

UNDERWATER SIGNALS

Hunt for black box intensifies

AFP, Perth

Ships searching the vast Indian Ocean for a Malaysian airliner have detected three separate underwater signals yesterday, and more ships and planes were diverted to investigate whether they could have come from its "black box".

Angus Houston, head of the Australian search mission, said the detections were being taken "very seriously" as time ticked down on the battery life of the black box's tracking beacons.

He said China's Haixun 01 has twice detected an underwater signal on a frequency used for the plane's flight data and cockpit voice recorders -- once for 90 seconds on Saturday and another more fleeting "ping" on Friday a short distance away.

A third "ping" was also being scrutinised, 300 nautical miles away in the Indian Ocean.

The Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 with 239 people aboard vanished on March 8 during a flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing.

"This is an important and encourag-

ing lead but one which I urge you to continue to treat carefully," Houston told reporters.

"We are working in a very big ocean and within a very large search area."

"Speculation and unconfirmed reports can see the loved ones of the passengers put through terrible stress and I don't want to put them under any further emotional distress at this very difficult time."

Britain's HMS Echo and the Australian ship Ocean Shield -- both equipped with black box locators -- and Australian air force planes were being diverted to the area to help discount or confirm the Chinese signals, Houston said.

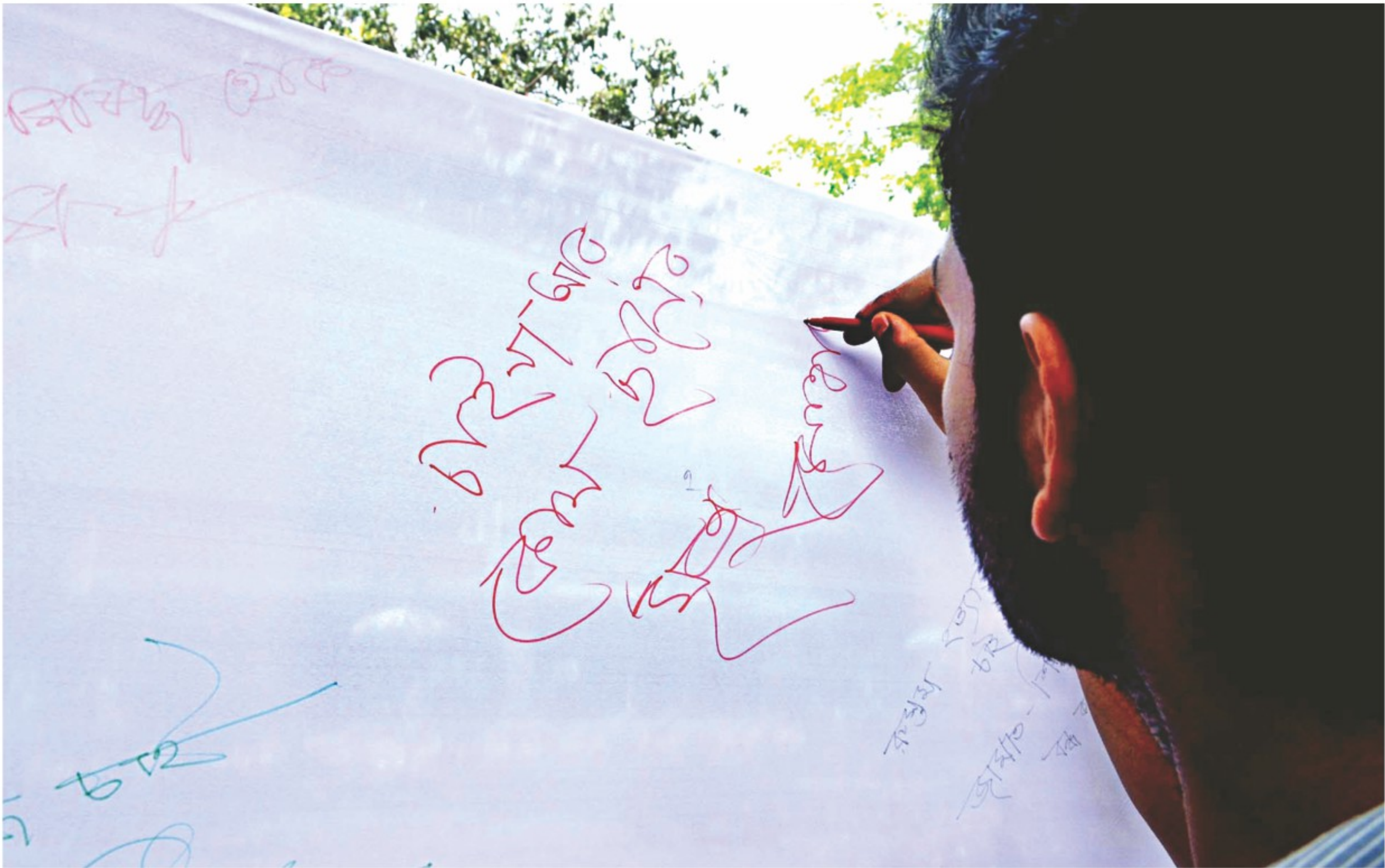
Ocean Shield was also detected the signal it in its current location, about 300 nautical miles north of Haixun 01, in waters far off Australia's west coast.

