthened to maintain a healthy rural economy, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed said yesterday.

"If the farmers of the country are benefited, the rural economy will become healthy," he said while addressing a grand rally of farmers in Cheradangi village of Dinajpur sadar upazila.

Earlier in the morning, the chief adviser inaugurated the grand rally and Boro harvest in the region by cutting a sheaf of paddy in a field owned by farmer Yar Muhammad.

Members of the Santal community were performing traditional

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PHOTO: STAR

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed inaugurates Boro harvest in the region by cutting sheaf of paddy at a field in Dinajpur yesterday while people of Santal community perform a traditional dance.

SC lawyers observe 2-hr work abstention

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) yesterday observed a two-hour work abstention at the Appellate Division, protesting some recent judgments of the apex court.

The state law officers including Attorney General (AG) barrister Fida M Kamal and a group of lawyers led by former vice-chairman of Bar Council Khondker Mahub Hossain however attended the court proceedings during the SCBA programme that began at 9:00am.

The full-bench Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice

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ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH Ex-NBR member Sarwar jailed for 13 years

Wife gets 3yrs

UNB, Dhaka

A special court dealing with corruption cases yesterday sentenced former National Board of Revenue (NBR) member ATM Sarwar Hossain to 13 years' imprisonment for amassing wealth illegally and hiding information about his wealth.

The court also awarded three

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Govt to import 1 lakh MT wheat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will procure one lakh tonne of wheat from the international market at about Tk 32 per kilogram (kg) after failing to buy the grain locally as its market price is higher than the government-fixed price.

The advisory committee on purchase at a meeting yesterday approved the procurement proposal of the food ministry.

The government had earlier set a target of procuring 50,000 tonnes of wheat from local market this

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PHOTO: STAR

Vendors occupy pavement forcing pedestrians on to the street, a common sight in Gullistan area of the capital.

BNP factions reviewing draft charter for unity

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the BNP factions yesterday held a series of meetings to review the draft charter prepared in a bid to reunite the party.

Party insiders said the major differences between the groups have already been resolved and the reconciliation now is 'only a matter of time'.

They said the pro-Saifur faction wants to unveil the unity charter after a joint meeting at the party headquarters. But Khandaker Delwar Hossain, the chairperson-appointed secretary general, thinks the pro-reform leaders should make the announcement on their own.

"There is no need to hold any meeting at this point for their return to the fold. However, they can clarify their position to the nation if they want," he said.

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Death in cop beating sparks clash: 15 hurt

UNB, Cox's Bazar

At least 15 people, including the officer-in-charge (OC) of Chakaria Police Station, were injured in a clash between local people and police yesterday over the death of a farmer after police beat him up.

Angered by the death of farmer Sirajul Islam, 52, local people laid a siege to the police station in the morning, triggering a chase and counter-chase.

Witnesses said the angry people also threw brickbats on policemen during the clash that continued for about four hours, injuring the 15 people.

Locals alleged that Shah Alam, a manpower agent, took Tk 3 lakh from Sirajul's son Nurul Amin and his friend Kafiluddin three years ago with a promise to send them to Malaysia.

As Shah Alam failed to send the youths to Malaysia, they demanded immediate return of their money.

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PLUNDERED MADDHAPARA HARD ROCK PROJECT Miner now wants refund of non-existent loans

SHARIER KHAN

Despite failing to complete Maddhapara hard rock mine project even 10 years behind schedule, North Korean company Namnam is now asking the government to repay instalments of loans that it arguably did not give, highly placed sources said.

Namnam is also trying to make the government accept the unfinished mine project as a completed one. And accordingly, it is trying to end the one-year guarantee period on May 24 without doing the project's unfinished tasks that it had promised to complete last year.

While the company is claiming loan repayment instalments of \$6.5 million, it actually owes Maddhapara Granite Mining Company Ltd (MGML) about Tk 104 crore as liquidated damage,

various bills and interests. This sum includes bills for electricity, explosives, hard rock and services from Bapex and Geological Survey of Bangladesh.

Namnam is now operating the mine with 65 South Koreans under a one-year service contract due to expire on May 27. As it did not fully transfer the South Korean technology to the MGML, it will get yet another year's service contract, the sources said.

"But the company has not even extended its bank guarantee of \$4.2 million beyond June 2007 while it is supposed to extend it till June 24, 2008," said a high official of Petrobangla that owns the MGML. As per the contract, this bank guarantee should be there till the mine project is completed.

If this guarantee was there, the MGML could have encashed it as

penalty for Namnam's failure to keep its promises.

Interestingly, the mine's Polish consultant Kopex is absent in Bangladesh for more than a year. Sources said due to bureaucratic red tape in the country, Kopex could not send its representatives.

Because of Namnam's questionable financing, very poor mining design and usually slow implementation, cost of the project that originally was Tk 650 crore shot up to Tk 1,275 crore.

The company was supposed to provide 90 percent of the project's finance. But it never pumped in that money and inadequately mobilised mining equipment and South Korean mining manpower. The project started with Petrobangla's 10 percent down payment (or \$13 million).

