

HC clears way for graft case against former RPGCL boss

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday cleared the way for resuming a corruption case filed against ABM Fazle Elahi, former managing director of Rupantarita Praktic Gas Company Limited (RPGCL).

The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case with Khilkhet Police Station on March 11, 2008 against Elahi and five other RPGCL officials over misappropriating state money worth Tk 9.75 crore from the Marine CNG Pilot Project at Aricha-Daulatdia Ferryghat.

The HC yesterday vacated its earlier order that had stayed the proceeding of the case against Elahi in 2009.

The court delivered the verdict after rejecting a petition submitted by Elahi in 2009 for quashing the proceedings of the case.

US offers help in education sector

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Visiting US official Robert O Blake yesterday said the US wanted to work for improving the education system in Bangladesh, which would help the students cope with future demands.

The US always wants to help Bangladesh in this area, and the two countries have taken up some measures in the sector jointly, he told journalists during his visit to Fulbari Azaria Senior Madrasa in the district's Golapganj upazila.

The US state assistant secretary for South & Central Asia hoped that the new generation would be able to build themselves up as competent citizens since they were increasingly becoming interested in learning better English.

Stressing the need for improving the madrasa education, Blake wanted to know whether the Bangladeshi madrasa students are like that of madrasas in Pakistan or Afghanistan.

In reply, the Fulbari madrasa authorities told him that the students did not have any link to terrorism or extremism and that they learned science and English.

Blake noted that the US was now stressing more on people to people contact between the US and Bangladesh than the government level contact.

US Ambassador in Dhaka Dan Mozena accompanied Blake during his visit.

The US officials later addressed a gathering of 50 students of the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (Sust) on "violent extremism in Bangladesh".



Newly manufactured energy-saving bulbs being tested at the factory of Energypac Electronics Ltd. Inset, an official addressing an orientation programme for some employees of the company on the lamp's quality.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Bangladesh Urban Institute launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Urban Institute (Buri), an initiative to address growing challenges of urbanisation, was launched in Dhaka on December 8 at an international seminar on urbanisation.

Leading urban experts, leadership of the Municipal Association of Bangladesh, town mayors from across the country, leadership of the Bangladesh Institute of Planners, economists, architects, social scientists, entrepreneurs and high-ranking officials from World Bank, Korean Research Institute of Human Settlements, Asian Development Bank and GTZ were present.

Dr Gowher Rizvi, adviser to the prime minister, launched the institute prior to the international seminar.

Facilitated by the policy action centre

PPRC, core team, advisors and associates of the institute include Hossain Zillur Rahman (convener), Maj Gen (retd) Ghulam Quader, Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, Prof Golam Rahman, Prof Amirul Islam Chowdhury, Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, Dr Mustafa Mujeri, Dr Mahabub Hossain, Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury, Prof MA Taslim, Liaquat Ali Choudhury, Prof Mauhbubullah, Prof ATM Nurul Amin, Syed Hashemi, Dr Adnam Morshed, Dr Md Akter Mahmud, Prof Ghulam Murtaza, Shahidul Islam and Mustapha Quaium Khan.

One of the first activities of the new institute will be an innovative capacity building programme on urban management.

Buri will utilise research, dialogues and advocacy to promote a holistic urban policy vision and innovative urban solutions.

HSBC - Star CLIMATE AWARDEE 2011

Green co contributes to emission cut

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Energypac Electronics Ltd won the HSBC-The Daily Star Climate Awards 2011 for its pioneering role in manufacturing, promoting and popularising energy-efficient lights in Bangladesh. Md Nurul Akhter, the CEO of the company, speaks to The Daily Star about the philosophy behind his firm's "green business".

There is nothing but an LED lamp illuminating the surroundings, and it is easy enough to miss the man sitting at his desk in a corner of the room.

"I don't believe in wasting energy," says Akhter. "Even when all the lights in my room are lit, it uses only 35 watts of electricity. With just this lamp, I bring down my energy use to just five watts."

Akhter has transformed his personal motto of conserving energy into a successful business model, with the development and production of highly-efficient, environment-friendly products, including Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFL), Electronic Ballast and Light-Emitting Diode (LED) lamps.

Energypac Electronics started trading in 1998 and began its full-fledged operations from 2005.

A CFL lamp uses 20 watts of electricity on an average while a normal lamp uses 100 watts, thus saving 80 percent of energy consumption. In addition, Energypac products reduce a huge amount of carbon dioxide emission. "One CFL lamp can reduce 360kgs of carbon diox-

ide emission in its three-year lifespan, which is equivalent to planting 26 trees per year," explains Akhter.

Since its inception, the company has saved 173 megawatts (MW) of electricity through its products and reduced carbon emission by two million tonnes, argues the Energypac CEO.

He believes that checking the consumption of electricity is the only way to immediately manage the energy crisis, which is plaguing the country right now.

