

Probe into graft charges

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pledges of the Awami League-led alliance government.

The corruption allegations regarding Padma Bridge are also under scrutiny by the World Bank, one of the financiers.

"The prime minister has directed those concerned to investigate the one or two allegations that the government has about the Padma Bridge project," Cabinet Secretary Abdul Aziz told reporters after the meeting.

Hasina directed the secretaries to show zero tolerance for corruption and warned that the government would not tolerate corruption in any sector, meeting sources said.

She asked the authorities to follow the rules in issuing driving licences and urged people to abide by the traffic rules to avoid road accidents.

Recently, the shipping minister requested the communications ministry to issue 28,000 licences without any tests and examinations, which drew a huge criticism in and outside the government.

At the meeting, Hasina observed that the print and broadcast media should point out in detail the traffic rules to create public awareness about road use, Prime Minister's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad said.

Expressing annoyance over the poor state of the roads and highways, she said maintenance and repair work have not been carried out in time as the communications ministry could not figure what should be done first with the funds available.

She asked the communications secretary to repair the roads immediately and priority-wise. In response, Secretary Muzammel Haque Khan said the ministry did not get adequate fund in time and

for that could not do the necessary repair and maintenance.

To contain price hike of essentials, the prime minister ordered the commerce ministry to strengthen the market monitoring system and keep monitoring the markets round the year.

Voicing her concern over shrinking farmlands, she asked the authorities to make proper use of land by setting up separate zones for housing, industries and agriculture in every upazila. She also stressed the need for expansion upwards to save agricultural land.

Hasina emphasised encouraging non-resident Bangladeshis to invest in the country to reduce dependency on foreign funds, said the cabinet secretary.

Talking about the gas crisis, she requested all to practise austerity and directed the officials to ensure more involvement of Bapex in exploring natural gas.

The prime minister said she was satisfied over implementation of 92 percent of the Annual Development Programmes under different ministries and 87 percent of the cabinet decisions. She directed the secretaries to strengthen coordination between the ministries to do even better.

Efforts should be on to increase public service and draw development projects keeping people's welfare in mind, she observed.

She instructed the officials to help the education ministry implement the education policy and expand school feeding programme across the country to reduce the dropout rate, said the cabinet secretary.

She also sought coopera-

tion of the secretaries to help the government implement its election manifesto.

Forty-eight secretaries of different ministries and divisions took part in the meeting and 24 of them spoke.

Railway secy

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administration during the communications ministry's recent crisis [over poor condition of roads and highways ahead of Eid], which prompted the authorities to take action against him," said a communications ministry official.

The communications ministry issued separate orders making the 18 self-confessed corrupt officers OSD. Of them, 14 are from RHD and four from BRTA.

The officers had gone to the now-defunct Truth and Accountability Commission (TAC) and confessed of amassing money through illegal means. They obtained pardon giving a small portion of the ill-gotten money to the exchequer.

At least 42 officials and employees of RHD and five of BRTA had gone to TAC to obtain pardon during the rule of the last caretaker government and many of them still work at the ministry and have even got promotions to important positions.

Although the ruling Awami League in its election manifesto had promised to fight corruption with a strong hand, but the government is yet to make any move against self-confessed corrupt officials in different ministries and departments.

The communications ministry is the first ministry to take any action against government officials who sought pardon before TAC.

New British HC

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The new UK envoy arrived in Dhaka on Wednesday and is expected to present his credentials to President Zillur Rahman in the first week of October, said British High Commission sources.

Gibson joined the foreign office in 1978. He has served in different capacities at home and overseas, mainly in the Middle East and Asia. He has also undertaken a number of jobs in multilateral missions.

He previously served as Deputy High Commissioner in Dhaka between 2002 and 2005. His immediate past posting was in Karachi as the British Deputy Head of Mission and Director UK Trade and Investment, Pakistan.

Gibson was appointed CMG by Her Majesty in the 2011 New Year's Honours list.

