

## Developer warned

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only fault in the building. From the nature of the accident, experts deduce that the developer did not properly carry out the piling work.

A four-member expert team led by former vice-chancellor of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) AMM Shafiqul Islam visited the spot yesterday morning, and identified foundation failure as one of the reasons for the accident, in addition to improper piling work.

According to witnesses, around 11:10pm on Sunday, the building suddenly generated a cracking noise -- alerting its construction workers to look for the source. They noticed that a pillar on the ground floor had cracked and the building had started to tilt.

The workers quickly started to abandon the building sending waves of panic through the neighbourhood.

Over the next 25 to 30 minutes, the building gradually tilted towards the 17-storey building next to it, which is also quite a new structure and had some occupants.

Finally, the bamboo construction ladder attached to Asia Haider Tower hit the neighbouring 17-storey structure. Shafiqul Islam observed that the neighbouring building also formed cracks due to the impact.

Then something even more dramatic happened. The tilted building suddenly slid into the ground by about 10 feet. The ground floor of Asia Haider Tower is now completely under the ground.

The building was built on a pond filled with sand. "We will be able to tell exactly what happened after examining the tilted building further," Shafiqul Islam said adding that his team will be formed soon, which will inspect the construction design and the report of the soil test the developer carried out.

M Mahubul Alam, member (development) of Rajuk, said the developer of the tilted building took approval for the building's layout, but its structural design was faulty, and the company also did not carry out proper soil test.

The building was constructed on a pond, but it seems that the developer did not do the piling required to ensure a durable structure. Aminur Rahman of Rajuk said, "We issued the first deviation notice to the developer on December 21, 2009, and the final notice was issued on December 31."

Haider Ali, who claimed himself as one of the owners of Asia Comtech Bangladesh, told The Daily Star over the phone in the early hours of yesterday, that the building was constructed in compliance with the building code.

"I followed all the rules. The soil was tested before the construction," he claimed.

When asked how the building tilted, if it had been constructed in compliance with the rules, Haider said, "Only God knows how it happened."

In the evening however, Haider Ali could no longer be reached over the phone as his phone was found switched off.

Prof Mehdi Ahmed Ansary of BUET, a member of the institution's team that visited the site yesterday, said as the building was constructed on a wetland, pilings should have gone at least as deep as 65 feet into the ground, but it seems either there was no piling, or at best those went only 25 feet or so into the ground.

## Babu murder

**FROM PAGE 1**  
accused KM Zakir Hossain, ex-information and research secretary of Awami League's Natore district unit.

A team of Natore Detective Branch of police, assisted by local police, arrested them, said Reaz Hossain, officer-in-charge of Sher-e-Banglanagar Police Station.

Sources, however, said the accused were picked up from the front of the south plaza of NAM flat area.

The accused had been staying at a flat under the cover of an influential person, added sources.

The law enforcers on October 10 arrested another accused, Russell Hossain Rappu, an upazila unit activist of Bangladesh Chhatra League, from his Mohisdanga village home.

Some local leaders and activists of ruling Awami League allegedly killed the BNP leader on October 8.

Natore police earlier said they identified 16 people from the video footage of the attack on the chairman.

Mohua Noor Kachi, wife of Babu, sued 27 people in a case filed with Boraigram Police Station.

He said many developers and building owners avoid proper piling to save money. Although many carry out soil tests, they do that only to ensure load bearing capacity, but do not pay attention to testing soil consolidation settlement, which is very necessary, he added.

Dr Munaz Ahmed Noor of BUET observed that the foundation pillars of the building's eastern side caved in, making the building tilt. Spectrum Garments building in Savar, and Phoenix building in Tejgaon also collapsed for the same reason.

President of the Institute of Planners Dr Sarwar Jahhan said due to lack of monitoring, this kind of incidents have been happening time and again.

Buildings have been built in the city in an unplanned way, and the authorities concerned are not taking steps to remedy the situation, meanwhile the problems are multiplying day by day, he said.

**PROBE COMMITTEE**  
The housing and public works ministry formed a five-member probe committee yesterday to look into the accident, and directed it to submit a report in seven days.