Houston said the Chinese finding was more promising.

"I think the fact that we've had two detections, two acoustic events in that location, provides some promise which requires a full investigation," he said.

The hunt for the jet was refocused

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"No more deaths of students," writes a student on a large canvas in front of the library at Rajshahi University yesterday. The Chhatra League organised the event along with forming a human chain to protest the murder of its activist Rustom Ali in his dorm room on Friday.

PHOTO: MOHAMMAD MASUD

12 key convicts challenge verdict

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capital punishment to 14 people, including Nizami, Babar and former top intelligence officials, for smuggling 10 truck-loads of arms during the last BNP-led four-party rule.

Life sentences were also handed down to the 14 for possessing illegal firearms and ammunition in another case filed over the largest-ever arms haul in the country about a decade ago.

The military commander of United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), a separatist group fighting for independence, Paresh Barua is among those condemned to death.

One of the cases was filed under the Special Powers Act, 1974 for smuggling firearms and the other was filed under the Arms Act, 1878 for possessing illegal weapons.

The cases were filed with Kamaphuli police a day after the arms were recovered at Chittagang Urea Fertiliser Ltd (CUFL) jetty in the early hours of April 2, 2004.

The arms cache included 4,930 sophisticated firearms, 840 rocket launchers, 300 rockets, 27,020 grenades, 2,000 grenade-launching tubes, 6,392

magazines and 11.41 million bullets.

The 10 other convicts, who filed the appeals with the HC, are former director of Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) Maj Gen (ret'd) Rezzakul Haider Chowdhury, ex-director general of National Security Intelligence (NSI) Brig Gen (ret'd) Abdur Rahim, former NSI director Wing Commander (ret'd) Shahab Uddin, former NSI deputy director Maj (ret'd) Liakat Hossain, ex-NSI field officer Akbar Hossain Khan, ex-CUFL managing director Mohsin Talukder, and former CUFL general manager (admin) Enamul Hoque, Hafizur Rahman Hafiz, a local arms smuggler, Din Mohammad, who supplied workers for offloading the arms cache, and Abdus Sobhan, owner of one of the two trawlers that carried the weapons from deep sea to the CUFL jetty.

The other two condemned convicts -- Paresh Barua and former additional secretary of industries ministry Nurul Amin -- have been on the run.

Citing an appeal filed by Nizami, his lawyer Emran Siddiq said there was a Supreme Court decision that two first

information reports (FIRs) could not be filed in connection with a single incident.

Two separate FIRs had been filed in connection with the arms haul and the conviction, therefore, was without jurisdiction, he argued.

The arms were recovered from an open place, not from the possession of Nizami, who could not be tried under the Arms Act, Emran added.

Babar's lawyer Abdus Sobhan Tarafdar said the prosecution "could not prove" the charges brought against his client, but he [Babar] was convicted.

The evidence of one case had been recorded for another case, which was illegal, he claimed.

The defence could not say immediately when the HC would hold hearing on the appeals.

Earlier on February 6, the trial court sent relevant documents as death reference of the case to the HC for scrutinising the capital punishment, an HC official said.

The official added the HC might hold analogous hearing on the death reference and appeals of the convicts.