"It takes as much as eight crore taka to produce one megawatt of electricity, but only 1.2 crore taka to save the same amount of energy. It is definitely a worthwhile investment for the government and the private sector, given the resource constraints in our country," says Akhter.

"We are so focused, as citizens and consumers, on the government's failure to produce enough energy that we don't realise that simple steps -- such as turning off lights and fans when we leave a room and switching to more energy-efficient alternatives -- can reduce our energy consumption by 40-45 percent."

Akhter says many consumers shy away from adopting energy-saving lamps because of its high price -- an energy-efficient lamp costs Tk 210, while a normal one costs Tk 30. However, given the fact that the former lasts at least three years or 10 times longer and uses

five times less electricity, it ends up saving the consumer Tk 2,210 in its lifespan, he adds.

He argues that for those struggling to pay exorbitant electricity bills, switching to energy-efficient products can be a saving grace.

Akhter thinks that the government needs to take immediate steps to standardise the quality of energy-saving lamps in the country.

Unfortunately, not all products manufactured in this country are the same, and without proper guidelines and follow-up, consumers might end up buying products that are not long-lasting and efficient, he says.

"I must congratulate the government for its efforts over the years to promote green energy, but its recent decision to hand out two crore low-quality CFLs imported from other countries that gave out within three months did us more bad than good, as people started to doubt the effectiveness of energy-saving products," he adds.

Energypac Electronics hopes to invest more money in research and development, and to introduce new and better products in the future, such as the high-end lamp on Akhter's desk. However, there has to be more government support for energy efficient and green technologies to make the efforts sustainable and the products more accessible to consumers, he thinks.

CASE OF FRAUDULENCE Charges against Amar Desh acting editor dropped

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday discharged Amar Desh acting editor Mahmudur Rahman in a case filed against him for illegally using Alhaj Md Hasmat Ali's name as the publisher of the daily and damaging his social image.

Magistrate Asaduzzaman Nur passed the order after Hasmat Ali submitted a petition to the court seeking permission from it for withdrawal of the case.

In the petition, Hasmat Ali told the court that they had amicably settled the matter out of court.

During yesterday's hearing, Mahmudur Rahman was present at court.

Police arrested Mahmudur Rahman in June of 2010 after Hasmat Ali filed a case against him.

In the case, Hasmat accused Mahmudur Rahman of using his name illegally as the publisher even though he submitted an application to the Dhaka deputy commissioner for excluding his name.

HC quashes case against Mohiuddin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday scrapped the proceedings of a corruption case filed against former mayor of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury in 2007.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed the case against Mohiuddin and three others on charge of illegally drawing Tk 1.47 crore from the city corporation fund to launch Bijoy TV, a private television channel.

The HC bench of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik and Justice Farid Ahmed delivered the verdict yesterday after hearing a petition filed by Mohiuddin in 2008 for quashing the proceedings against him.

The court quashed the proceedings on the ground that the charges brought against Mohiuddin were not proved.

In 2008, the HC had stayed the proceedings of the case against Mohiuddin and issued a rule upon the ACC and government to explain why the proceedings should not be quashed.



Police getting a group of BNP activists into a prison van, not in picture, after arresting them at the capital's Institute of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh. The opposition activists gathered there yesterday to attend a meeting commemorating recently deceased Sayeed Iskandar, younger brother of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

PHOTO: STAR

PURBACHAL HOUSING PROJECT Provide plots against all acquired lands

Demand Gazipur land owners

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gazipur district residents, whose lands were acquired for Rajuk's Purbachal New Town project, yesterday demanded plots and adequate compensation for all the affected land owners.

As per Rajuk, only those who had their residence in the acquired land are eligible to apply for plots in the project, said Sheikh Reza Ahmed, whose land was also acquired, at a press conference in the capital's Jatiya Press Club.

Rajuk states that owners of 16.50 decimal of land can apply for 3-katha (10 katha = 16.50 decimal) plots while owners of 33 decimal of land can apply for 5-katha plots, he said.

Only 2,000, from around 15,000 land owners, have applied for the plots while Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) allotted only 576 plots so far, he added.

Reza said not only were they getting a

fraction of the actual market price of their lands as compensation, some officials of Gazipur Deputy Commissioner's Office were also demanding bribes for the compensation's paperwork.

The government is giving Tk 1.20 lakh for each bigha of land (1 bigha = 33 decimal) whereas the current market price is Tk 2 to 3 crore, he said.

The land owners can not even get the whole amount as the officials were demanding nearly 30 to 40 percent from each bigha as bribe.

"If anyone denies paying, the officials delay the paperwork unnecessarily." Due to this, around 60 percent of the land owners failed to get their compensation, said Reza.

Stating that the acquisition left many with no source of livelihood since 2000, he also urged the government to provide at least flats to those who owned less than 16.5 decimal of land.



Journalists form a human chain in front of the capital's Jatiya Press Club yesterday demanding arrest of the killers of journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi. Sagar and Runi were murdered in the capital on February 11.

PHOTO: STAR