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CANTT HOUSE HC adjourns hearing on Khaleda plea till May 25

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday adjourned till May 25 the hearing on a writ petition filed by BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia challenging the legality of government notices concerning her (Khaleda) Dhaka cantonment house.

An HC bench comprised of Justice Syed Rezaul Karim and Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury directed the government not to force her (Khaleda) to leave the house during this period (till May 25).

The court ruled that Khaleda, also leader of the opposition in parliament, may submit a supplementary

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FENCHUGANJ POWER PLANT

Govt seeks China help to get Harbin going

The Chinese company sitting idle for 18 months as tax dispute with PDB unsettled

SHARIEF KHAN

As the last resort for a friendly solution, Bangladesh government has sought intervention of the Chinese government to make a Chinese company, Harbin, complete and handover the 90 megawatt three-unit Fenchuganj Power Project that has been remaining idle for more than 18 months following a dispute over payment of taxes, said a top PDB source.

In accordance with the government rule, the Power Development Board (PDB) last year deducted 4.5 million US

dollars as payment of taxes to the National Board of Revenue (NBR) from the 83 million dollar power project.

Harbin claimed the contract was tax-free.

Clause 55.01 (b) of the contract signed in September 2005 says, "The contractor shall pay all income tax, super tax, corporate tax, VAT, and all other taxes of similar nature on income earned in Bangladesh arising out of both foreign and local currency portions of the contract price, which shall be deducted at the source as per the existing rule of the government."

NBR scrutinised Harbin's claim and decided that it has no validity.

"NBR clearly told Harbin that it would have to pay the taxes," said the top PDB source adding, "The government is convinced that PDB's deduction of tax was rightfully done, and Harbin cannot give us any excuse."

Harbin in September-October last year tested two units of the plant and generated up to 70 mw of power.

It has been following a go-slow policy since 2007 soon after PDB informed the

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GAS EXPLORATION

JS body slams Petrobangla for 'inefficiency'

RASHIDUL HASAN

A parliamentary body yesterday strongly criticised officials of Petrobangla for not working "efficiently" in producing gas at different gas fields.

The parliamentary standing committee on estimate at a meeting asked Petrobangla to work in a "warlike situation" and increase volume of gas production.

The committee also asked officials of the power and energy ministry to submit in two weeks a report on how to overcome energy crisis.

Petrobangla on the other hand sought relaxation of present rules and regulations in exploring gas in a bid to materialise its specialised fast-track project under which it projected to produce as much as 118 to 128 million cubic feet per day (mmcf/d).

Petrobangla made the appeal to the government considering urgency of additional gas exploration and digging of gas fields to ensure energy safety by meeting ongoing demand.

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KARNAPHULI RIVER Workers' strike paralyses goods unloading from lighter vessels

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Around 3,000 workers went on an indefinite strike and refrained from unloading imported goods, mostly essential commodities, from lighter vessels anchored at different ghats along the Karnaphuli river yesterday morning demanding pay hike.

The strike badly disrupted the riverine inland cargo transport and is also likely to hit the unloading of cargoes of mother vessels.

Sources said 36 mother vessels with a total of 11,467 lakh tonnes of goods are now waiting at outer anchorage of Chittagong port for unloading. These include cement clinker, wheat, salt, sugar,

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Law enforcers to get a raise in allowances

Cabinet okays plan

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

The government yesterday okayed in principle a plan to increase allowances and perks for law enforcement personnel on a priority basis, as part of its comprehensive plan to improve law and order in the country.

"The cabinet unanimously approved in principle a plan to increase allowances and perks for law enforcement personnel step by step," State Minister For Home Affairs Tanjim Ahmad Sohel Taj told reporters in his ministry office yesterday following a regular cabinet meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

It was the first official meeting of the prime minister since her husband Dr Wazed Miah had passed away on May 9.

The cabinet also decided that the issue of judicial service members' allowances will be settled later in line with recommendations of the next budget and the Pay Commission, said Prime Minister's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad at a news briefing after the meeting.

