

CID seeks

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the petition today that sought time for the probe into the case filed under Explosive Substances Act.

The investigators got 20 months in seven phases so far to get through the probe.

Earlier on March 1, the court warned the IO for delaying the probe into the case and directed him to submit the report by April 4.

In the yesterday's forwarding report, the IO said Harkatul Jihad (Huji) leader Abdur Rouf was earlier shown arrested and remanded for nine days in the case. During the remand, Rouf gave important information about supplying the grenades used in the attacks.

Moreover, the foreign ministry requested the Pakistan government to arrest another Huji leader Moulana Tajuddin, brother of BNP leader Abdus Salam Pintu, and a red alert was declared through Interpol. So, more time is needed for the probe, the IO said.

At least 23 people, including AL leader Ivy Rahman, were killed and scores of others injured when assailants hurled grenades on an AL rally at Bangabandhu Avenue on August 21, 2004.

AL president and the then leader of the opposition Sheikh Hasina narrowly escaped the attack.

The case filed for murder is now pending with the Second Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court in Dhaka.

Cox's Bazar

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inaugurated the Cox's Bazar Air Force Base.

Under the railway project, there will be two metre gauge lines - one 100km long will connect Dohajari in Chittagong with Cox's Bazar via Ramu and the other 28km line will connect Ramu with Gundum.

There will be four bridges in the rail line over Sangu, Matamuhuri, Shankha and Banskhali rivers.

The stations on the railway line will be at Satkania, Dulahazra, Chokoria, Edgaon, Ramu, Cox's Bazar, Ukhia and Gundum.

The first survey for the railway line was conducted in 1890 during the British colonial regime. But due to the first and second world wars the construction works could not be started. The first feasibility study on the rail line was conducted in 2001 during the previous Awami League regime.

The premier offered munajat after formally inaugurating the construction works.

Later, at the same place, Hasina also opened the work on the upgraded submarine cable connection of Cox's Bazar Landing Station, which cost Tk 50 crore. She also offered munajat and held a meeting with the officials.

According to officials, the government connected the submarine cable using the 40G solutions to increase the bandwidth.

The expansion works will be completed by November this year.

A tragic death

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art school Sea Breeze in Gulshan. She has a six-year-old son.

Stationery shop owner Shoaib Uddin who witnessed the incident told The Daily Star, "When the tyre burst with a big bang, we thought it was a bomb explosion. There was panic among pedestrians, passengers of bus and rickshaws and locals."

"When many frightened people started running to and fro, the woman was hit by something and got trapped in the barbed-wire fence," he said.

Later police took the body to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Shahbagh Police Station Officer-in-Charge Rezaul Karim said the panic caused the death of the woman as she tried to escape running over the fence.

However, Tajul Islam, brother-in-law of the victim, said they were not sure if she hit the iron bar of the fence and fell on the wires or a bus had hit her before.

Meanwhile, a carpenter was killed at Natun Bazar in Shahzadpur in Gulshan when he was hit by a bus around 9:00am.

He was crossing the street. The bus hit Mohammad Bakul, 35, of Sirajganj, and sped away leaving him dead on the spot.

Peres heads to US for talks with Obama

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli President Shimon Peres departed yesterday for the United States where he will hold talks with US President Barack Obama aimed at furthering regional peace efforts.

Peres, who holds a largely ceremonial position, is nevertheless regarded as an elder statesman of Israeli politics and both sides will be hoping he can ease often tense relations between Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Nobel peace laureate is to meet US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Monday, his office said.

He will meet Obama on Tuesday for talks, which the White House said planned to

focus on US-Israeli security cooperation, the recent turbulent developments in the Middle East and stalled regional peace efforts at the meeting.

US-brokered peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians stalled in late 2010 after Netanyahu refused to extend a temporary freeze on Jewish settlement building in the West Bank.

Efforts by Washington to coax Israel into reimposing a freeze collapsed in December, and the Palestinians are refusing to continue negotiating while Israel builds on land they want for their promised state.

Peres was also set to hold meetings with Vice President Joe Biden and Congressional leaders.

