

ACC accused of contempt of JS

JS body asks it to explain by a week before June 2 as Mashhud, incumbent commissioners, secy shun public undertakings committee meeting

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Undertakings yesterday accused the immediate past chief of Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), its incumbent acting chief, the other incumbent commissioner, and one of its former secretaries of contempt of the parliament.

The parliamentary committee also questioned the legality of some of ACC's moves under the regime of the immediate past caretaker government over almost the last two years.

Despite being summoned by the parliamentary committee to be present at a committee meeting yesterday, former ACC chief Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury, incumbent Acting ACC Chairman M Habibur Rahman, incumbent Commissioner Abul Hasan Manzur Mannan, and former ACC secretary Delwar Hossain who is now the land secretary were absent from the meeting.

Their absence prompted the parliamentary committee in yesterday's meeting in Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, to charge them with the offence of denying the committee access to relevant documents and information for examining the functions and activities of the anti-graft commission.

The committee also decided to hold a joint meeting with the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Ministry on June 2 to take necessary legal actions against the alleged 'offenders', members of the public undertakings committee disclosed after the meeting.

Meanwhile, the ACC acting chairman said their decision not to attend the committee meeting was right. "We will go for the legal battle," the ACC acting boss said speaking to a private TV channel yesterday.

The committee, mandated to scrutinise the functions of public undertakings, also ordered

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PM asks for import of sugar, pulses thru' TCB

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed the industries ministry to import sugar and pulses through Trading Corporation of Bangladesh for making those available to people at lower price.

She also directed the authorities concerned to import unrefined sugar for the country's sugar mills and asked the industries ministry to take immediate steps for reopening of Khulna Newsprint Mill and Chittagong Chemical Complex.

The PM further directed to convert Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institute into an international standard monitoring body.

The directives came from the prime minister during a meeting with Industries Minister Dilip Barua and other

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Rapid Action Battalion personnel gather at DC Hill in Chittagong yesterday to conduct reconnaissance of the area as they will be in charge of security during the Pahela Baishakh celebrations scheduled there for tomorrow.

PHOTO: STAR

OMS price of rice slashed to Tk 16

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday brought down the price of rice at Open Market Sale (OMS) to Tk 16 from Tk 18 for per kilogram in the wake of low price of rice at local markets and poor response to the OMS programme.

Food Minister Abdur Razzaque announced the price cut at a press briefing after a meeting of the food planning and procurement committee at his ministry.

Earlier, the government

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ANOMALIES IN MEDICAL BILL

Sircar drew Tk 28 lakh illegally, finds JS probe

RASHIDUL HASAN

A parliamentary probe body has found that immediate past speaker Jamiruddin Sircar "illegally" drew Tk 27.86 lakh as medical bill.

"After examining documents, the committee finds that Sircar unlawfully drew the amount of money," advocate Fazle Rabbi Mia told reporters yesterday after a meeting of the probe committee at the parliament building.

"The probe body revealed that violating the law, the then speaker Jamiruddin Sircar drew Tk 27.86 lakh as medical bill without the then prime minister Khaleda Zia's consent and

ignoring her opinion," Rabbi added.

Being refused twice by the chief of the government, Jamiruddin Sircar misused his power and committed financial anomalies, giving an undertaking, he said.

"In my good faith and proper understanding of law, I am drawing this amount of money and I will send it back if any question arises centring the money and if the Supreme Court gave order," the probe body chief Rabbi said about how Sircar had drawn the money after the then prime minister refused to approve it.

"In the note, Sircar admitted that the then

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Indian FS in Dhaka, meets PM

UNB, Dhaka

Indian Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hasina yesterday night.

During the hour-long meeting at the PM's official residence Jamuna, Hasina and Menon discussed the sharing of river waters between the two countries, mutual cooperation on electricity crisis, border problems and Tipaimukh dam.

Indian High Commissioner

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8 JMB men held, bomb-making materials seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested eight operatives of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and recovered bomb-making materials in the capital's Khilkhet area.

In a pre-dawn raid barely two days before Pahela Baishakh, the elite anti-crime force also seized CDs, audiotapes, computer accessories and manuals, and books and leaflets on jihad.

Rab claimed three of the arrestees have been trained to be suicide bombers. They are Abu Sayeed alias Parvez and Yusuf Al Asadullah Bin Wahidullah of Bogra and Sumon alias Abdullah of Narayanganj.

Of the others, Abdul Matin alias Zakir of Munshiganj had been coordinating efforts to reorganise JMB that was left in ruins

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380 workers back from abroad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As many as 380 Bangladeshi labourers who were cheated by recruiting agencies returned home from Malaysia and Dubai yesterday.

The Bangladeshi workers either lost their jobs or remained jobless in Malaysia and Dubai before they were deported, returnees said at the Zia International Airport.

Many more are waiting to return home, they said.

According to immigration sources, 180 labourers

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Back to rice farming after 25yrs

Khulna farmers fight salinity, give up shrimp cultivation

AMENA KHATUN, Back From Khulna

Thousands of farmers in three upazilas of Khulna district have decided to turn their backs on shrimp cultivation, choosing instead to return to farming on their croplands to live a more sustainable life.

They are keen to return to their way of life lived 25 years ago, happy to grow rice and vegetables to support their families.

Many farmers have united to protect their lands from the saline water used for shrimp cultivation that has led to huge damage to the environment and biodiversity of the area, and especially the fertility of soil.

Statistics from the department of agriculture extension of the district show that this year farmers in Dakop upazila have brought 1,260 hectares of land under Boro cultivation

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PHOTO: STAR

This paddy field was once a shrimp enclosure. The farmers are returning to paddy cultivation as they realise that shrimp enclosures have been ruining the soil and damaging the environment.

KHALEDA'S HOUSE Govt directs Cantt Board to scrap lease

UNB, Dhaka

The government has directed the Dhaka Cantonment Board to take necessary steps to cancel the lease allocation of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's cantonment residence.

State Minister for Housing and Public Works Abdul Mannan Khan said this yesterday at his office as journalists wanted to know the follow-up action on Wednesday's cabinet decision scrapping the allocation of Khaleda Zia's Shaheed Mainul Road residence inside Dhaka Cantonment.

He said the cabinet meeting in its decision directed the authorities concerned to take appropriate steps to cancel the

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State of emergency slapped in Bangkok

PM's convoy attacked, protest leader detained

AFP, Bangkok

Tanks and armoured vehicles rumbled across Bangkok yesterday as Thai premier Abhisit Vejjajiva cracked down on protesters leading the most serious challenge yet to his four-month rule.

One day after wrecking a summit of Asian leaders, demonstrators fired into the air and attacked his convoy as he was being driven away from the interior ministry where he had minutes earlier imposed a state of emergency in Bangkok.

Abhisit said he was safe and unhurt after the incident, and called for calm while threatening the use of force to restore order.

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Plaintiff seeks to drop cases against Sheikh Helal, Mamun

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The last caretaker government forced Reza Construction Ltd to file four extortion cases against Awami League lawmaker Sheikh Helaluddin and businessman Giasuddin Al Mamun with political motive, firm officials alleged yesterday.

"Sheikh Helaluddin and several others, who had been accused in an extortion case, were neither directly or indirectly involved in making demands or realising extortion money from the firm. In reality the firm was intimidated to file the case," said firm Director SAS Sahel at a

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