

Start process to sign

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modalities with India to see how it operates. The modalities, he said, should not be a lifelong commitment. "If we make any mistake we can correct it later," he said.

Speaking at the seminar Debapriya, distinguished fellow of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said Bangladesh should not rush to sign the transit deal with India.

"Bangladesh is still not prepared for it. Signing an agreement without proper technical evaluation, authentic cost-benefit analysis and mobilisation of public opinion will be suicidal," Debapriya told the seminar organised by Media Initiative for Public Policy (MIPP) and Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB).

Presided over by MIPP President Farid Hossain the seminar on "Regional connectivity and transit" was also addressed by Dr Mohammad Yunus, a senior research fellow at Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), and also a member of the government committee on transit.

Insisting that his organisation was the first to advocate for regional connectivity and transit deal with India Debapriya said, "It has to be visibly economically viable to become politically sustainable."

He said there are many uncertainties and many questions unanswered as Bangladesh prepares to sign the deal with India.

"We will need land to build the roads. Is it easy to get the

land in Bangladesh? The process of determining the price of land is very complex," he said.

He suggested signing a framework agreement with India before going for a full-scale deal. He said Bangladesh needs to start the bargaining with India from a higher position. "But we are starting from a lower position. This is not good for us," he said.

"To achieve maximum benefit from providing transit and transshipment facilities to India, the government has to boost its bargaining capacity at the discussions table. The government needs to achieve the best of its national interest," he said.

"Without proper evaluation, authentic cost-benefit study and public opinion, it would be unwise and suicidal for the government to finalise guidelines that are related to transit between Bangladesh and India," he said.

Debapriya, also a former ambassador of Bangladesh to the World Trade Organization (WTO), criticised those who seek to drag the world body into the debate on transit.

"Transit is essentially a bilateral issue. I don't know how it can be treated as multilateral?" he said.

He also cautioned about hazards of fixing transit fees under the articles of World Trade Organization (WTO) as the approach would be counter-productive.

"The document for transit fees should be bilateral as it is based on the joint communicate between

Bangladesh and India signed in 2010. So WTO has nothing to do with it unless any conflict arises," said Debapriya.

He advised for comprehensive study before fixing transit fees for using Bangladesh roads and infrastructure by India. "It will not be wise to fix the fees on the basis of other's study instead of doing our own homework on it."

He said all the issues like congestion charges, cost of lands and its impact on food production, environment and biodiversity should also be taken into account while fixing the fees.

Gowher Rizvi agreed to some of the points raised by Debapriya, but said it will not be wise to delay the transit process.

He said "To begin with, we can sign an operational deal with India, and learn from them. If there are flaws in the deal, we can amend that later."

He also stressed the need to look at the economic and trade potentials of transit and transshipment between neighbouring countries.

"This is an investment for the future of the region. Bangladesh will be a hub of development in the region. The transit issue should be seen in the perspective of this long vision," he said.

Yunus, who has worked extensively on the cost-benefit analysis of transit under a yet-to-be-published ADB report, Bangladesh stands to gain immensely from transit deal with India.

Banks asked

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issued letters to the banks on Sunday giving a brief introduction about the man, who is allegedly involved in a number of high-profile crimes including money laundering.

According to the letter, the business tycoon uses two other names -- Dr Moosa Bin Shamsher and Prince Moosa Bin Shamsher.

The documents BB asked for include anything relating to him or his interest, specifically his account opening forms, know your customer (KYC) profile forms and records of all his transactions.

The central bank asked for those following a request by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

A top official of the anti-graft body said they spontaneously initiated an enquiry about him after several dailies ran reports that this "mysterious man" has amassed a huge wealth.

"There are various allegations against this man. He is allegedly involved in several high-profile criminal activities. Currently, the commission is conducting an enquiry into the allegations including one of money laundering," said the ACC official asking not to be named.

However, details about the enquiry or allegations being probed could not be known.

If the enquiry finds evidence to substantiate the allegations, the ACC would ask the man to submit his wealth statement. If the statement does not match the ACC findings, the commission will launch an investigation into his wealth.

BAF aircraft

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due to one of its punctured wheels at about 1:30pm, sources at the airport said.

Flight operations resumed at 2:00pm after the authorities concerned repaired the damaged tyre of the aircraft and cleared the runway.

3 die

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But suddenly Taher felt sick and became unconscious inside the tank.

His two nephews -- Jhinuk Mia, 20, and Shahin Miah, 17, -- met the same fate when they hurried down to rescue Taher.