Demolish BGMEA

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to demolish the building at their own cost, as per the HC directives.

Foundation of the building was laid by the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina in 1998, and it was opened by the then premier Khaleda Zia in 2006.

The HC in its judgement said a forgery has taken place in respect of handing over possession of the land to the BGMEA, which is a criminal offence.

And it ordered the inspector general of police, commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police and deputy commissioner of Dhaka to investigate the allegations and take necessary steps.

The court said records submitted by the office of the DC of Dhaka proved the land was acquired for the East Bengal Railway in 1910, and it was in the possession of Bangladesh Railway till 2006. The railway authorities handed over the land to Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) in 2006.

Surprisingly, it has been found in the sale deed submitted by the BGMEA to Rajuk that it purchased the land from the EPB in 2001, the HC said, adding it is necessary to investigate how the BGMEA purchased the land in 2001.

The court said the forgery in handing over the land to the BGMEA is tantamount to land grabbing with a gang of frauds involved in the process.

Possession of the land must be reverted to the DC of Dhaka, and the DC will be entitled to use the land for public purposes, it said.

The HC said people who have invested money for purchasing flats and some parts of this building can take legal steps as per the Contract Act and Tort Act for remedy in this regard.

It directed the authorities to restore the water bodies in

Begunbari-Hatirjheel area after demolishing the building.

It also asked the Department of Environment to investigate whether the building damaged the water body's environment, and take appropriate legal steps.

The court observed that investors in the building did so knowing fully it was constructed illegally, and they are only to blame themselves.

Senior judge of the bench Justice Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik, who read out the verdict, said the acquired land must be used for public welfare, and it cannot be handed over to any private organisation like the BGMEA.

Violation of law has taken place in respect of handing over the land to the BGMEA through the EPB, the judge said.

The building has been constructed on a water body by blocking the normal flow of Begunbari canal in violation of the Water Bodies Act, which is a criminal offence, he said.

As per the statement submitted by Rajuk, it found that the BGMEA paid a fine of over Tk 12 lakh to Rajuk for not taking its approval in constructing the building, but the payment did not legalise the construction, the judge said.

Even, Rajuk cannot approve construction of any structure by the BGMEA on the land which is not owned by it (BGMEA), he said.

Advocate D H M Muniruddin placed the report before the HC, and said the BGMEA building was built illegally.

The HC bench heard opinions from amici curiae Fida M Kamal, Anisul Huq, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Manzill Musshid and Iqbal Kabir.

Deputy Attorney General Mostafa Zaman Islam appeared for Rajuk.

New hilsa

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2011.

The government has taken initiative to make the existing law relating to the ban on catching hilsa during the breeding season more time-befitting, the minister said.

The Jatka Preservation Week will be observed from April 4 to April 10.

The minister would formally inaugurate the week through a rally at Kalapara in Patuakhali tomorrow.

The four other hilsa sanctuaries are a 100km long stretch from Shatnol of Chandpur to Char Alexander of Laxmipur in the Meghna River; a 90km long Shahbajpur channel of Meghna confluence including Madanpur of Manpara, Char Ilisha, Char Pial of Bhola district; a 100km long Tentulia river from Bheduria of Bhola to Char Rustom of Patuakhali; and a 40km long Andharmanik river route under Kalapara upazila in Patuakhali.

Latif Biswas said a total of 330km area in 21 upazilas

under four districts has been declared sanctuary for hilsa.

Fishing in the sanctuaries in Chandpur, Laxmipur and Bhola is prohibited from March to April while the ban comes into effect from November to January in Patuakhali, he said.

The minister said around 2.85 lakh tonnes of hilsa fish have been netted in the first seven months of this fiscal year and the production may reach 3 lakh tonnes at the end of the year.

The export earning has been doubled in the first seven months of the current fiscal year compared to last year, and the government earned Tk 280 crore exporting 6,898 tonnes of hilsa till February this fiscal year, he said.

The government will have to spend around Tk 5.17 crore for alternative employment of the fishermen in these districts, he added.