On his appointment as British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Gibson said "I am honoured and delighted to have been appointed to this post. I retain a deep and abiding affection for Bangladesh and its people from my previous posting here. I look forward to resuming work in a country which enjoys such close and extensive relations with the United Kingdom."

Sayedee

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He repeatedly provided false information about his income and expenditure, said the plaintiff.

Sayedee was arrested on June 29 last year in a case filed for hurting religious sentiment of Muslims. He was shown arrested in a number of criminal cases, including three for crimes against humanity during the country's Liberation War in 1971.

PM flies to US

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The UN General Assembly, better known as UNGA, on September 24.

Hasina's 87-member delegation includes Finance Minister AMA Muhith, Health Minister Dr AFM Ruhul Haq, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Ambassador At-Large Mohammad Ziauddin, 23 businesspeople, 10 mostly district level leaders of her ruling party. An eight-member official media team will be with her.

During the visit Hasina will attend and address several seminars and high level meetings. She will speak on counter-terrorism, non-communicable diseases, climate change, autism, women, economic empowerment and digital Bangladesh.

The prime minister will hold bilateral meetings on Sept 23 with the presidents of South Sudan and Slovenia, and the prime ministers of Turkey and Nepal, and the UN Secretary General.

The Commonwealth secretary general, the foreign minister of Saudi Arabia and the Co-Chair of Bangladesh Caucus Joseph Crowley will pay courtesy calls on her on September 23 at New York's Hotel Waldorf Astoria, where Hasina will be staying.

She will attend a reception to be hosted by Michelle Obama at UN on September 21. The PM will also attend a reception by the UN secretary general in the afternoon same day.

Official sources said Hasina will also travel to Connecticut for a check-up of her hearing problem she suffered during a grenade attack on her rally in Dhaka on August 21 in 2004.

The prime minister will leave New York for Connecticut on September 26 and she will be staying there for two days.

She will leave Connecticut on September 28 for Dhaka and return to Dhaka the next day.

The business team accompanying her includes FBCCI President AK Azad, Chairman of Standard Bank Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed, BGMEA leader Tipu Munshi and MCCI President Major Gen (retd) Amjad Khan Chowdhury.

Saarc power grid

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meet the rising energy demand of the people, the premier said. "Irrespective of the level of economic development across the region, this is a challenge common to all our countries."

She hoped that the Energy Ministers' Meeting would not only consider and discuss the broader policy issues, but would also try to take a few practical collaborative initiatives.

"Such initiatives, either on bilateral or sub-regional or regional basis, should be such that would help our countries to help address the short- and medium-term challenges in provisioning energy to our masses," Hasina said.

The Saarc countries have huge potentialities to share their knowledge, technology and resources in the energy sector including the renewable energy resources. "It will help ensure sustainable development of the region in the long run," she said.

Hasina said the carbon footprint of Bangladesh is insignificant. However, the country cannot remain totally apathetic to the developments elsewhere to the paradigm shift towards the clean energy options.

"The energy development outlook of the Saarc countries has to be pragmatic as well as dynamically

aligned to the new energy world order," she said.

The premier mentioned that the Saarc Regional Energy Trade Study, which has been finalised, would provide specific and time-bound recommendations that have emerged through the study.

"We have been talking about expediting regional cooperation in energy in the spirit of mutual trust, equity and shared benefits," she said.

Hasina mentioned that in a most comprehensive manner, the study brings the ways forward in energy trade, development of efficient conventional and renewable energy sources, especially hydropower, grid inter-connections, development of renewable energy.

"Development of a Saarc market for electricity is also articulated. Therefore, this provides a much-needed blueprint to advance cooperation among our countries in a practical manner," she said.

The premier also briefly described her government's numerous steps to develop the power situation of the country.

Hasina said that electricity generation on January 6, 2009 was 3,268 megawatt. Till now, the present government has added 2,179 MW of electricity to the national grid.

Toxic ship Ctg-bound

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hazardous ship and urged them not to allow it enter the country for dismantling, said Tajminur Rahman, senior assistant director of the DoE.

Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) in a letter to the DoE, the Mercantile Marine Department and the Chittagong Customs yesterday warned them about the hazardous ship's arrival.

Bela said Indian ship breakers rejected dismantling the Chinese ship for having hazardous substances. The organisation urged the offices concerned not to issue any NOC or environmental clearance for dismantling the ship in Bangladesh.

Sources said Global Marketing System (GMS), a US company that negotiates sales of vessels, brokered the deal for purchasing the Chinese ship for RS

Shipping, a Chittagong-based company.

Parimal Sharma Barua, operation manager of RS Shipping, said they had been in talks about the deal and the ship was yet to arrive. He declined to comment further.

An official of Robins des Bois, a Paris-based watchdog for protection of people and the environment, said that surprisingly, the ship was never detained despite being detected with many deficiencies by Port State Controls at different ports.

"This is a 29 year-old ship coming to the end of her life. She is in a very bad state," said Christine Bossard, in-charge of campaign at Robin des Bois.

Sources in the ship-breaking industry said the entire process of procuring a ship is done dubiously. Pre-cleaning certificates, environmental clearance and other documents necessary

The government has chalked out a plan to produce 7,000 MW of electricity by the year 2013 and 8,000 MW by the year 2015. In the process, it has planned to generate 20,000 MW of electricity by the year 2021, she said.

"In this context, we would like to lay emphasis on the importance of cross-border exchange of power. Bangladesh is currently working on power exchange with India and Myanmar," Hasina said.

If the hydro-power potential in Bhutan, Nepal and even Myanmar, can be utilised properly, the region could be self-reliant on clean energy, the premier said, adding "This would reduce our dependence on conventional energy. This, in turn, will also prevent environmental degradation for the region."

Hasina said "The opportunity before us is vast and immediate. If we can demonstrate results through collaborative endeavours, it would eventually help us all in shaping South Asia as a truly integrating economic space, which we nurture in the vision of a South Asian Economic Union."

PM's Adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, Saarc Secretary General Fatimath Dhiyana Saeed, among others, spoke on the occasion.

to purchase ships are obtained instantly.

Sometimes pre-cleaning certificates are faked and other clearance certificates are obtained in package deals, said a source in the industry.

The source said there is a plan to purchase a total of 300 ships in a short time for dismantling.

India, China, Pakistan and Bangladesh are the leading ship-breaking countries in Asia. In the international ship breaking business Bangladesh is considered a dumping ground for older ships and vessels with hazardous substances due to lack of laws in the country.

The authorities have given permission to dismantle more than 100 ships in ship-breaking yards in Sitakunda since the High Court on March 7 conditionally relaxed restrictions on purchase of ships for dismantling.

New banks, not now

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Wednesday decided to allow opening of new private banks with some stringent conditions under political pressure.

At present Bangladesh has more banks than other countries do in the sub-continent, but bowing to different pressure groups the government asked the central bank to initiate a process of issuing licences for new private banks.

Already about 82 applications for licences have been submitted. The applicants include ruling party lawmakers.

A central bank board member told The Daily Star that the majority of board members strongly opposed the idea of allowing new banks during Wednesday's meeting.

Finance ministry officials said the IMF mission in its

report submitted to the government reviewed the overall banking situation and opposed issuing licences for new banks.

David Cowen said the existing banks have been suffering from a liquidity crisis now. He recommended that steps be taken to further ease the liquidity crisis before proceeding with new licences.

He said it is important that new reforms in supervising the banks be enacted beforehand.

He also suggested that some of the amendments to the banking companies act, currently under consideration, be finalised and approved by the parliament.

In a written statement the mission recommended that BB moves to a more risk-based supervisory framework for banks.

Power import

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supplying electricity to Bangladesh. The Indian government however has not officially conveyed Bangladesh anything on the issue.

State Minister for Energy and Power Muhammad Enamul Huq said yesterday installation of power grid network both in Bangladesh and India is going on in line with the power import plan.

