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Grafts reign supreme in import trade

Nexus of traders, politicians, taxmen abusing PSI system to gobble up at least Tk 1,000cr revenue a year

Star Investigation 1

SYED ASHFAQUL HAQUE and
JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

The system for pre-shipment inspection (PSI) of imports has become riddled with corruption, and plagued by tax dodging and money laundering, depriving the

country of huge amounts of revenue, reveals an investigation by The Daily Star.

Behind the large scale corruption is a nexus of some businessmen, politicians, taxmen and PSI staff who have plundered government revenues since the system was made mandatory in 2000.

The exact amount the scams have cost the country is difficult to know, but businessmen and revenue experts believe the sum is well

in excess of 1,000 crore taka a year.

Now the National Board of Revenue (NBR) has been forced to act, cancelling the license of one PSI company and launching probes into the activities of others.

"NBR will go for instant actions, if it finds any PSI company involved in irregularities," NBR Chairman Muhammad Abdul Mazid told The Daily Star. "Though we have cancelled license of one company, but none of the three others is

innocent."

The PSI system was introduced to help the National Board of Revenue (NBR) generate revenue by minimising corruption in customs and ending hassle for importers in clearing goods. However it is now being abused at will, and swamped by phoney declarations, under or over invoicing, false inspections and fraudulent certification of consignments.

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TALKS WITH GOVT, POLLS WITHOUT HASINA AL leaves decision to grassroots leaders

Observes mass hunger strike today

HASAN JAHD TUSHER

Awami League's (AL) decision whether to participate in the dialogue with the government and the election without its President Sheikh Hasina will be based on opinions of the grassroots- and national-level committees.

How the party should go about securing Hasina's release too will be decided on the basis of the feedback from its rank and file.

AL acting general secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam has already sent out letters to the district leaders, asking them to join the extended meeting

slated for May 26 and come up with formal proposals on the issues.

Besides, the party has instructed its district units to submit detailed reports on the state of their organisations and that of their rivals'. It also requested them to turn in a list of the cases filed against leaders and workers during the caretaker government and BNP-Jamaat coalition rules.

"Our decision whether or not to join the dialogue will be based on the opinions to be expressed at the party's extended meeting," AL acting general secretary Syed

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Pro-Khaleda faction rejects, reformists accept talks invite

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pro-Khaleda faction of BNP yesterday rejected the government letter inviting them to participate in the formal dialogue, saying it did not address party secretary general Khandaker Delwar Hossain properly.

Meanwhile, Maj (ret'd) Hafizuddin Ahmed, acting secretary general of the pro-reform faction, accepted the government invitation for the talks Sunday night, though the letter made no mention of his designation.

Rizvi Ahmed, acting office secretary of pro-Khaleda faction,

said a Special Branch official carried the letter to Delwar's Nam apartment at about 9:30am.

But Delwar regretted to accept the letter sent from the Chief Adviser's Office, as the authorities did not state his designation in it.

After getting a 'corrected' letter from the government, the pro-Khaleda faction will take its decision about participating in the dialogue in consultation with the party leaders, sources said.

In its letter, the government asked the leaders of both factions to send the names of their representatives.

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Dialogue starts Thursday with small parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The much-awaited dialogue between the caretaker government and the political parties begins Thursday with some small parties sitting first to discuss reforms and ways to hold a free and fair election.

So far, Workers Party of Bangladesh, Bikalpadhara Bangladesh, Liberal Democratic Party and some other small parties have sent names of their party leaders to represent the respective parties in the dialogue.

Meanwhile, the two major parties of the country Awami League (AL) and BNP are still "undecided" over taking part in the dialogue, which will be held at the Chief Adviser's Office.

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Nizami behind bars

COURT CORRESPONDENT

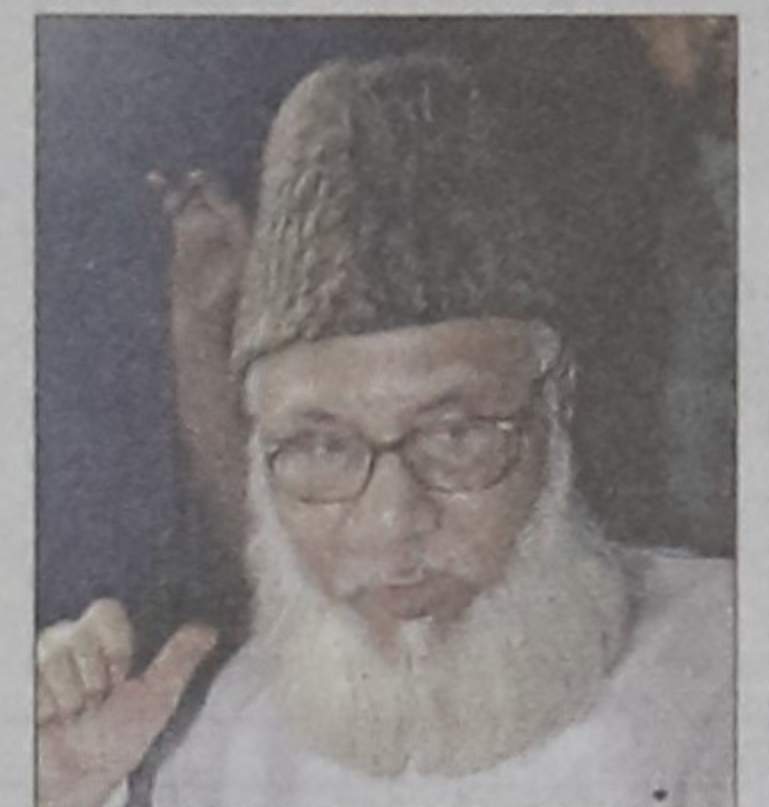
Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami was sent to jail yesterday after being produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court of Dhaka in connection with the Gatco graft case.

Nizami was arrested from his Moghbazar residence at about 11:15pm on Sunday following receipt of his arrest warrant copy issued earlier on May 15 in the case.

Police produced Nizami before the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Waliul Islam under tight security, at about 9:45am yesterday where his lawyers submitted three petitions.

The petitions included a bail petition, another for providing him with first class division and the other for granting him proper treatment in jail custody.

Before taking his seat, the magis-



Motiur Rahman Nizami

trate Assistant Commissioner (prosecution) Mockbul Hossain asked on duty policemen to place the accused Nizami in the dock, otherwise the magistrate would not take his seat.

Nizami's lawyers protested this saying there were instances where

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As history knows him

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami, who enjoyed leniency of the past governments, is now at an isolated cell of Dhaka Central Jail thanks to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) implicating him in the Gatco graft case that eventually led to his arrest on Sunday night.

Although there is enough evidence of his involvement in atrocities during the Liberation War in 1971, he and other local collaborators of the Pakistani occupation forces managed to evade arrest.

Chief of Al-Badr, a force formed with local collaborators of the Pakistani invading army to eliminate intellectuals of Bangladesh, Nizami also got off scot-free even after dozens of former ministers and senior politicians were put

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