Fisheries and Livestock Secretary Uzzal Bikash Dutta, among others, was present at the briefing.

Two PMs misled

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November 1998, while another premier Khaleda Zia inaugurated the building in October 2006.

The HC yesterday ordered the occupants to vacate the 15-storey building in the capital's Begunbari canal area within three months from receiving the verdict.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) constructed the building although Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) did not approve its design.

Mubasshar Hussain, president of the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB), said the public works minister and secretary and the Rajuk chairman who covered this up should be punished.

Rajuk Chairman Md Nurul Huda said the then government officials should have informed the two prime ministers that the building had no approval.

"We served notice asking the BGMEA authorities not to construct the building without approval but they did not pay any heed," Huda told The Daily Star yesterday.

Though Rajuk did not approve the building's design, it issued clearance for using the land to construct the building in the middle of the canal.

The environment department, Dhaka Wasa and Civil Aviation Authorities also issued clearance certificates.

Meanwhile, BGMEA President Shafiu Islam Mohiuddin said they will appeal against the HC verdict and approach the president and the prime minister to protect the building.

The overall interest of the garment sector should be taken into consideration, he said.

"The building was not built overnight. Why didn't the authorities object then?" he said.

Anwar-Ul-Alam Chowdhury, a former BGMEA president, said the government itself has many buildings without approved design.

BGMEA officials say they bought a two-bigha plot in the canal area for the Export Promotion Bureau at Tk 2.7 crore.

In July 2003, Rajuk instructed BGMEA to consult the Buet expert team that was carrying out a study for Begunbari-Hatirjheel Development Project. But BGMEA did not comply, they added.

Project's technical experts also said the building was "not compatible" with the idea of conserving Begunbari canal as a sewer facility.

In a move to rectify the unauthorised construction, Rajuk in July 2006 asked BGMEA to pay a penalty of Tk Tk 12.5 lakh (ten times more than the regular fees), demolish certain portions of the building and build an approach bridge clearing the canal's water flow.

BGMEA initially declined to comply but later paid the penalty. It, however, evaded other conditions.

The matter remained unresolved throughout the caretaker government's rule.

About yesterday's HC verdict, Prof Sarwar Jahan, president of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, said it is a landmark precedence to remove illegal obstruction in implementing planned development.

Expatriate

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route of China through Tibet to reach the summit of Everest within 69 days.

"I already have climbed Mount Kilimanjaro -- the highest peak of Africa, the Scottish Highlands, the Swiss Alps, high altitude mountain in Kyrgyzstan, and many other mountains around the world as part of the preparation for the Everest," Abdul Salam, 35, told The Daily Star over the telephone from London.

He climbed Scottish mountains in three winters and also trekked on the British mountains.

Salam also ran five marathons following his dream for Everest and will trek to Namche Bazar of Nepal for acclimatisation.

He will set off for Tibet Everest Base Camp from Kathmandu on April 9 and intends to visit Bangladesh after successfully climbing the Everest.

Musa Ibrahim, a journalist by profession, climbed the Mt Everest as first Bangladeshi on May 23, 2010.

Rally for Yunus

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Politician ASM Abdur Rob said no civilised people in the world can perceive the so-called demand that the Nobel Peace Prize must be returned to the Nobel Committee.

The politician urged Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to fathom the impact of Dr Yunus' removal from the bank and make the right move to redress it.

Senior journalist ABM Musa said only a few had controlled wealth in the country in the past. "But it is Yunus who has given people an opportunity to lift themselves from poverty and become better-off than before. He has helped women get out of the confines of home."

Zafarullah Chowdhury, founder of Gono Shasthya Kendra, said people around the prime minister are plotting to disgrace Yunus, eventually leading her towards a crisis.

Asif Nazrul, professor of law at Dhaka University,

said the ongoing struggle is a fight between a section of deviant politicians, journalists and civil society, and the rest. "This is a fight between the powerless, and the dirty and power-hungry people."