The committee headed by Housing Ministry Joint Secretary (Development) Md Zillur Rahman will investigate whether the building was constructed in compliance with the approved plan, and whether the soil test was done by the proper authorities.

It will also investigate whether the developer constructed the building following Bangladesh National Building Code, and whether the space where the building was constructed was suitable for such a construction.

Other members of the committee are former BUET VC Shafiqul Islam, an army official from Begunbari-Hatirjheel Integrated Development Project, Dhaka City Corporation Executive Engineer Md Sharif Uddin, and Rajuk Member (Development) M Mahubul Alam.

**CASES FILED**  
Rajuk filed two cases with Kalabagan Police Station yesterday morning against Shamsuddin Majumder, chairman of Asia Comtech Bangladesh Ltd, and landowners Alamgir Hossain et al for not following the building code.

State Minister for Housing and Public Works Abdul Mannan Khan and ruling party lawmaker of the constituency Fazle Noor Taposh also visited the spot yesterday.

Faruk Khan, owner of a flat in the affected next building, said all inhabitants of the 17 flats evacuated on the night of the accident.

"We still do not fill secure to go back to the flats, and will return there only after being assured of safety," he said last night.

## Free transit

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Besides, it charges conservancy and pilotage fees, which add up to Tk 20 crore in earnings from water transit every year.

"Now we need a new set of rules for road and rail transit," said the finance minister.

The issues discussed at his meeting with the Indian high commissioner included operation of Ashuganj port, one-time movement of oversized Indian cargoes to Agartala through Bangladesh, regional power grid and release of two Indian ships held by the Bangladesh authorities.

To facilitate transport of its oversized cargoes, India wants to bring the equipment that is not available in Bangladesh, Muih said.

On the Indian demand for opening the Ashuganj port, he said it would take time, as the revenue board has no office there.

Replying to another query, the minister said infrastructure of the port has to be developed by Bangladesh, not India.

He said officials of the Indian Export Import Bank (EXIM) are in Dhaka to finalise the procedures for utilisation of the \$1 billion Indian credit. "We are experienced in dealing with the donors. We'll fix it in two days."

About the regional power grid being laid out with the assistance of Asian Development Bank, he said Bangladesh would get 250 megawatts of power through this grid in two to three years.

"The grid will help in energy trade not only with India but with Nepal and Bhutan as well," he noted.

The two Indian ships stopped over duty-related issues will be released soon, he said.

Recently, the National Board of Revenue had imposed new duties on Indian ships, but later withdrew those by an SRO (statutory regulatory order).

## Guinea urged to stay calm as votes counted

**AFP, Conakry**

Guineans were urged to keep calm as vote counting got under way yesterday after a presidential run-off election praised as peaceful, a relief after a campaign marked by clashes between rival camps.

Despite fears of fresh ethnic violence no serious incident was noted as massive numbers of voters went to the polls to elect the mineral-rich country's first civilian president since independence from France in 1958.

"The election went well, really, it's a cause for satisfaction and we are waiting calmly for the proclamation of definitive results," former prime minister Francois Lonseny Fall said on behalf of candidate Alpha Conde.

Candidate Cellou Dalein Diallo highlighted "the absence of violence" but accused his rival's supporters of "attempted fraud in upper Guinea."

The head of the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI), Malian General Siaka Sangare, described the conduct of the vote as "peaceful, normal", when meeting with journalists late on Sunday.

"Across the country Guineans voted in calm and serenity and above all with restraint," he said.

In a joint statement the observer missions from the African Union, European Union and Carter Center hailed "the engagement of Guinean voters who turned out at the ballot box in great numbers to determine, in peace, the future of Guinea."

They appealed to the "sense of responsibility of the two candidates and their supporters to maintain a climate of calm during the wait for the complete and definitive results..."

Provisional results are not expected before Wednesday and Guineans have been urged to keep focus in case of tensions arising around the counting of votes.

Speaking to AFP in Dakar, Corinne Dufka, senior West Africa researcher at Human Rights Watch, said it was difficult for Guineans to "override this long legacy of mistrust where the vote has been stolen from them."

This election is hailed as the first true democratic vote in the country, where the few elections held previously were widely rigged.

"The fear of violence remains high, the situation remains tense, both sides fear a winner take all scenario," said Dufka.