"There is no scope that it will be delayed. We hope to bring electricity from India by the end of 2012 or in

early 2013," he said at a press briefing in the city.

Power Secretary Md Abul Kalam Azad refuted media reports that there is no transmission line on the India side for supply of electricity to Bangladesh. "We will get electricity as we expect," he said.

The state minister said, "The grid line exists in most parts of India. There is no debate over the issue. There is however debate over land to be used to set up poles in Paschim Banga."

Strengthening the banks' internal governance is seen as a complementary step towards ensuring their financial soundness, it said.

It noted the need for state-owned commercial banks to be allowed to operate under BB's sole jurisdiction, consistent with their corporatisation.

In view of the recent stock market volatility, the mission suggested timely enactment of measures aimed at further strengthening securities market oversight to protect investors' interests.

It also highlighted the pressing need for containing subsidy cost, as its rapid rise threatens to eat away the fiscal space being created by a larger tax collection.

Containment of subsidy cost is also needed for social and development spending, it added.

Contacted yesterday, Power Development Board Chairman Alamgir Kabir said, "All disputes will be solved in time and everything is going ahead as per the plan. Everything will be done within the deadline. There is enough time in our hand."

Meanwhile, despite the hype over the issue, Dhaka and New Delhi could not sign a deal on sale of electricity to Bangladesh during Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Dhaka earlier this month.

New dolphin

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commonly be known as the Burrunan dolphin, an Aboriginal name meaning large sea fish of the porpoise kind.

"This is an incredibly fascinating discovery as there have only been three new dolphin species formally described and recognised since the late 1800s," Charlton-Robb said of her research, published in the PLoS One journal.

"What makes this even more exciting is this dolphin species has been living right under our noses, with only two known resident populations living in Port Phillip Bay and the Gippsland Lakes in Victoria state."

The research relied in part on the analysis of dolphin skulls collected and maintained by museums over the last century, particularly holdings at Museum Victoria.

Kidney trade

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interrogation, both confessed to their involvement in illegal kidney trading," said Fazlul Karim, officer-in-charge of Kalai Police Station in Joypurhat district.

The OC suspects Nasir to be an agent of an international hospital located at Panthapath, which has branches in Kolkata, Bangalore, New Delhi, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Police also seized some documents from the hospital, which shows around 101 Bangladeshi 'donors' who were sent to India by the hospital for kidney transplantation, he said.

"Nasir maintained a close contact with doctors at home and abroad while Sujon collected donors from different parts of the country," said the OC.

Police has arrested eight people, including Nasir and Sujon, in connection with kidney trading.

Earlier on September 8, Tareq Azam alias Bablu Chowdhury, ringleader of the illegal network was arrested, who named around 18 people in his confessional statement made under section 164 to Joypurhat Sessions Judge's Court on September 10.

During the interrogation, Tareq Azam said the gang sent kidney 'donors' abroad for transplantation, who received around Tk1.7 lakh to Tk4 lakh per kidney.

Abul seeks

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upon your consent. I seek your full assistance in creating awareness in the ministry so that no corruption can take place, and that corruption can be stopped," Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain wrote in a letter to the ACC chief Ghulam Rahman.

The ACC has received the letter, which came a day after Ghulam questioned the ministry's invitation to TIB to examine irregularities in the ministry activities.

"As the allegation of corruption regarding Padma Bridge has drawn huge flak, the commission on Sunday will evaluate what it can do in this regard," Ghulam Rahman said yesterday, adding that view exchange meetings can be held "anytime with any ministry".

In a rather unusual move, Abul on Tuesday offered TIB "all-out cooperation" in looking into his ministry's activities amid allegations of corruption in the bidding process of the \$2.9b Padma Bridge project.

The letter to the ACC chairman proposes a meeting between the senior officials of the ministry and the anti-graft body.

Signed by Abul Hossain, the two-page letter is full of theoretical discussion on corruption and its "devastating multifaceted impact on society".

"Corruption is a complex issue, which is linked to human behaviour and many other matters. At present, corruption appears to come out as a force," the letter says, for instance.

