

## HUGO CHAVEZ

Venezuela's president in "critical" but stable condition following emergency surgery



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## COURTING BLACK MONEY

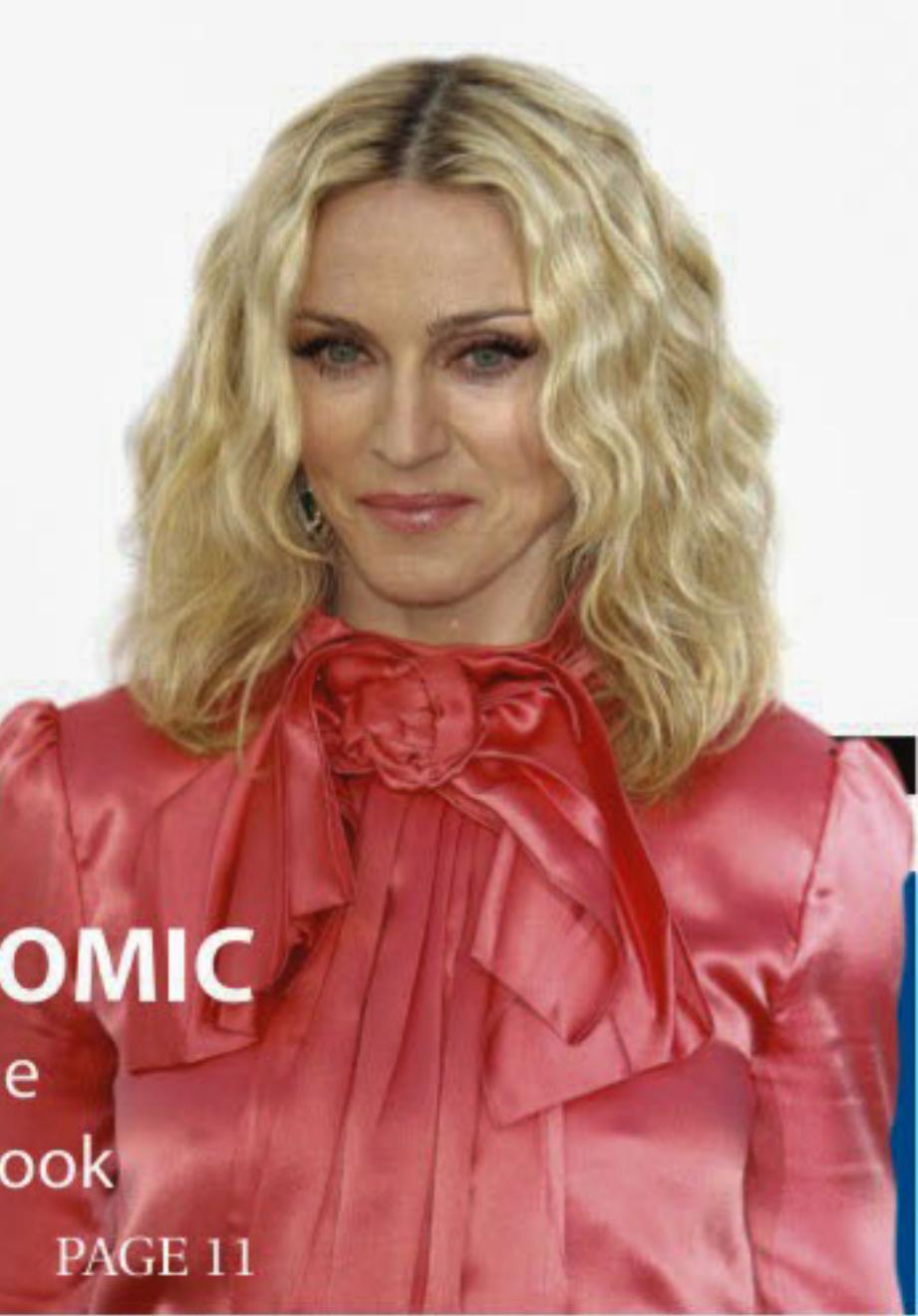
A critical look into the issue of money whitening

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## MADONNA IN COMIC

Her life story has become the subject of a comic book

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ACC ACT  
Muhith  
opposes  
proposed  
changes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister AMA Muhith has strongly opposed the proposed changes to the Anti-Corruption Commission Act that make it mandatory for the anti-graft body to take government permission before filing cases against civil servants.

