

## actionaid

প্রশিক্ষণ কর্মসূচির উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠান

ইশারাভাষী জনগোষ্ঠীর তথ্যপ্রাপ্তি অধিকার নিশ্চিত করনে



PHOTO: STAR

ActionAid Country Director Farah Kabir speaks at the inaugural ceremony of a workshop on the use of sign language in the media at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On her right are Masuda Binte Kadir and Mansur Ahmed Chowdhury. ActionAid and SDSL organised the workshop.

## 10 injured in BCL feud at Titumir College

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 10 activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) were injured during a factional feud on Government Titumir College campus in the city yesterday.

The injured were rushed to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) and Mohakhali Metropolitan Hospital.

Of them, Kazi Neon, Ismail Hossain, Protim, Sumon, Fibat and Akbar were sent to DMCH while others were given treatment at Mohakhali Metropolitan Hospital, hospital sources said.

General students said a group of 10 to 12 BCL activists led by Kazi Neon and the other faction led by Nipun were locked in fresh clash in front of the college auditorium at around 1:15pm on sequel to a Saturday's clash on the campus.

They said the two feuding groups clashed for establishing dominance during the visit of Home Minister Sahara Khatun to the campus on Saturday.

On information police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Police were deployed at the college yesterday to avert any further untoward incident, police said.

## 200th episode of BSB-Cambrian Medhabikash tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 200th episode of the BSB-Cambrian Medhabikash, a live TV programme on education, will be aired on Channel-i at 11.05am tomorrow.

This was disclosed at a press conference at the Channel-i office at Shidheshawari in the city yesterday. Channel-i Director Shykh Siraj described different aspects and planning of the programme at the conference.

Dr Alauddin Ahmed, political adviser to the prime minister, Dhaka Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, Prof Atiqur Rahaman and BSB Cambrian College Chairman M K Bashar will attend this episode as special guests.

The programme was first aired in March 2004.

In each episode, a guest teacher on a particular subject and a meritorious student who obtained outstanding result in the SSC and HSC examinations answer different questions on preparation for the SSC and HSC examinations.

## Jute mills workers start fresh agitation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Casual workers of state-owned jute mills of Khulna-Jessore industrial belt yesterday announced a three-day agitation programme to press home their seven-point demand.

The programmes include work abstention from 8:00am to 12:00noon and laying siege to the offices of project directors today, work abstention and sit-in from 8:00am to 12:00noon in front of the offices tomorrow and preventing officials from entering their respective mills from 8:00am till 12:00noon on February 5.

They will observe work abstention at all the state-owned jute mills for an indefinite period from February 7 if their seven-point demand is not met by February 6, said Gazi Masum, convener of Jute Mills Workers' Development Committee.

## FACTORIES IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS HC asks authorities to explain in 4 weeks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule upon the government to show cause as to why the rules of Environment Conservation Act, 1995 and Environment Conservation Rules 1997 prohibiting the setting up of mills and factories in the residential areas should not be followed properly.

An HC bench of Justice ABD Khamil Haque and Justice Md Abdul Hye in the rule also asked the authorities concerned to explain within four weeks why direction should not be given to close Al-tech Aluminum Industries Limited in Gazipur for damaging environmental balances.

The rule came upon a writ petition filed by Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST).

The industries ministry and its secretary, the director general and the director of the environment directorate and

deputy commissioner and upazila nirbahi officer of Gazipur and managing director of Al-tech Aluminum Industries Limited have been made respondents in the rule.

The petition stated that Al-tech Aluminum Industries Limited has been set up in the Vurulia residential area at Ward No-1 in Gazipur in 2005 without any environment licence and violating the rules of Environment Conservation Act, 1995 and Environment Conservation Rules 1997.

It said few hundred residential houses and Dhaka Engineering and Technology University (DETU) are situated within the areas of 100 feet from the factory.

The environmental balance of the residential area and the normal life of the people of the area are being seriously damaged.

Advocate Idrisur Rahman assisted by Advocate Toufikul Islam moved the petition.



PHOTO: STAR

Channel-i Director Shykh Siraj speaks at a press conference at its office at Shidheshawari in the city yesterday. On his left is BSB Cambrian College Chairman MK Bashar and on his right is Dr Selina Akhtar Jahan.