Ensure justice

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yesterday, they condemned the deliberate attempts by some media to misconstrue the fact of the attack and influence the case against the assaulter.

Rumana, an assistant professor of International Relations Department at Dhaka University, sustained severe injuries as her husband Hasan Sayeed Sumon pushed his fingers into her eyes on June 5.

She is now being treated at Lab Aid Hospital in the city.

Signatories of the statement include Hameeda Hossain, Khushi Kabir, Sara Hossain, Gitiara Nasreen, Zafrullah Chowdhury, Amena Mohsin, Salma Khan, Rokeya Kabir, Sara Zaker, Sadeka Halim, Rahnuma Ahmed, Habibun Nessa, Shireen Huq, Anu Muhammad, Sonia Amin, Imtiaz Ahmed, Mohuya Leya Falia, Naila Zaman Khan, Salma Ali, Kaberi Gayen, Farida Akhter and Moshrefa Mishu.

They said the allegation of infidelity brought against Rumana by Sumon is an attempt to divert attention from the attack and put the blame on the victim.

"Even though accusations of infidelity to justify violence against women have no place in law, women tolerate violence for fear of such allegations, which allows the perpetrators to continue the violence with impunity," the statement said, adding that a woman's fidelity or character is immaterial to the prosecution of a case of violence.

The attack against Rumana constitutes a grievous crime and the prosecution should take into account not just the physical injuries to her, but also the psychological harm that she, her daughter and parents have suffered.

They said the incident provides all those committed to combat violence against women, be it by strangers or by the loved ones, an opportunity to come together and strengthen the voice against such violence.

Govt to take \$6.45b

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planned projects. The total cost of the projects has been estimated at \$6.45 billion.

Economic Relations Division (ERD) Secretary M Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan and ADB's Country Director Thevakumar Kandiah signed the deal at a ceremony at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the capital.

The loan will be used for proper feasibility study, design and ensuring implementation of the projects, noted the ERD secretary adding, many projects are either being delayed or could not be implemented due to flawed feasibility study and design.

The road projects include Chittagong-Cox's Bazar-Teknaf road, 374-km Petrapole (India)-Benapole-Jessore-Magura-Daulatdia-Paturia-Dhakar-Akhaur-Mongla, 286-km Phulbari (India)-Banglabandha-Hatikumrul-Mongla, 286-km Dawki/Tamabil-Sylhet-Dhaka, 215-km Akhaur-Dhakar-Comilla-Chittagong, 138-km

Burimari-Rangpur, 60-km Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga and 219-km Sonamasjid-Rajshahi-Jamuna Bridge roads.

The 222-km Daulatdia-Magura-Jhenaidah-Jessore-Khulna National Highway, 157-km Hatikamrul-Rangpur National Highway, 48-km Khulna-Mongla road with link to Dhigraj to Mongla Ferry Ghat, 286-km Dhaka (Katchpur)-Bhairab-Jagadishpur-Shaistaganj-Sylhet-Tamabil, 138-km Rangpur-Teesta-Burimari (Lalmonirhat) and 204-km Sonamasjid-Rajshahi-Hatikamrul roads will be upgraded into four lanes.

Among the sub-regional railway projects are construction of 160-km Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga-Jessore rail link, 53-km Khulna-Mongla Port rail line, 128 km single line metre gauge railway track from Dohazari to Cox's Bazar via Ramu and Ramu to Gundum near Myanmar border, railway bridge with provision of dual gauge double track over Jamuna river and strengthening or

re-construction of Hardinge Bridge to allow trans-Asian traffic.

Replacement and modernisation of railway signalling system of 20 stations between Iswardi-Parbatipur section, five stations between Rajshahi-Abdulpur section and 15 stations between Darsana-Khulna section in the west zone of Bangladesh Railway will be done under a separate project.

According to the agreement, the amount is a concessional Asian Development Fund (ADF) loan with a repayment tenure of 32 years including a grace period of eight years. The interest rate is 1 percent during the grace period and 1.5 percent thereafter.

These projects focus on priority transport corridors identified in the Saarc Regional Multimodal Transport Study and also with the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (Bimstec) countries.

Koko jailed for 6yrs

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and Saimon had received Tk 19.71 crore in bribe from German telecom giant Siemens and Chinese engineering firm China Harbour Ltd to win them telecom and terminal-building contracts. They later siphoned the money off to Singapore.