The prime minister instructed the cabinet to ensure more allowances and perks for law enforcement personnel as well as judicial service members as part of the government's efforts to establish rule of law, which is one of the electoral pledges of the ruling Awami League (AL), said Sohel Taj.

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An elephant is used in an innovative way to collect fund for the circus. This photo taken at Tejgunipara in Tejgaon yesterday shows the elephant receiving money from a shop with its trunk.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

SWINE FLU WHO mulls pandemic alert globally

AFP, Geneva

The World Health Organisation was under pressure yesterday to declare swine flu a full-fledged pandemic as the number of cases in Japan soared and a New York teacher died of the virus.

Japan shuttered more than 2,000 schools and kindergartens after it confirmed that swine flu cases had reached 129 with authorities warning the real number of infections from the (A)H1N1 virus could already be in the hundreds.

Officials in New York, where six schools had already been closed, were reported to have ordered the closure of five more after the death of a 55-year-old assistant principal at a school in the borough of Queens.

Mitchell Wiener was "overwhelmed by the illness despite treatment with an experimental drug," a spokesman for Flushing Hospital Medical Centre where Wiener had

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PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP New scheme to get Tk 700cr budget

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

In the next fiscal year's budget a minimum of Tk 700 crore might be allocated for the new public-private partnership (PPP) scheme dubbed Bangladesh Investment Infrastructure Fund.

Yesterday at a high level meeting, Finance Minister AMA Muhith discussed different aspects of the PPP budget, the final proposal regarding which might be sent to the National Economic Council (NEC) soon, meetings sources said.

After the meeting, talking to reporters Muhith however did not disclose the exact

amount of the PPP budget, but said it will be of several hundred crores of taka, 30 percent of which will come from government contributions and the remaining 70 percent from the private sector contributions. The figure might vary and the ratio of private contributions might also be larger, he added.

Finance ministry sources however said the PPP budget might even be given more than Tk 1,000 crore.

A separate authority will be set up to implement the PPP projects, which will be led by a

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PRIVATE UNIVERSITY UGC to hold talks today on new act

WASIM BIN HABIB

A new private university act is going to be formulated in a bid to stop malpractices of a section of private universities and ensure quality education in private universities.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) which is tasked with the job is going to hold a view-exchanging meeting today with the stakeholders concerned to place the act with recommendations before the government.

Vice-Chancellors of private universities, leaders of the Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh, eminent educationists, members of the Education Policy Formulation Committee, representatives of the Education Ministry, civil society members and other stakeholders concerned will attend

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Morshed Khan, Manju get HC bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday granted ad-interim bail to former foreign minister M Morshed Khan and to former communications minister Anwar Hossain Manju in three separate cases.

Morshed was granted bail in a case filed against him on charge of amassing illegal wealth and concealing information about it to the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC).

Manju got bail in two bribery cases.

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Focus on troubles in neighbourhood

Manmohan identifies immediate challenges, prepares for second stint

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, now preparing for his second term in office, has made it clear that the developments in India's South Asian neighbourhood will be among the subjects high on his agenda.

Addressing a meeting of Congress Working Committee, Singh identified troubles in India's neighbourhood and global economic meltdown as the "immediate challenges" and expressed the confidence that a clear mandate for Congress-led coalition in parliamentary elections would help tackle these challenges "effectively".

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One killed as fuel lorry catches fire

CU CORRESPONDENT

One person was burnt alive and two others sustained injuries when a fuel-laden lorry and a covered van caught fire following a head-on collision between them at Maddhya Wahedpur under Mirsarai upazila in Chittagong yesterday.

Traffic movement on the

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Prayer Timing		
May 19		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-10	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-36	6-40
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation



Sri Lankans wave the national flag in Colombo yesterday as they celebrate their country's military victory over the Tamil Tigers.