## Tourist found dead in Cox's Bazar hotel

A CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A tourist was found dead at his hotel room in Cox's Bazar sea beach at 6:00pm on Sunday.

Police said Miraz Hossain from Uttara in Dhaka and his wife Touhida Hossain boarded at the Sea Olive on January 30.

Police said hotel boys became suspicious when Touhida Hossain tried to leave the hotel hurriedly leaving the key of the room at reception desk.

Then hotel authorities

informed the police and police broke the lock of the room and found Miraz dead inside the room.

Police arrested his wife Touhida.

The body was sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

Police said Touhida did not confess killing of her husband. She, however, said they had frequent quarrels in their conjugal life. She also said that her husband used to warn her that he would commit suicide.

## KHULNA TRAIN Poor coaches replace modern ones

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Modern coaches from the Sundarbans-Nishtha inter-services train plying Khulna-Dhaka-Khulna route have allegedly been replaced by low quality coaches.

It is alleged that a group of transport owners are involved in a conspiracy to make this comfortable train service inactive and unpopular for the sake of their business.

As a result, authorities of Railway removed ten Indonesian luxurious coaches from the train last December and replaced them with Middle Order Generation (MOG) coaches, citing overhauling works as an excuse, alleged passengers, who travel frequently by this train and employees at Khulna Railway Office.

The luxurious coaches made in Indonesia were shifted to Chittagong, they added.

Leaders of Greater Khulna Development Action Coordination Committee have threatened to wage a movement if Khulna Railway authorities fail to bring back the ten luxurious coaches from Chittagong.

ULAB spring semester orientation

METRO DESK

The orientation programme of the spring semester 2009 of University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) was held in its Dhanmondi campus yesterday, says a press release.

The ULAB Vice Chancellor Prof Rafiqul Islam welcomed the freshers at the programme. Pro-VC Imran Rahman and Dr Kazi Anis Ahmed, director, Academic Affairs, also spoke.

## Lengthy legal war wears out ACC It stresses faster case disposal mechanism at trial courts

For the first time Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) led by Lt Gen (retd) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury is working under a political government. Recently the ACC top brass have paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

A few days after that meeting ACC Chairman HASAN MASHHUD CHOWDHURY in an interview with The Daily Star said under no circumstances the anti-graft watchdog would hesitate to take action against anyone. JULFIKAR ALI MANIK took the interview.

Q. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is responsible to fight corruption. But it is very difficult to do the task alone. You had tremendous support from the caretaker government since combating graft was their prime agenda. How do you feel now that a political party is in power?

Mashhud: Why not, we're still hopeful that we should be able to continue with fighting corruption since all the political parties, especially the one which is in power now, had made respondents in the rule.

The petition stated that Al-tech Aluminum Industries Limited has been set up in the Vurulia residential area at Ward No-1 in Gazipur in 2005 without any environment licence and violating the rules of Environment Conservation Act, 1995 and Environment Conservation Rules 1997.

It said few hundred residential houses and Dhaka Engineering and Technology University (DETU) are situated within the areas of 100 feet from the factory.

The environmental balance of the residential area and the normal life of the people of the area are being seriously damaged.

Advocate Idrisur Rahman assisted by Advocate Toufikul Islam moved the petition.

alliance government so that the anti-graft body could function independently. But we saw the first commission could not function effectively as the BNP government controlled it as per their political whims. Your commission was formed during the caretaker rule. Do you think it would be able to function independently under the present political government?

Mashhud: Inshallah, yes. ACC would make it a point that it is not associated with either a group or a party or a profession and it performs its tasks with a very clear and transparent agenda that is fighting corruption wherever it is.

Q. What would you do if you were not allowed to work independently and without interference from the government?

Mashhud: This being a hypothetical question I may not elaborate much on this; rather we should hope that situation will not arise and we should be able to continue working as best as we can.

Q. Last two years saw unprecedented anti-graft drive against high-profile corruption-suspects, especially politicians from both the major parties - Awami League and BNP. Now AL is in power. Many of its leaders including the prime minister are accused in corruption cases filed by the commission. What would be the fate of these cases?

Mashhud: I believe we have mentioned it before that the only thing that can happen to the cases is that the process of prosecution should be allowed to continue and the ultimate purpose of fair verdict should not be hampered by anybody in any manner.