Hinting at a possible outcome of the changes, the minister said only a Pakistani customs official named Zakir was convicted in the subcontinent's

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CHANGES TO CHARTER  
JS body starts  
scrutiny of  
bill today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliamentary standing committee on the law ministry today starts scrutiny of the constitution amendment bill placed in parliament on Saturday.

The bill proposes some major changes in the charter including scrapping of the provisions for caretaker government system for holding parliamentary elections.

"We want to invite BNP to the committee meeting. The prime minister also wants it. But we are not sure if BNP will respond to our call," chief of the House body Suranjan Sengupta told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said he is thinking of inviting BNP to send a delegation to the committee meeting to give their opinion on any issues including a new formula for caretaker government.

On Saturday, Suranjan met the premier at her

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## CHARGE SHEETS OF 10-TRUCK ARMS HAUL CASES

# Babar, Nizami among 11 new accused

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

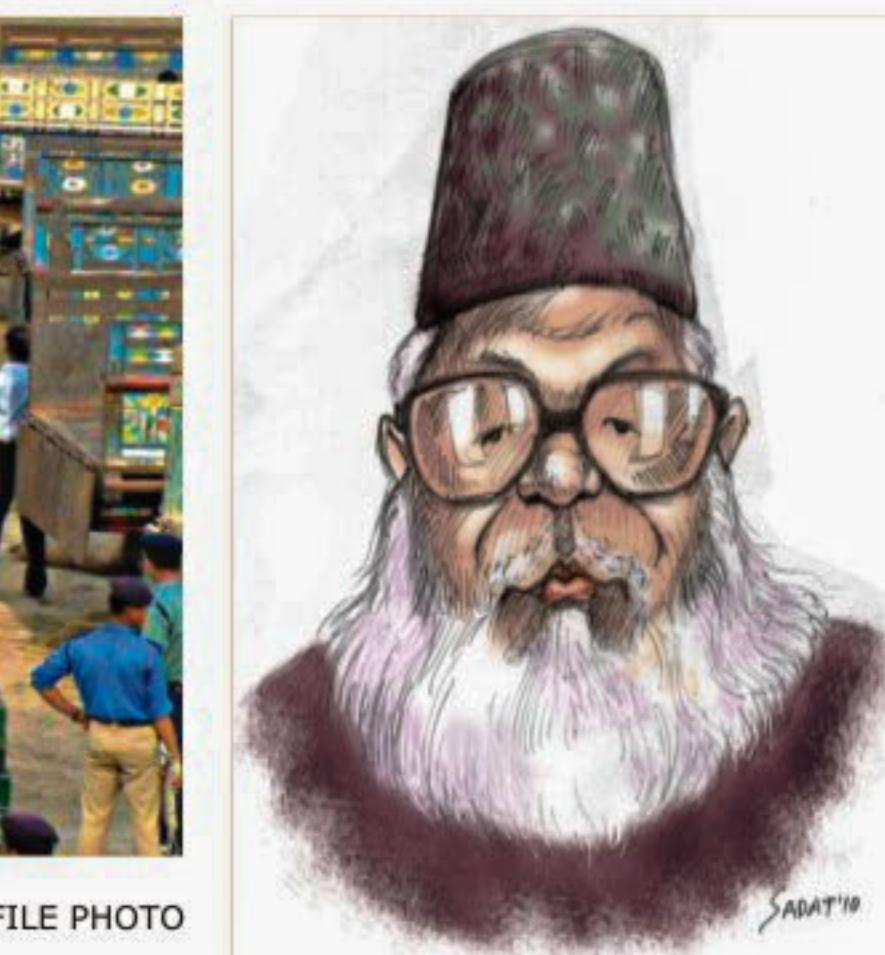
Charges have been pressed against 11 new suspects including former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar and Jamaat-e-Islami chief Motiur Rahman Nizami in two cases filed in connection with the 10-truck arms haul in Chittagong in 2004.