PHOTO: AFP

Suu Kyi goes on trial in Insein prison

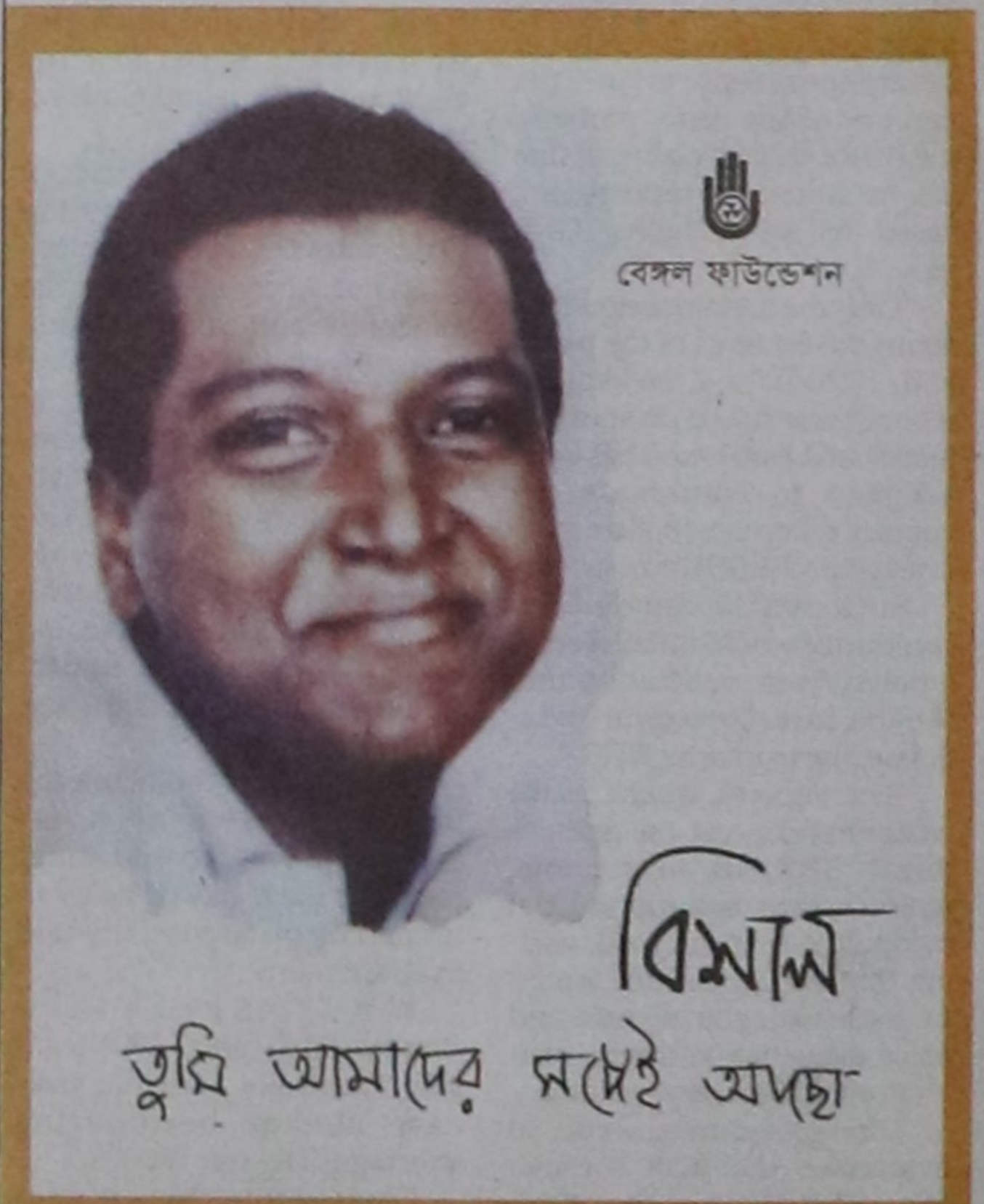
AFP, Yangon

Myanmar opposition icon Aung San Suu Kyi went on trial amid tight security at a notorious prison Monday, facing another five years in detention on charges of harbouring a US man who swam to her home.

Dozens of supporters of the ailing Nobel Peace Prize laureate gathered near Insein prison for the hearing, as riot police set up barbed wire barricades and blocked all roads to the compound near Yangon, witnesses said.

Myanmar's junta has ignored a storm of international protest to push ahead with charges that the 63-year-old violated the terms of her

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