"The Guinean people have to keep their eye on the ball, they have to focus on the big picture issues which are at stake here, which is the possibility for Guineans to live free of authoritarian regimes..."

A first-round vote on June 27 in which Diallo scored 43 percent of votes and Conde 18 percent, was followed by hostility between supporters of the two final candidates, who accused each other of planning to rig the vote.

The two final candidates were chosen from the country's two biggest ethnic groups, the Fulani and the Malinke, and mounting mistrust and rumours of sabotage pitted the two groups against each other in a series of violent clashes.

## 4 BCL men

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department.  
All of them are activists of Jasim Uddin Hall unit BCL.

Kazi Enayet, general secretary of the Jasim Uddin Hall BCL, said he had suspended the four from the unit.

The victim, a student of Mass Communication and Journalism department, filed a complaint with Shahbagh Police Station accusing the four of stalking her.

Rezaul Karim, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station, said police had not been able to arrest the culprits as the BCL activists had gone into hiding.

On Sunday evening, Rubayet and Soheli verbally assaulted her while she was on the way to her dormitory.

She then informed the matter to some fellow students who asked the BCL men not to harass their classmate.

An hour later, the BCL activists attempted to attack the students but got beaten up as their move was countered by the police.

DU Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique told The Daily Star that immediate stern action has been taken against the four to keep genial atmosphere on the campus.

## Rich nations guilty

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They had to start working again in their old age since the only bread earner of the family died, Suraiya continued. But most of the time her husband Kamez Haolader, 62, remains sick and she alone has to work as domestic help to manage their meals, she added.

"We often have to starve. Other times we can manage only plain rice with no curry. Vegetables and other items are really expensive nowadays," she lamented.

"We cannot even think of buying medicines though my husband needs it most," Suraiya broke into tears as she continued narrating their plight.

Three other litigants from Barguna -- Siddiquir Rahman, Bareq Dafadar and Momtaz Begum -- also described how the Bay has been changing its character and how devastating cyclones frequently rip through the coast nowadays.

Rahman and Dafadar had narrowly escaped death as they were washed away by a cyclone and were rescued from the Bay by an Indian ship after three days. Momtaz said her husband went to the Bay one day to return never again.

The petitioners also filed with the tribunal statement of their vulnerability and sufferings caused by climate change.

The tribunal said the climate change issue is related to the human rights and urged the Bangladesh government to include a section about it in the Constitution.

Climate change expert Dr Ahsanuddin Ahmed explained the scientific aspects of the effects of climate change and how and why cyclones get intensified in the Bay.

"The temperature of the upper level of the sea has increased by 0.45 degrees over the last few decades causing more and more cyclones in the Bay," he said.

"Once there were only four to five cyclones in the Bay from June to November. But the number has increased to at least 12 in the last four years. The Bay has already seen 15 cyclones this year," he said.

Hearing the submission of the litigants, the jury panel said the developed countries have to bear the responsibility of the sufferings they have caused for millions of people.

The judgment came from a jury panel that also includes economist Qazi Kholiquzaman Ahmad and lawmakers Hasanul Haq Inu, Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Advocate Tarana Halim.

Bangladesh-born British MP Rushnara Ali, Richard Lord, counsellor of Quince, economist Peter Custers, Bangladesh coordinator of European Action on Climate Change Ansar Ahmed Ullah, among others, observed the session.

Dr Ahmed Zia Uddin, president of the Centre for Bangladesh Genocide, Belgium, spoke about the legal features of the climate change issue.

Dr Mizanur Rahman in the judgment said the countries responsible for emitting the highest amount of carbon would have to compensate the victims in Bangladesh.

He said people of various professions including fishermen in the coast have fallen victims to climate change and should be properly compensated for the loss of their livelihoods.

The jury panel mentioned that human rights to the coastal people are massively violated due to climate change and all victims could demand compensation.

Dr Mizanur Rahman added Bangladesh should put emphasis on climate change issue and include at least a section in the Constitution in this regard. The government would have to gradually formulate a complete law over the matter, he observed.

The jury also called upon all concerned to install an international tribunal so that various complaints on climate change raised by the developing countries could be resolved.