Mashhud: Till now I believe we have got all the right signals from the government. Starting with the manifesto as I mentioned and subsequent developments including forming of the government or nomination of the candidates and then forming of the cabinet. Rare exceptions apart, I believe there is a qualitative change regarding the corruption aspect of the persons, those who would be in the governance of the state.

Q. Could you elaborate on the assurance of cooperation you've got?

Mashhud: No, we didn't go for any specific assurance. It was a general assurance which is I think quite all right at this stage. I think when specific measures are needed, I am confident we will be able to talk it out with the government and we will always maintain safe and a reliable channel of communications at all levels.

Q. What did you ask from the prime minister?

Mashhud: No, we did not go to ask anything. We went to convey our regards and congratulations on assumption of office. But definitely as we went there some relevant matters came up regarding ACC. To be specific we did discuss certain administrative matters of ACC, which we thought need immediate attention of the government. She was kind enough to note those and I'm sure the follow-ups as such will take place in time. Otherwise, generally we discussed the methods and the procedures of ACC and we did clarify some of our points.

Overall it was not a so-called give-and-take session; it was more or less a matter of paying compliments to her. And as you had mentioned before, getting an assurance that ACC will be supported by the government in its future endeavours.

Q. We always hear about manpower crisis, lack of logistics and expertise in fighting corruption. Apart from these, what are the other significant challenges, and what kind of support is required from the government to meet the challenges?

Mashhud: Well, first of the major challenges we have indicated is political will. The government must retain the will to fight corruption. But that is not in either of the categories as you have mentioned, this is neither logistics nor money nor manpower, this is something much more valuable, much more important than these. Once this is in place, the political will, other things will automatically follow. So, our job at this stage is to expect and encourage the government to sustain the political will, which it has so far shown.

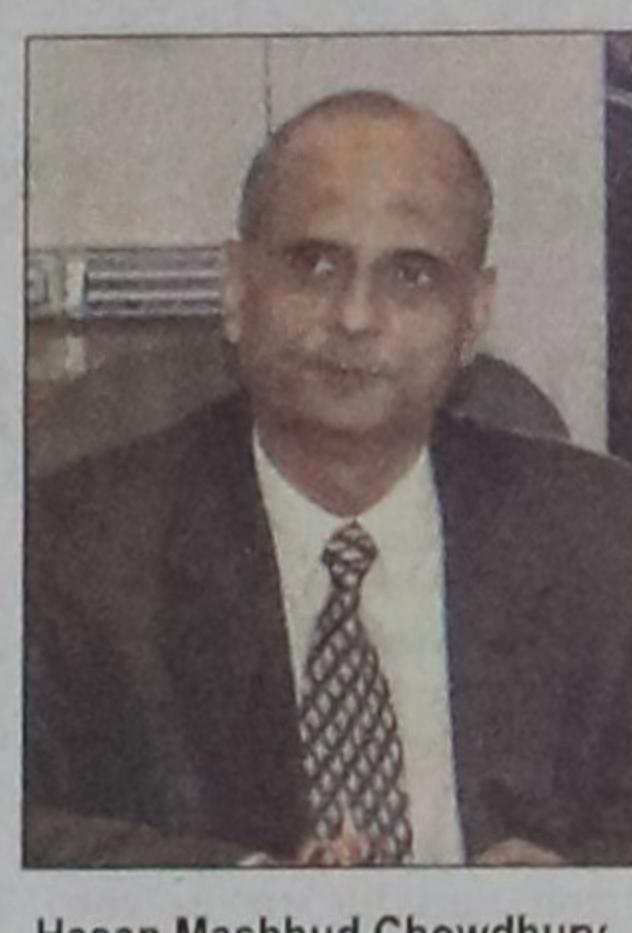
Q. It is a tradition here to go after corruption of the previous government. But we have no instance to take steps against corruption of the administration of a party in power. Do you think we will see any change this time in regard?

Mashhud: If we remain steady in pursuing our goal then there should be no difficulty in prosecuting people, those who are involved with the present government. The matter of prosecuting individual

from the past governments would continue as part of our duty but then under no circumstances inshallah ACC would hesitate to take action [in case of corruption] against any persons who would be in the present administration.