Former lawmaker Humayun Kabir said the Yunus issue is a political matter, not a legal one. "The issue cannot be resolved in court. It has to be settled politically, out of court."

He urged the government to cancel the central bank order to remove Yunus from Grameen and allow the microfinance bank to work independently.

ABM Mostafa Ameen, the committee convenor, said the Bangladesh Bank order is unacceptable, unjust and unwanted.

Political activist Abdul Maleq Ratan said, "Yunus has shown people a way to get out of poverty. For those, poverty was almost inevitable."

Rights activist Shirin Huq said: "It is unprecedented that 37 lakh people have signed up for a cause."

Fierce battle for control of Brega

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that characterized the fighting over the past few weeks, the conflict has stabilised around the oil facilities of Brega, as better trained rebel soldiers join the fight and airstrikes blunt the government advantages in weapons and training.

"There is fighting going on inside Brega. Gaddafi's forces are based inside Brega university, and we're shelling them and advancing them bit by bit," said Col Juma Abdel-Hamid, as Grad rockets fired off toward government positions, reports AP.

The popular uprising has turned into a civil war pitting Gaddafi's troops, tanks and artillery against an enthusiastic, but chaotic rebel force backed by Western air power. Neither side has for now been able to gain the upper hand.

The rebels are, however, attempting to put their house in order, naming a "crisis team" with the former interior minister as the armed forces chief of staff, to try to run parts of Libya it holds and reorganising their military force, reports Reuters.

As more veterans of the old army of joined the battle, the rebel forces have shown more skill in battling their government opponents who

possess better training and weapons.

The rebel truck-mounted rocket launchers would fire their missiles, move and then fire again to avoid government counter-strikes, suggesting better tactics and training then previously.

The rebels have also been aided by an international campaign of airstrikes that have knocked out the government's heavy weapons, such as the tanks whose withering artillery fire shredded several previous rebel advances.

One of those airstrikes went awry late on Friday however, and mistakenly killed 13 rebel fighters. Significantly, however, the opposition blamed mistakes on their own actions in a sign of the importance of the international air campaign to their war effort.

There were also reports by Arab news channels of continued heavy shelling of Misrata, the lone rebel outpost in western Libya, where Gaddafi's forces still largely hold sway.

Medical officials said Saturday that government forces killed 37 civilians over the past two days in an unrelenting campaign of shelling and sniper fire and an attack that burned down the city's main stocks of flour and sugar.

Peacekeepers safe

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Dhaka told The Daily Star yesterday that the Bangladeshi peacekeepers in Ivory Coast fire back when there is an attack and they are safe and there has been no casualties.

However, a Bangladesh police official, who is stationed in Yamoussoukro, yesterday, said, "Nobody is now safe here. The UN has relocated its civil staffs to safer places. We are in serious trouble."

Of the Bangladeshi policemen, two are Superintendent of Police, one additional SP, 12 Assistant SPs, eight inspectors while the rest are constables.

Ivory Coast, the world's largest cocoa producer, has been in turmoil for almost a decade.

It was split into a rebel-controlled north and government-controlled south after an attempted coup sparked civil war in 2002. A peace deal in March 2007 brought key rebel leaders into the administration and offered hope for a single government after years of foundering accords and disarmament plans. But the results of the November 29, 2010 presidential election made clear that deep divisions remain.

Uncertainty has reigned in the West African nation since incumbent Laurent Gbagbo disputed the outcome of presidential elections in November. Gbagbo has refused to concede and hand over power to Alassane Ouattara, who is internationally recognised as the legitimate winner.

"They [rebels] are fighting in the West Ivory Coast's democratically elected president and internationally recognized President Alassane Ouattara," the police official said.

He said of the 361 Bangladeshi police personnel, one is in UN Police and the rest are under Formed

Police Unit.

Under the FPU, there are 180 in Abidjan and 90 policemen at Bouake airport area and another 90 in the base station in Yamoussoukro city.

They are guarding various important institutions, including the internationally recognised elected President Alassane Ouattara who stays in Gulf Hotel in Abidjan, the commercial capital of Ivory Coast.