In connection with the money laundering, a Singapore court on January 2 this year fined Lim Siew Cheng, a local businessman, for keeping Koko's money in his account.

The Straits Times, an English language daily in the island state, reported that the court fined Cheng \$900,677 for having Koko's \$317,000 transferred to his account and holding on to it on Koko's advice.

According to other media reports, the US authorities on January 8, 2009, initiated a move in a District of Columbia court to recover funds worth \$3 million allegedly obtained by Koko from German company Siemens and kept in a Singapore-based bank.

On December 15 the previous year, in a settlement with the US Department of Justice, Siemens agreed to pay \$1.6 billion in fine to various authorities as penalties for

its "corruption".

The US authorities alleged that former Siemens Telecommunication Group had made payments totaling \$813.9 million to win various telecom projects in Argentina, Bangladesh, and Venezuela.

PROTESTS

Terming the judgment "politically biased," Dhaka city unit Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum, a pro-BNP lawyers' body, held a protest rally at the Dhaka Bar Association's conference room yesterday afternoon.

Speakers there demanded resignation of Home Minister Sahara Khatun and State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam. They alleged that even before the verdict came, the two had stated that Tarique and Koko would be convicted shortly.

The lawyers declared that they would cover their faces with black cloth on June 26 to protest the verdict against Koko.

Additional police forces including Rapid Action Battalion personnel were deployed on the court premises to avoid any untoward incident.

All the gates were kept shut to restrict entry. Lawyers, litigants and visitors had to undergo body

searches.

At one stage, law enforcers and lawyers got locked in clashes over entering the courtroom.

Meanwhile, ACC Chairman Ghulam Rahman said the commission would take steps in line with the laws to bring back the laundered money once it has the court order in hand.

Judge Mohammad Mozammel Hossain on June 19 set the date for verdict after hearing the closing argument of the prosecution.

Earlier, the court recorded statements of 22 prosecution witnesses and complainant ACC Deputy Director Abu Sayeed.

On October 30 last year, it issued arrest warrants against Koko and Saimon, and a month later, it framed charges against them in their absence.

Koko was arrested on September 2, 2007, on corruption charges. He was released on parole for treatment abroad on July 17 the following year. His parole was cancelled on August 19 last year for violating terms and he was asked to return home. He, however, has yet to return.

Saimon has been absconding since filing of the case.

The charges

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other sources in exchange for helping them get government contracts.

Charging Koko of money laundering, the ACC case pinpoints his illegal dealings with China Harbour in relation to a Tk351 crore contract for constructing New Mooring Container Terminal at Chittagong Port, and with Siemens in relation to a Tk 239 crore contract for equipment supply and set up of a mobile phone company Teletalk.

Some other persons deposited additional money in Koko's two of the four Singapore bank accounts detected by ACC. Three of his accounts are with United Overseas Bank (UOB), and the other is with CIC Bank.

"The allegation that Arafat Rahman...has illegally sent abroad 28,84,603.15 Singaporean dollars and 9,32,672.81 US dollars to hide his illegally earned money and his illegal source of income has been primarily proven. This is a punishable offense under section 4(2) of the Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2009," ACC said in the case.

It adds that Koko obtained 2.58 million Singaporean dollars from China Harbour in three instalments on May 6, May 31, and August 1 of 2005.

Koko also received 3.03 lakh Singaporean dollars from German company Siemens on October 6, 2005.

ZASZ Trading and Consulting Pte Ltd with an address of 9, Changy South Street of Singapore. Koko and a local businessman Lim Seu Chang jointly own this company.

CHINA HARBOUR SCAM
China Harbour was awarded a contract to construct New Mooring Container Terminal in Chittagong Port through a competitive tender on January 29, 2004 with a budget of Tk351.41 crore.

When the tender was floated by the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) in mid 2003, China Harbour quoted Tk 331.41 crore for the job, and got it. But when the company was asked to sign the contract, China Harbour proposed a budgetary increase of Tk25.64 crore.

This "value engineering proposal" and relevant correspondence of China Harbour were then incorporated in the agreement with the Chinese company. The Cabinet's purchase committee then approved the proposal.

ACC in its investigation found that China Harbour employed retired Brig Gen Md Zillur Rahman as its local agent in November 26, 2001.

When the tendering process was at its final stage in 2003, and China Harbour was sure to get the job, Koko put undue pressure on Zillur Rahman to arrange a commission of Tk 19 crore.

Koko said Zillur would get Tk 3.5 crore as his commission, but he must let one AKM Musa Kajal draw the remaining commission from China Harbour.