The arms produced in Chinese factory Norinco were to be transported to India for Assamese separatist group United Liberation Front of Assam (Ulfa), Muniruzzaman Chowdhury, investigation officer of the two cases, told reporters yesterday after submitting two supplementary charge sheets.

Muniruzzaman, senior assistant superintendent of the Criminal Investigation Department, handed over the charge sheets to Md Mainuddin, assistant commissioner (Prosecution) of



The 2004 arms haul...largest ever in Bangladesh.



Chittagong Metropolitan Police, at the latter's office at about 5:30pm.

Two cases were filed -- one for smuggling firearms and the other under the arms act -- a day after ten truckloads of

arms and ammunitions were seized at a jetty of Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd (CUFL) in the port city on April 2, 2004.

Mainuddin said the supplementary charge sheets would be sent to the Chief

Metropolitan Magistrate's Court.

In 2004, investigators submitted charge sheets against 45 people in the case filed for smuggling of firearms and

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ARMS HAUL PROBE  
Chronology

April 2, 2004

Police and coastguard forces seized 10-truck arms and ammunition -- submachine-guns, AK-47 rifles, submachine carbines, Chinese pistols, rocket shells and launchers, hand grenades and bullets -- in around 1,500 wooden boxes during unloading from two vessels at Chittagong Urea Fertilizer Limited jetty.

An unofficial estimate said around 10,000 arms, 2,000 grenades and three lakh bullets were in the consignment.

The weapons were taken to the arms warehouse at Dampara Police Lines in the port city in 10

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## CONTROL OVER LOWER COURTS

# No move to restore SC's authority

Govt seeks to retain power

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The hope for effective separation of the judiciary from the executive branch of the state seems to have waned as it is now clear that the upcoming constitutional amendment will not restore two related articles to their original 1972 positions.

The Supreme Court in a landmark verdict on the constitution's fifth amendment sought restoration of articles 115 and 116 to their original positions for a meaningful separation of the judiciary from executive branch.

But the constitutional amendment bill placed in the parliament on Saturday did not make any proposal to restore the two articles to their original positions, as the government seeks to retain its control over the lower judiciary, sources said.

Rather, the changes brought to these two articles by the constitution's fourth amendment and martial law proclamations are set to remain unchanged according to the proposals approved by the cabinet.

The bill was prepared in line with the recommendations of the parliamentary special committee on constitutional amendment.

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## Khaleda threatens to oust govt

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia last night threatened to bring down the government through movement for holding midterm election under a caretaker government.

The threat of the opposition leader came at a closed-door meeting with a group of senior engineers and agriculturists at her Gulshan office as part of her ongoing view exchange programmes with various professional groups.

Sources close to the meeting said Khaleda reiterated her party's call that the existing provision of the caretaker government in the constitution has to be sustained.

The unilateral government move for constitution amendment is not acceptable to her party, the BNP chief said.

Khaleda indicated that a tough anti-government

# Army to get 44 tanks

2 helicopters also on purchase list

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

For the first time in the country's history, the government will purchase 44 new tanks and three armoured recovery vehicles (ARV) for the army as part of its plan to modernise the armed forces.

The government will also buy two brand new helicopters for the army to

ensure necessary logistic support for the UN peacekeeping activities.

The Main Battle Tanks (MBT-2000) and the ARVs will be bought from China, and the helicopters from France through government-to-government deals, which were recently signed. According to the deals, the cost of the tanks will be around

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CARETAKER ISSUE  
TIB calls for dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) yesterday expressed concern at the political confrontation over the issues of caretaker government system and the 15th

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# A REWARD FOR MAKING BANKING SIMPLER

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My MPs are free to talk with me  
Says Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina instantly refuted the allegation in parliament yesterday that most of the lawmakers from her party Awami League are afraid of discussing with her different problems of their constituencies.

"All lawmakers of my party are always in close contact with me. They can discuss with me any issue," said the AL president.

Hasina, also leader of the House, promptly responded to the allegation made by Jatiya Party (a component of the AL-led alliance) lawmaker TIM Fazle Rabbi Chowdhury while taking part in the discussion on the proposed budget for next fiscal year.

As soon as the JP lawmaker ended his speech, Speaker Abdul Hamid said, "What you have

**3 days to go!**

The countdown to a weekend of up to Tk. 55,000 concession has begun

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