Senior leaders including standing committee members, party lawmakers, vice presidents, members of chairperson's advisory council, joint secretaries general were present there.

From the airport, Khaleda Zia went to her younger brother's residence at Gulshan where she has been staying since November last year.

Talking to reporters at the airport, Moudud Ahmed, a standing committee member, said the chairperson will soon sit with the committee to finalise the anti-government programmes the party is going to take.

They may call hartal as the government failed to run the country, he added.

During her visit as a royal guest, Khaleda performed Umrah and met Prince Turkey Al Faisal, chairman of King Faisal Institute, besides taking treatment at King Faisal Bin Abdul Aziz Hospital. She also visited Princess Noora Bint Abdur-Rahman University.

Al-Amin, a postgraduate student of Jagannath University, who has taken an education loan from Grameen Bank to pursue higher education, narrated how the microcredit organisation helped him continue education.

"My rickshaw-puller father could not afford my educational expenses when I passed the higher secondary certificate exams. I did not receive any support from the government or banks. Grameen Bank stepped in to help me," he said.

Ratna Begum, a Grameen Bank borrower from Sylhet, said she used to do menial jobs to make a living. A loan from the microcredit bank has changed her life.

Grameen has 83 lakh borrowers across the country. The microfinance bank is currently providing scholarships and education loans to 54,000 students to help them pursue higher education.

Deep 6.4-magnitude quake strikes Fiji region

WELLINGTON

A 6.4-magnitude earthquake struck the Fiji region today, the US Geological Survey said, but no tsunami warning was immediately issued.

The undersea quake hit 321 kilometres west of Suva at a depth of 555 kilometres at 2:07am, USGS said.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre which monitors the region and issues bulletins in the event of a tsunami being generated had no such warning in force.

The area lies on the Pacific "ring of fire", a highly active tectonic zone that frequently experiences earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

338 more

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the new arrivals, necessary measures are being taken by the ministry in coordination with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

The foreign ministry has already approached the civil aviation ministry to send more Bangladesh Biman flights urgently to bring back the rest of the Bangladeshis stranded at the Libya-Tunisia border.

There was no more new arrival of Bangladeshis nationals at Al Salloum border point in Egypt till Saturday.

However, the foreign ministry's consular team has been asked to stay put at this border point to facilitate repatriation of Bangladesh nationals crossing over into Egypt.

Since the beginning of repatriation of Bangladeshis from Libya, a total of 123 flights have operated till date. Among these, 112 flights were jointly operated by the Bangladesh government and IOM, while Bangladesh Biman operated the rest.

As of yesterday, 33,896 Bangladesh nationals, who were employed in Libya, have been brought home.

Of them, the return of 3,831 persons has been arranged by their employers while some have returned on their own and 27,010 persons have been repatriated by the IOM.

Of the total repatriates, 3,055 persons availed Biman flights.

As per the flights schedule, 310 Bangladeshis were due to return home by a Biman flight from Djerba in Tunisia yesterday while another Biman flight is scheduled to carry similar number of Bangladeshis from Tunisia today.

Twin suicide

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strain of Islam, have increasingly been the target of bloody attacks by Islamist militants in Pakistan.

No group has immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks, but Sunni extremists, including the Taliban, are vehemently opposed to the Sufi strand of Islam and consider their shrines to be idolatrous.

A bomb blast outside the popular shrine of the 12th century saint, Baba Farid, also known as Ganjshakar in the Punjab town of Pakpattan, killed four people, including women, in October last year.

The Pakpattan site is the second most popular Sufi shrine after the Data Darbar shrine in the eastern city of Lahore, where two suicide bombers blew themselves up among crowds of worshippers in July last year, killing 42 people.

On October 7, two suicide bombers blew themselves up at a Sufi shrine of Abdullah Shah Ghazi in Karachi, killing nine worshippers, including two children.

More than 4,150 people have been killed in suicide attacks and bomb explosions, blamed on home-grown Taliban and other Islamist extremist networks, since government troops stormed a radical mosque in Islamabad in July 2007.