Koko then compelled Zillur to sign a memorandum

of understanding (MoU) with China Harbour on January 13, 2004 stating that the remaining commission money would be given to Musa.

The MoU indicates that the total commission through the revised budget for construction of the container terminal was Tk 19 crore.

Of the amount, China Harbour itself kept 8.5 percent, China Harbour company officials received Tk 60 lakh, Zillur got Tk 3.5 crore, and Musa the remaining Tk 13.28 crore.

Musa was supposed to give this money to "other officers".

Ismael Hossain -- son of erstwhile shipping minister late Lt Col Akbar Hossain -- was present at the signing of the MoU.

ACC believes that a part of this money landed in Koko's account in Singapore.

SIEMENS
Siemens was awarded a Tk 239.39 crore job to supply, install, test, and commission the equipment required to launch Teletalk, a mobile telephone company of Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board, in April 27, 2004.

The tender for this job was floated in August 2002.

Siemens Bangladesh local consultant Md Zulfiqar Ali told ACC that Koko compelled Siemens to give him US \$180,000. This money was transacted through Ali's Singapore Standard Chartered Bank account to Arafat's account in UOB under the name of ZASZ Trading and Consultant. This money was converted into 3.03 lakh Singaporean dollars.

Find solution

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solution through constructive dialogue," German Minister Niebel told the press conference held at the EU Head of the Delegation office yesterday evening.

The German minister referred to his own political career. He said he had been in the opposition for 12 years and two years in the government. Whatever is the number, the opposition can say and show how can they do better than the government, he said.

Replying to a question about the current impasse between the government and the opposition, they said it is up to the politicians to discuss the divergent views and find out a solution through constructive talks.

On another question about extra-judicial killings by Rab, the EU commissioner said the legal system should be followed for justice and an accused should have the chance to defend.

When asked about any impediments they had found in the implementation of EU-funded projects in Bangladesh, the minister and the commissioner were of the opinion that it takes a long time for the administration to make a decision about any development project.

The minister said with better administrative structure, the decision-making and implementation of projects should be fast.

Niebel said Germany would continue its support to the development of Bangladesh and the economic cooperation should bring in development. He stressed the importance of more engagement of the private sector in poverty alleviation.

The EU commissioner and the German minister arrived in Dhaka on June 21 for a four-day joint visit and held meetings with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Finance Minister AM Muhith, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid and State Minister for Environment and Forest Hasan Mahmud.

They also exchanged views with representatives of the civil society and prior to yesterday's pre-departure press conference, they met Leader of the Opposition and BNP chief Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan office in the afternoon.

Khaleda told them about her party's apprehension that there will be no atmosphere for free and acceptable elections following "the government's bid to abolish non-party caretaker government system", UNB reports.

She told them that the caretaker government provision was introduced following an Awami League movement in 1994-95. The caretaker government system is accepted by the people, she said.

During their four-day visit, the joint mission of Niebel and Piebalgs looked at EU and German bilateral development projects in Dhaka, Tongi, Satkhira and Jessore and expressed satisfaction over the development cooperation.

In reply to a question, Niebel said they want that their tax payers' money are spent effectively and efficiently to have best results.

German Ambassador to Bangladesh Holger Michael and EU Head of the Delegation Ambassador William Hanna were present at the press conference. French Ambassador Charley Causert and Danish Ambassador Savend Olling were also there.

The EU is the largest market for Bangladeshi products and Germany ranks second largest export destination only behind the USA. Trade with the EU provides Bangladesh with more than half the country's export earnings, reaching 6.5 billion Euro last year. In 2010, total trade between Bangladesh and the EU passed the 8 billion Euro mark. Both export and imports are growing rapidly.

German exports to Bangladesh, mostly machinery and electrical equipment, saw a record increase of almost 80 percent from July 2010 to March 2011 over the corresponding period of the previous year.

LNG import

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(USA), Hiranandi Pvt Co of India with Hoegh LNG, Norway and BW Gas Norway have been primarily qualified. The BW Gas was selected although it had not provided the tender processing fee.

The selection has not yet been made public.

Bangladesh has twice sent a team to Qatar to make a primary agreement on LNG supply at a concessional rate. Qatar has assured the team of the supply but declined any concession. It has also told Bangladesh that it would sign an agreement when Bangladesh's infrastructure is ready to import LNG.

Petrobangla Chairman Hussain Monsur said the bidding process was delayed due mainly to selection of a consultant by the previous Petrobangla chairman, who was heading the LNG terminal project.