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Moudud charged with amassing Tk 7.38cr wealth illegally

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday pressed charges against detained former law minister Moudud with Gulshan Police Station in connection with amassing wealth beyond his known sources of income and withholding information about his assets.

The first information report (FIR) of the case said Moudud showed movable and immovable properties worth over Tk 13.23 crore in his account of wealth submitted to the ACC on July 23.

The anti-graft body in an investigation found out that his movable and immovable wealth is worth over Tk 17.63 crore.

The FIR said Moudud did not declare his wealth worth over Tk 4.40 crore and he has assets to the tune of Tk 7.38 crore which is

prosecution witnesses.

On September 16, ACC Deputy Assistant Director Shariful Haque Siddiqui filed the case against Moudud with Gulshan Police Station in connection with amassing wealth beyond his known sources of income and withholding information about his assets.

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FORESTLAND GRAFT ACC to sue Shamsul Islam, Shajahan Siraj, Mamun

UNB, Dhaka

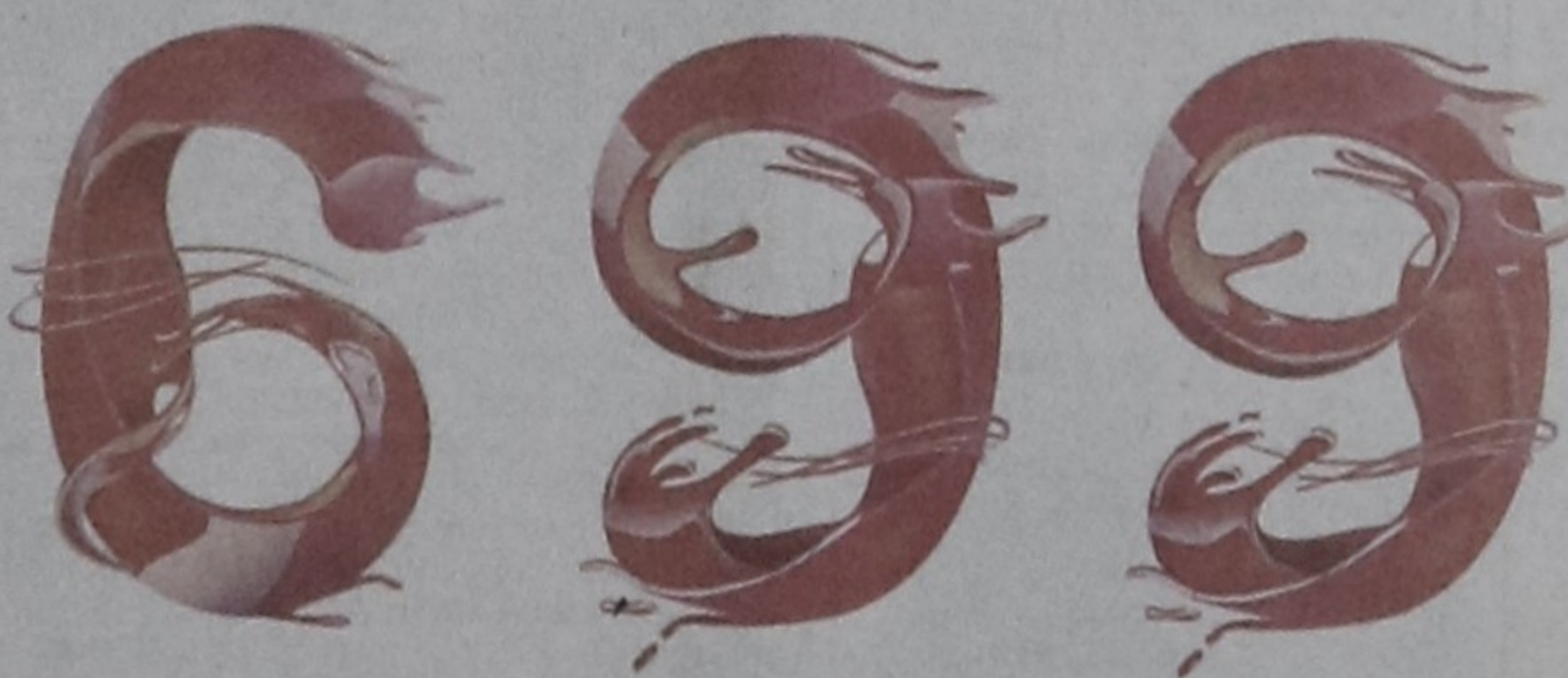
The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has decided to file two cases against nine individuals, including former BNP ministers Shamsul Islam and Shajahan Siraj, and businessman Giasuddin Al Mamun, for corruption in making permanent allocation of about 24 acres of forestland in Bhawal National Park, Gazipur.

The accused also include Orion Group Chairman Obaidul Karim, Shajahan Siraj's son Rajib Siraj, two incumbent senior government officials and a retired secretary of accused.

ACC Director General Col Hanif Iqbal told the regular briefing that the commission approved the filing of the cases for corruption relating to forestland.

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