Delivering his observations, Dr Qazi Kholiquzaman Ahmad said emissions of greenhouse gases would have to be mitigated in line with providing financial compensation by the countries responsible.

He said a concerted pro-people effort should be taken by the government to face the effects of climate change in Bangladesh.

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## 30 BCL men

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Sharmeen of Pabna Speedy Trial Tribunal granted the bail after the accused appeared before the court and sought bail on the plea that other accused in the same case got bail.

Twenty-one accused surrendered before the judicial magistrate's court on September 26 and another four on October 6. And police arrested five soon after the incident.

The case was filed with Pabna Sadar Police Station immediately after the incident accusing 31 leaders and workers of ruling Awami League and the party backed organisations.

More than 100 Jubo League and Chhatra League activists on September 17 attacked two exam centres during a recruitment test of class-III employees for the deputy commissioner's office.

They assaulted a number of government officers including two additional deputy commissioners and a female magistrate and vandalised a number of officers' vehicles.

In another case, filed with the same police station for vandalising a number of vehicles of administration officials, more than 100 people including the 31 were accused.

Neither the complainant nor any witness was present in the court yesterday.

Contacted, Belayet Ali Billu, public prosecutor of Pabna court, said the witnesses informed him over the phone of their inability to appear before the court due to "personal problems".

Asked, complainant of the case Md Sarwar Alam, also the district's executive magistrate, said he had submitted a time petition to the court. He, however, declined to say anything about his absence in the court.

## Islami Bank

**FROM PAGE 16**  
investigation into the allegations.

They mentioned that Islami Bank Foundation is a subsidiary of Islami Bank. On approval of the bank's board of directors, every year the bank gives the foundation a huge amount of money not considered as "halal".

The sources pointed out that since the foundation is a subsidiary of Islami Bank, there must be transparency in receiving and spending the money.

The foundation is also carrying out micro-credit programmes without permission from the micro-credit regulatory authorities.

Contacted, MD of Islami Bank Mohammad Abdul Mannan said that in conducting banking transactions, some amount of interest accrues to its income, which is not legal as per the Sharia.

Citing an example, he said they often have to deposit foreign currency in the banks concerned which brings some interest. Earlier, they did not receive the income, but following a decision of the Sharia Council, Islami Bank distributes the money among ultra-poor people through the foundation.

On micro-credit programme, he said that following the central bank's objections to it, they have suspended the programme.

## Brick kiln owner fined by DoE

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The Department of Environment has fined owner of a brickfield in Savar Tk 8.28 lakh for damaging croplands by setting up the brickfield without permission of the DOE.

The DoE has realised Tk 5 lakh of the sum, says a press release.

The DoE enforced the punishment acting on a complaint from the locals of the Mograkandara area of Bhakurtin in Savar. The DoE has also asked the owner of the brickfield to shut it down immediately and to destroy the chimneys and other establishments of the brickfield.

According to the Environment Protection Act, the DoE is authorised to take punitive actions if any individual or any community were being affected by the pollution.

Farmers and workers of Barapardeshi and Panchali mouja in Savar filed a complaint to the DoE against a brickfield named MBH which was emitting fumes damaging the crops and also threatened the local health causing serious eye and lung diseases to the people living in the vicinity.

Director (enforcement) of DoE Mohammad Munir Chowdhury said the owner of the brickfield would be arrested if he does not dismantle the brickfield within the given period.

A case will be filed against him under the Environment Protection Act and the illegal brickfield will be evicted, he said.

## Rab finds

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ammunition and arms-making equipment from a shanty of the village.

"We have seized one 303 rifle, one foreign pistol, one foreign revolver, seven light guns, two homemade single-barrel guns, one homemade double-barrel gun, one three-quarter rifle, 100 rounds of cartridges and a huge amount of arms-making equipment," said Lt Col Sazzad Hossain, commanding officer of Rab-7.

An exchange of fire with an armed gang had erupted during the drive but nobody was hurt, Rab said.

One from the gang has been held.

In interrogation, the arrestees admitted of making arms since long in a makeshift house of the village and conducting various "terrorist activities" in the area.