He said the previous chairman selected American company Channel 4 for the job even though it was neither the lowest bidder nor the most competent one. The World Bank, which is financing the project, had reservations about it.

"But we have resolved that matter. We have picked another company, Potent and Partners, which is the lowest bidder. We are now expecting the World Bank's concurrence within a short time," Monsur said.

Potent and Partners has quoted a cost of \$1.5 million

against Channel 4's \$2.7 million for the consultancy.

Despite the delay, the Petrobangla chairman is hopeful about completion of the Floating Storage and Regasification Unit (FSRU) project of the LNG terminal by the deadline of December 2012. He, however, noted, "If for any reason we face delay, we would surely complete it by June-July in 2013."

The Petrobangla tender asks bidders to install the FSRU within 18 months of signing the agreement. But industry insiders differ with such optimism. They say there can be two types of terminals, both of which would take 24 to 30 months to install after signing of the agreement. At the current pace of the tender process, one cannot expect to see the signing of such an agreement within the next four to six months at the earliest, they add.

The first type, preferred by Petrobangla, is FSRU that would cost around \$300 million and take about 12 months to install if there is a unit ready with the winning bidder. But that is an unlikely case as builders do not keep such an expensive unit standby.

"It would practically take two years to have such a unit in the Bay because the contractor would have to build it and then transfer it there," says a source.

Normally, an FSRU has a 20-year lifespan.

Another type of terminal,

Gravifloat, costs about \$350 million and takes about 30 months to install. Unlike the FSRUs, which is a floating terminal, Gravifloat is a platform structure that sits on the seabed. The advantage of this technology is that it has a 40-year lifespan and can be expanded easily as it has a modular structure.

Officials say both types have their own advantages. The FSRU can be installed more quickly, while Gravifloat ensures more safety and durability.

Meanwhile, the government has acquired huge amount of land in Moheshkhali to facilitate the LNG terminal and build other future energy infrastructures.

The cost of the imported LNG would be much higher than that of domestic gas. Sources say that it would hover between \$7 and \$8 per thousand cubic metres against \$1.2 of locally produced gas.

However, LNG would provide energy security and its cost would be reduced by mixing imported LNG with local gas.

The level of gas supply shortfall is increasing every year by 7 to 10 percent due to lack of increase in supply. Currently, US oil company Chevron has a proposal to increase its production by more than 900 million cubic feet per day within 2013, while there are smaller plans to increase local gas production.

Bring stock

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She accused Anu Muhammad, member secretary of the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports, of 'misleading' country's people on the gas exploration deal with US company ConocoPhillips.

"What will we do with the satisfaction of having gas underground? People are facing a severe gas crisis across the country and we cannot supply gas to many industries," she said adding they (people like Anu Muhammad) did not protest the move when the petroleum-run vehicles had been converted to CNG-run ones.

Matia also proposed to reduce the import tax on scrap iron.

Former minister Tofail Ahmed said the government should give serious attention on how to stabilise the stock market to regain the confidence of small investors who lost almost all of their capital during the recent slide.

How's Koko?

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ex-premier Khaleda Zia left for Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur in October, according to a letter from the Anti-Money Laundering Office (AMLO) to the attorney general of Bangladesh.

The Daily Star has a copy of the letter.

According to the Thai Immigration Bureau database, "Arafat Rahman departed Thailand for Kuala Lumpur by flight no MH 783 on October 15, 2010," reads the letter.

During his stay in Thailand, Koko received treatment from Praram 9 Hospital twice.

In the first phase, he got admitted on July 25, 2008 with complaints of chest pain, dyspnea (shortness of breath) and tremor with asthma and received treatment till August 26 the same year.

Last year, he again received treatment from the same hospital from September 17 to 23 for fibromyalgia (muscle pain) with dyspnea.

A specialist at

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University said, the problems relate to asthma, weakness, nervousness and tension, sometimes these may be heart and kidney related problems.

"According to the Bank check, neither Arafat Rahman nor his associates were found to have any transaction records with financial institutions in Thailand," the letter added.

The attorney general office of Bangladesh wanted to know the whereabouts of Koko from the Thai government in August last year. The AMLO on behalf of the Thai government sent the letter in February this year.

Koko was arrested on September 2, 2007 on charges of corruption and was released on parole for treatment in Bangkok on July 17, 2008.

His parole was cancelled on August 19 last year for violating the parole terms. He was asked to return home, but he did not.