Police focus

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On Saturday, witnesses told The Daily Star that soon after the shooting of Rustam, two BCL activists were seen by his side, with one of them holding a pistol.

Through the window, one witness said, he saw Rustam lying in a pool of blood.

Standing close to the bullet-hit youth were Abdullah Al Galib, publicity secretary of RU BCL, and Selim Reza, a BCL activist and second-year student.

Selim was holding a pistol, while Galib was scolding him. "What have you done? You should have watched out."

A classmate of Rustam, a fourth-year student of political science, was also in the room.

The classmate told The Daily Star he was studying with Rustam before the two BCL men came in. Selim shot Rustam following an altercation over leadership of the hall unit BCL.

On the statements of the witnesses, Proloy Chichim, deputy commissioner, on Saturday said the authorities got a similar version.

But no action has been taken against the BCL men so far, while the witnesses are feeling insecure after being threatened not to say anything.

Abdullah Al Galib is roaming around the campus freely. However, Selim Reza has not been seen after the incident.

According to campus sources, Rustam was vying for the position of president of the hall unit BCL at the

April 10 council while Selim Hossain, a third-year law student was his contender. Selim Reza was loyal to Hossain.

Yesterday, all academic activities of the campus remained suspended for a second consecutive day as the pro-Awami League student body enforced the strike for an indefinite period.

Hundreds of BCL men organised a mass signature campaign and formed a human chain in front of the RU central library at 11:30am, demanding the immediate arrest of Rustom's killers and banning the politics of the Islami Chhatra Shibir on the campus.

They claimed RU Shibir president Ashraful Alam had masterminded all the previous attacks on BCL men at the university.

Additionally, over a hundred pro-BNP-Jamaat teachers have called on the RU VC to ensure security at dormitories and demanded a resumption of academic activities. A group of 301 BNP-Jamaat teachers condemned the Rustom killing in a press release.

Protesting the case and the arrests, RU Shibir brought out a procession in Kazla gate area. In a press release, the pro-Jamaat student organisation asked law enforcers to withdraw the case.

At least four BCL men and a Shibir leader have been killed at the RU campus since 2009, while three killings occurred on the premises of three different dormitories. Of four BCL victims, three were killed as a result of BCL infighting while one died in a Shibir attack.

Duties on tea, sugar imports increased

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Board of Revenue yesterday raised duties on tea and sugar imports to help local producers cut losses due to fall in sales.

The regulatory duties on tea imports rose to 15 percent from 5 percent, according to an NBR order. The duties on raw sugar imports went up by Tk 500 per tonne to Tk 2,000 while that of the finished sugar rose by Tk 1,500 per tonne to Tk 4,500.

The increase in the duties came into effect immediately, according to the NBR order.

Local tea traders had long been demanding a rise in the duties on

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Indians beat

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cattle lifters. The locals caught the three and beat them to death on the spot. The rest managed to escape, he added.

A battalion commander-level flag meeting between the BGB and the BSF was held at the border yesterday. At the meeting, the BSF officials assured the BGB of handing over the bodies after conducting autopsies, the BGB official said.

India goes to polls today

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Sabha from Tezpur, Jorhat, Kaliabor, Dibrugarh and Lakhimpur constituencies in Assam.

According to the Election Commission, 51 candidates are contesting today's election in Assam. The remaining nine Lok Sabha members will be elected on April 12 (three) and 24 (six).

Police and paramilitary forces have stepped up security in Assam, considering that today is the rising day of the outlawed insurgents' outfit, United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA).

"There is no specific threat for the election but we cannot take chances," said a senior official of the Assam police. As many as 240 companies of the Assam police and paramilitary forces had been deployed in the state.

Among the leading candidates in Assam are Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi's son Gourav, outgoing Congress lawmaker Bijoy Krishna Handique, federal ministers Rane Narah and Paban Singh Ghatowar.

The West Tripura Lok Sabha constituency also goes to polls today. Polling in the Tripura East constituency will be held on April 12.

Narendra Modi, the 63-year-old

prime ministerial candidate of the main opposition BJP, and his main challenger, 43-year-old Rahul Gandhi, the political heir of Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, of Congress party, have run a high-octane campaign, with many rallies across the country.