In another development, on information from intelligence agencies about some armed "terrorists" in VIP Naval Academy area, the Rab team conducted a raid and seized four homemade single-barrel guns and eight cartridges around 6:15am.

No arrest was made in this drive, Rab said.

## Govt resumes

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sources of the division said.

The circular said half of the applicants who already demanded new connections will get electricity lines now based on the precedence while the rest will be given gradually. The new clients have been asked to ensure use of energy-efficient bulbs.

However, no load will be given for using air conditioner now, and the research organisations can get the line with special permission, the source said.

The government requested the residential users, who consume two kilowatts of power, to set up solar panel to meet three percent of their total demand while the commercial and industrial users were requested to set up solar panel to meet seven percent of their demand.

## 7th session

**FROM PAGE 16**  
The session might be a very brief one as it has been convened mainly to meet the constitutional obligation, which says the gap between two consecutive sessions would not be more than 60 days. The last session was prorogued on October 6.

Asked about joining the upcoming session, Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abedin Farroque said they would discuss the issue in the party forum to decide whether to return to the House or not.

Opposition lawmakers belonging to BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and Bangladesh Jatiya Party attended the first day of the budget session in June, but boycotted the rest of that session. They also kept away from the sixth session.

The House is expected to convene its first session of new year in January, where the president will deliver his address.

## Laptop to cost

**FROM PAGE 16**  
The decision came at the weekly cabinet meeting at Bangladesh Secretariat with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

The meeting approved a proposal to merge TSS Ltd, the state-run telephone equipment manufacturer, with 2M Corporation Ltd, Dhaka and TFT Technology, Penang, Malaysia for assembling and production of laptop and notebook.

TFT Technology Group is a leading original equipment manufacturer of audiovisual products and computer peripherals including LCD monitors, LCD TVs and integrated home theatre solutions while 2M Corporation is a trading house and service provider of renewable energy, hi-tech security and surveillance products.

The decision was taken with an aim to make laptop and notebook available to common people in rural areas as part of the government's pledge to build digital Bangladesh.

The joint venture company, to be named as TSS-2M-TFT, will manufacture laptop and notebook in three sizes -- 8.5", 9.5", 12" and the highest price will be Tk 15,000, prime minister's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad told reporters after the meeting.

Total capital for launching

the project has been fixed at Tk 148 crore in which TSS will have 30% share, he said adding this initiative will create employment opportunities and also save foreign currencies.

Talking to The Daily Star, Mesbah Ahmed, managing director of 2M Corporation, said the laptop and notebook will be manufactured maintaining international standards. "The prices of the notebook and laptop will be less and their quality will be better than other similar items in the market."

It would take at least six months to sell laptops and notebooks in the market because TFT would take at least two to three months time to bring machinery and set them up in the TSS factory in Tongi, he said.

TSS's existing infrastructure will be used to manufacture laptops and notebooks.

"Primarily we will be manufacturing 5,000 laptops and notebooks per month although the government's desires of supplying 10,000 units a month," said Mesbah.

The initiative was taken a year back but remained stalled due to bureaucratic tangles, he said.

"After getting the official order, we will formally invite TFT to set up the machinery," he added.

## Kashmir dispute

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I have always believed that a strong, peaceful and moderate Pakistan is in the interest of India," Obama added.

He hoped that "in the coming months both India and Pakistan will find appropriate mechanisms to work very difficult issues."

The Indian prime minister said New Delhi was always ready to engage Pakistan. "We are not afraid of the Kashmir word in discussions with Pakistan," he said.

"India is committed to resolving all problems with Pakistan but simultaneously Pakistan should ensure that it moves away from terrorism-induced coercion," Manmohan Singh said.

"It is our request that you cannot go for talks while terror machines are as active as ever," he added.

Obama commended Manmohan Singh's efforts to ease the friction between India and Pakistan.

The US president also backed India for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, a dramatic diplomatic gesture to the booming nation, reports AP.

Obama made the announcement in a speech to India's parliament.

India has sought permanent Security Council membership for years.

"The just and sustainable international order that America seeks includes a United Nations that is efficient, effective, credible and

legitimate," Obama said.

"That is why I can say today -- in the years ahead, I look forward to a reformed UN Security Council that includes India as a permanent member."