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Jalil's bail extended by 6 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday extended the bail of Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil for another six months in a graft case filed by the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) for amassing wealth illegally and concealing information of the assets.

Upon a prayer filed by Jalil, an HC bench comprising Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Quamrul Islam Siddiqui passed the order.

On September 10, the HC granted ad-interim bail to Jalil in the case until October 20 and also issued a rule upon the ACC and the government to explain why the initiation and proceedings of the case against Jalil should not be declared illegal.

The ACC filed the case against Jalil with Ramna Police Station on December 18 last year. He was

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Melamine 'found' in popular milk brands

DU chemistry dept submits test results to BSTI

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Department of Chemistry of Dhaka University has found traces of melamine in different brands of powdered milk available in the country's markets.

The department sent its findings in a report to the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) yesterday in which they stated that melamine has been found present in the Chinese brands Yashili 1, Yashili 2 and Sweet Baby 2, and five other popular brands of milk available in local markets.

Director General of BSTI Azmal Hossain told The Daily Star, "According to the DU report, the level

of melamine found in all eight samples are beyond tolerable levels."

BSTI scientists say that presence of upto 1 milligram (mg) of melamine per kg of milk consumed would be considered safe for children to consume. For adults, this would be 2.5 mg per kg of milk.

"The BSTI and the private testing laboratory Plasma Plus also examined the same eight samples but did not find melamine in any of those samples except Yashili 1," Azmal Hossain said.

He said that BSTI would send the copies of the DU report to the commerce and other ministries concerned by the end of the day yesterday.

Hossain also said that BSTI will not go for testing of the remaining 28 powdered milk samples they have collected until it is confirmed how reliable the DU test results are.

The BSTI sent the eight samples of powdered milk to DU's chemistry department a few weeks ago for tests.

The DU report however shows much higher levels of melamine present in the samples.

Experts consider industrial 'melamine' toxic for health, especially in children.

Prof Golam Mainuddin of the Paediatric Nephrology department of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, said, "We are

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ACC moves to get stayed cases disposed of

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is going to move the pending cases filed against corruption suspects which were stayed by the High Court (HC) on different legal grounds.

ACC lawyers Tuesday prayed to the HC to take up 10 corruption cases including those filed against BNP leaders Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and Lutfozzaman Babar for quick disposal of the cases.

ACC's counsel Anisul Haq yesterday told newsmen in his chamber at the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) that the HC bench of Justice Mohammad Anwarul Haque and Justice Farah Mahbub has fixed nine out of the 10 cases for hearing.

He said the HC would now hold hearings on the rules earlier issued

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Visiting British Minister of State for Asia, Africa and the United Nations Lord Mark Malloch Brown calls on Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed at his office yesterday.

Sculptures near ZIA removed after protests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) and Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) were forced to remove five sculptures of Bauls (folk singers) including Lalou Shah in front of the Zia International Airport in the face of protests from an Islamist group.

Sculptor Mrinal Haque told reporters that almost 50 percent task of the Tk 1 crore project had been finished at a cost of around Tk 50 lakh.

Two of the five sculptures had been removed by yesterday evening while the rest was to be removed by midnight, Officer-in-Charge (OC) of the Airport Police Station Sirajul Islam told the Daily Star.

He said the erection of the sculptures began about a month ago.

Earlier, Murti Protirodh Committee (Sculpture Prevention Committee) led by Khatme Nabuat Chairman Mufti Nur Hossain Nurani gave an ultimatum of 24

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Workers pulling down sculptures erected at the roundabout in front of Zia International Airport yesterday after the authorities decided to dismantle them following protest by a local Islamist group against the sculptures.

Foods to remain pricey despite good reserve

Global hunger index ranks Bangladesh 70th out of 88 countries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladeshis have to buy food at high prices even though the country has adequate food in reserve, leaving around 47 million people undernourished.

As World Food Day, 2008, is being observed today worldwide, a global hunger index (GHI) ranks Bangladesh 70th out of 88 countries. This means the hunger situation in the country remains alarming.

In 2008, Bangladesh's score stood at 25.2 (100 being the worst and 0 the best). This is an improvement from 32.3 in 1990.

Experts said that the price hike of agricultural inputs is contributing to the rise in food prices. Stronger safety net programmes for low and middle income groups, creation of employment opportu-

nities and development of new and high-yielding variety crops are urgently required.

According to the Directorate General of Food, the government at the moment has food reserve of 12.76 lakh tonnes. Over 80,000 tonnes of imported wheat and rice are being released from ports and the government is also buying boro from the domestic market.

"We have adequate food reserve in the country," Pius Costa, director general of Directorate General of Food, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Officials say that Bangladesh's average annual demand for food-wheat and rice-is 2.9 crore tonnes and the target of food production during the current fiscal year is 3.66 crore tonnes.

"Yes the food reserve is enough but the challenge is the high price of food. This is happening due to

the price increase of agriculture inputs like fuel, fertilisers, pesticides," Agriculture Adviser CS Karim said.

Rising food prices is an obstacle to food security of people of low and middle-income groups, he said, adding that it seems prices will not come down soon.

"What we need to face the problem is interim safety net measures. The government initiated 100-day employment scheme for the poor to this end," Karim told The Daily Star. Safety net programmes like Vulnerable Group Feeding and open market sales are also effective.