Q. If ACC gets any information of corruption of present ministers, lawmakers or any bureaucrats serving in the administration, how far the commission would be able to go after this?

Mashhud: As I said again, nothing should stop ACC, nothing. We are at the stage no way to be constrained to pursue any case against anybody, whether it is of this party or that party or this profession or that profession. I know people would be watching very closely as to who would be targeted by ACC in near future. I can assure you, we



Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury

will not make any change in our standard regarding who should be investigated or who should be prosecuted. Only corruption will be the criteria.

Q. What would be your strategies of work in the changed situation?

Mashhud: Basically, I think the strategy should be that we should not go on a collision course with any agency including the government. We should rather be patient and try to make the other parties see the reasons, the logic of certain corruption. This is because by doing so everybody gains except the corrupt people. The government gains in terms of its image, misuse of government resources are minimised, common people are not harassed and Bangladesh as a country gets rid of the stigma of being the most corrupt country in the world.

Q. We did not see any major steps regarding corruption allegations against bureaucrats and policemen, but still the ordinary people have been suffering from petty corruption in the police force and administration. How ACC can make a meaningful change in this regard?

Mashhud: As I keep on saying unfortunately a very large number of cases which were initiated against government officials did not get the attention of the common people as everybody including the media was interested in the high-profile cases. To repeat I may say that more 1,200 cases have been filed by ACC of which more than 700 are related to such petty corruption that you mentioned, and this involves the whole of Bangladesh not only Dhaka. So there is nothing to stop us from following this method of dealing with corruption at all levels. But I believe it would be better to prevent corruption, the petty corruption, because prosecuting all of them will be simply impossible. So both the aspects of prosecution and prevention should be aimed at regarding corruption at the lower levels as you indicate.

Q. Many think ACC drive against institutional graft was premature and not well planned. They feel ACC is just not equipped yet to get into that battle. What's your view?

Mashhud: Basically, I don't think that we cannot deal with them if not follow them at a time, so there is the point. I think the nature of the incidents or corruption is not very complicated. It is either misuse of power or getting illegal benefits, etc, especially, when the government agencies are concerned. The only point is how many cases you can initiate, how much resources you can employ against all these agencies. We are, as a matter of fact, in stages we have dealt with the Roads and Highways Department and

most of them have gone to the Truth Commission and tried to get themselves absolved of the crimes they have committed. We will be looking into other agencies that you have indicated. We have the plan to go for this institutional corruption, slowly but steadily.

In the mean time we should be able to enhance both our manpower and the methods so that we can handle these matters efficiently.

Q. Politicians never got punished for their corruption as yet. Either political clout, loopholes in the laws or presidential mercy saved them. Do you think ACC can make that happen by following up a case till the end?

Mashhud: This commission is breaking fresh grounds and not following the old precedence blindly. I believe ACC should be satisfied as long as it can prosecute an accused till the final stage that is the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court. ACC should not be the agency to determine or demand what punishment should be meted out to the accused if he or she is proved guilty. Again it is the privilege of the president to grant clemency in his own wisdom if he wants to. So that is an area the agency should not have any intention to get into.

Q. No substantial progress was seen in corruption allegations against several high-profile graft-suspects. The probe into alleged corruption by Arafat Rahman Koko also gained pace after the Siemens scandal and Singapore probe came to light. What actually held back ACC?

Mashhud: The cases against all such high-profile personalities will be pursued with full vigour and may be right now all the things are not visible but we are quietly and surely working both at home and abroad to prove the cases of corruption against many high-profile personalities. You indicate that ACC was held back by somebody or some reason, I told you that the only reason would be the sensitivity of the cases. We should not do anything in a premature manner, where either the case gets compromised or the accused gets the benefit before the case goes to the court.

Q. Where do you think that ACC has failed so far to make any headway? What goal have you set for yourself during this assignment?

Mashhud: Yes, we should be very clear in what we have failed. We have failed in seeing the end of the cases; the cases in the court could not be settled at a final stage. Because, the existing system would not permit us to do so in a hurry. Where else we have failed most probably is the capacity building of ACC has not progressed as smoothly as we had intended. Inshallah by now things are getting under control. We have started the process of firing or rather inducting