Claiming to have properly followed rules in the tender process, the letter jumps to the topic of corruption prevention by citing the proverb, "Prevention is better than cure."

The letter then focuses on gaining long term benefit by creating awareness among high ranking officials against corruption through a meeting with the ACC.

"The ministry held one such meeting during the immediate past caretaker government rule," it says.

'Minus 2' met messy fate

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eleven people killed when she ordered the burning of a bus in 2004... He said there could be as many as twenty other charges."

In the wake of her arrest, Amin opined that "there could be violence, but we believe we have things under control", the cable added.

He acknowledged that Hasina's son Sajeeb Wazed Joy (currently in the US) could inspire demonstrations, but that the authorities had warned political leaders and others not to demonstrate in her support.

The US embassy, which was maintaining close contacts with the "officials behind the scenes", informed Washington earlier on June 4 that having "failed to exile the two ladies, the next option for the government is to take Hasina and then, for the sake of bipartisanship, Zia to trial on corruption and perhaps other charges".

In a cable sent on April 17 the same year, Butenis detailed, after talking with Khaleda's family, the arrangement of their leaving the country.

"The military will send Zia abroad to prevent Hasina from returning," Butenis quoted former BNP MP Mushfiqur Rahman as saying.

A classmate and friend of the then caretaker government head Fakhruddin Ahmed, Mushfiqur Rahman was permitted access to Khaleda's cantonment house, she said.

The BNP leader also talked about a deal, saying "It is more or less decided that she will leave and that Arafat [Rahman Koko, Khaleda's younger son] will go with her". Her elder son Tarique Rahman's fate remained undecided till then, the April 17 cable said.

Mushfiqur Rahman also said the military used Khaleda Zia's brother, Major (retd) Sayeed Iskandar and Major General Sadique Hasan Rumi to broker the deal. He added the threat of further charges was used to encourage her to leave.

Rumi was appointed DGFI chief during the ending months of BNP-Jamaat coalition government rule and was transferred as director general of Ansar and VDP on May 17, 2007.

After Hasina had left for the US in March, the government moved to prevent her return but ultimately failed to do so under international pressure.

Talking on the caretaker administration's restriction

on Hasina's return, the then law adviser Mainul Hossain on April 18, 2007 said legal measures would have to be taken against her in case she came back.

Hasina returned on May 7 that year. Her attempt psychologically boosted her arch rival Khaleda who u-turned on her decision to leave the country.

Preparation began then to file cases against the two leaders.

The Anti-Corruption Commission was working on 27 cases against Hasina. One of the cases was on sedition charges as she threatened to topple the previous BNP government by "people's pressure" if it didn't resign by April 30, 2004, the cable on June 19, 2007 quoted ACC contacts as saying.

The two cases against Khaleda Zia might be designed to suggest political balance for the possible arrest of Hasina, the cable added.

In early April 2008, when moves were still on to split political parties in the name of reforms, the US embassy got James F Moriarty to succeed Butenis.

Moriarty wrote to Washington a cable on July 3 under the title "Bangladesh military intelligence active but not very adept at politics". He identified the DGFI as the "much-feared military intelligence force that active in domestic politics" since the CG came to power in January 2007 "with the strong support of Chief of Army Staff Gen Moeen Uddin Ahmed".

"Its (DGFI's) 'minus-two' policy of attempting to sideline the two former prime ministers by sending them into exile abroad or destroying them politically at home has failed. Both women remain firmly at the helm of their parties despite multiple corruption charges."

In pursuit of its goals, the DGFI had played a key role in trying to remove from politics former prime ministers Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia, "who it views as responsible for the country's endemic political violence and graft", Moriarty wrote.

THE INFUENTIAL TWO
ATM Amin and Brig Gen Fazlul Bari, a DGFI director and an influential figure during the tenure of military-backed caretaker regime, are much-talked-about for their role in execution of the "minus-two" policy.

Fazlul Bari, posted to Bangladesh mission in Washington DC by the end