A report of Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP) says that Bangladesh's undernourished population has increased by 7.3 million to 46.9 million, largely the

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Move to fill vacant posts of SC judges

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The government has taken initiatives to appoint new judges in the both the Appellate and High Court (HC) divisions of the Supreme Court.

Both divisions of the apex court have been suffering from shortage of judges for some time now.

Sources said 10 to 15 new judges would be appointed through the Supreme Judicial Commission (SJC) to fill the vacancies in this court. Also two judges from the HC division will be promoted to the Appellate Division.

According to the sources, the government has already sent a list of suggestions for the posts to the Chief Justice who is the chairman

of the SJC, to make his recommendations to the President for their appointment.

The SJC will sit in a meeting today afternoon at the Chief Justice's office to decide on the names to recommend to the President.

While talking to The Daily Star on Tuesday, SJC member and president of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) barrister Shafique Ahmed said that the SJC would recommend names of competent, honest and impartial candidates to the President for appointment as High Court judges.

"I think competent and honest judges will be appointed to the HC very soon and help reduce the huge

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ALLEGED CORRUPTION 17 govt high-ups asked to appear before Tac

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Truth and Accountability Commission (Tac) has so far issued notices on 17 government high-ups asking them to appear before it to answer their alleged involvement in corruption.

The commission, however, believes an educated and conscious government official "cannot be corrupt" unless they are psychologically imbalanced or entrapped under circumstances or social contexts.

To combat corruption, Tac members said they would recommend ensuring transparency and

accountability in the government service, modernise the working system, and introducing counselling and psychiatric treatment for the government officials involved in graft.

The commission members made the comments at a regular press briefing at Tac office yesterday immediately after announcing issuance of notices on the government high officials.

"We've served notices on 17 government officials. If they don't appear before the commission on receipt of the notices, they will be jailed for three months," said Tac Chairman Justice Habibur Rahman

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Recover Tk 8cr embezzled Viqarunnisa school fund Urge teachers, students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The teachers and students of Viqarunnisa Noon School and College (VNSC) yesterday urged the authorities concerned to recover the embezzled Tk 8.09 crore from the accused in the Viqarunnisa University Foundation graft case.

They made the call at a press conference at the VNSC auditorium on Baily road in the capital.

The VNSC teachers asked the education ministry to formulate a policy to safeguard them from undue political pressure they face every year during admission tests for the VNSC.

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Ctg mayor kept out of his office Mohiuddin seeks explanation of the govt order

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury could not hold a meeting with CCC councillors and staffs yesterday as the government prevented him from resuming work as CCC mayor.

The LGRD ministry sent a letter to CCC chief executive officer (CEO) Tuesday saying acting Mayor M Monjur Alam would continue discharging the mayoral duties until further notice.

"The High Court has granted him [Mohiuddin] bail and issued permission for foreign tours. It has not given any directives on resuming his duties [as the mayor]," LGRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal told reporters yesterday.

The CCC mayor has sought explanation from the ministry concerned as to why the charge of mayor has not been returned to him.

"We are examining it now. We will seek the law ministry's opinion in this regard," the LGRD adviser said.

Mohiuddin, now facing 22 cases that were filed after the launch of the anti-corruption drive last year,

cancelled his trip to Bangkok yesterday as he did not get a government order. His daughter is having treatment in Bangkok.

Returning to his port city home Tuesday evening, the mayor scheduled a meeting with CCC councillors and staffs yesterday morning. Mohiuddin postponed the meeting as he came to know about the LGRD ministry letter, signed by Senior Assistant Secretary of the LGRD ministry Delwar Hossain.

The councillors convened a press conference at the CCC building yesterday protesting the ministerial order and termed the content of the letter contradictory and illegal. Thirty-eight out of 55 CCC councillors were present.

Citing example of Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka and Sylhet City Corporation Mayor Badruddin Ahmed Kamran, they said Khoka and Kamran are now discharging their mayoral duties even though they are on bail.

Sources said the LGRD letter was in fact a reply to another letter sent to the ministry by a CCC official on October 13.

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PHOTO: STAR

Illegal structures are being bulldozed on the link road between Pragati Sarani and Bashundhara connecting road in the capital yesterday.

US recession fears grow despite firm rescue efforts

AFP, Washington

The extraordinary efforts by Washington and other governments to stem a financial market crisis appear to be helping confidence but will not prevent recession in the world's biggest economy, analysts say.

Those fears were hammered home Wednesday with unusually bleak reports on US retail sales, which represents the bulk of US economic activity, and a key regional manufacturing index.

Most analysts say that a US recession appears virtually certain due to the impact of the credit crunch and housing meltdown on the rest of the economy, despite the 700-billion-dollar rescue plan approved by Congress that will

include 250 billion dollars infused into bank capital to help restore credit flows.

On Tuesday, San Francisco Federal Reserve president Janet Yellen became the first central bank official to acknowledge that a recession is probably underway.

"The recent flow of economic data suggests that the economy was weaker than expected in the third quarter, probably showing essentially no growth at all," she said.

"Growth in the fourth quarter appears to be weaker yet, with an outright contraction quite likely. Indeed, the US economy appears to be in recession."

Reinforcing those fears, the Commerce Department reported

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McCain faces make-or-break debate with Obama today

AFP, New York

Republican John McCain has a third and final chance to debate his way back into contention when he faces his hard-charging White House rival Barack Obama in New York late Wednesday.

McCain, who was down a whopping 14 points in one new poll as the United States weathers its worst financial crisis in decades.

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