Modi, who stood from two constituencies in the holy Hindu city of Varanasi as well as Vadodara city in his home state of Gujarat, has promised to revive a \$1 trillion infrastructure programme and create jobs to put Indian economy back on faster growth track after it suffered the longest slowdown since 1980s.

While Modi has cut red tape and overseen a period of high growth in Gujarat and is considered a favourite of corporate India, details of his policy plans, popularly known as "Modinomics", at the national level remain sketchy largely due to BJP's delay in releasing its manifesto so far, unusual for a party hoping to form next government.

Reports suggest BJP is bogged down by internal bickering on a range of political and economic issues to be included in the manifesto being drafted by a committee headed by former party chief Murlis Manohar Joshi.

The delay has already given Congress, which made public its manifesto last month, a chance to Rahul Gandhi to attack the right-wing party alleging that it is divided over the document.

BJP leaders, particularly the younger lot, are reportedly upset that Joshi has not incorporated their suggestions in the manifesto.

BJP chief media coordinator Ravi Shankar Prasad on Friday, however, insisted that there were "no differences" within the party leadership over the manifesto.

Ahead of the voting, the electioneering was marred by an unseemly controversy when Modi's right-hand man Amit Shah spoke of "revenge" in Muzaffarnagar in India's politically key state of Uttar Pradesh that was hit by riots last year. His remarks on Thursday raised concerns over BJP's ability to protect India's secular traditions.

Congress charged Shah, who leads BJP's campaign in Uttar Pradesh, with making hate speeches while BJP defended it claiming that he was only asking the voters to use ballots as a weapon against a government that had "failed" to end religious violence in the state.

MONEY-LAUNDERING CASE

Mosharraf denied bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A High Court bench yesterday denied bail to detained BNP leader Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain in a money laundering case.

The Anti-Corruption Commission on February 6 sued the former health minister for siphoning off over Tk 9.53 crore to the United Kingdom.

ACC Director Nasim Anwar filed the case with Ramna Police Station, stating that the BNP leader amassed the amount between 2001 and 2006 and deposited that with a bank account in the UK.

Yesterday, the HC bench of Justice Borhanuddin and Justice KM Kamrul Kader returned the bail petition of Mosharraf to his lawyer barrister Moudud Ahmed, saying that it will not grant bail to him [Mosharraf] as there is

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AIDS prevalence

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said Nokrek at a workshop in the capital yesterday.

The study titled "Vulnerability to HIV & Aids: A social research on cross border mobile population from Bangladesh to India" was conducted under EMPHASIS, a regional project, involving Bangladesh, Nepal and India.

According to government statistics, till December 2013, 3,241 Bangladeshis were found HIV/AIDs positive, which is less than 0.1 percent of its population, whereas the HIV prevalence is 0.3 percent in India and 0.4 percent in Nepal.

"Though HIV prevalence in Bangladesh is low, its rate is higher among the mobile populations," said Abu Taher, team leader of the project.

The National Aids and STD Programme Report-2006, Bangladesh, stated that approximately 67 percent of identified HIV-positive cases in the country are returnee migrant workers and their spouses.

Abu Taher said, "There is a growing

concern that mobile populations are forming a bridge between Bangladesh and the high prevalence areas of India and Nepal".

He said it is not possible to determine the number of total Bangladeshis, who had illegally migrated to India and returned home later.

However, many Bangladeshis from the bordering districts go to India for work on better wages, but some of them get engaged in risky sexual activities, he said.

Women go to India mainly to work as housemaids, but many are forced to brothels or dance bars, which may ultimately expose them to HIV infection, Taher added.

Mirza Manbira Sultana, regional research manager of EMPHASIS project, said though labour migration has become an important development agenda, it is causing major health risks as well.

"It is imperative that the authorities immediately intervene to reduce such health risks like HIV/Aids," she said.

Priority changed

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But within just two months, the authorities prioritised establishment of a four-tier national data centre and construction of a railway-cum-road bridge across the river Karnaphuli in Kalurghat of Chittagong. The previous top two priority projects came third and fifth in the new list.

China implements projects in Bangladesh through its different companies who have the required experience in the jobs. The financier is baffled by the changes in the priority list.

"We are confused at the changes as we can't understand the real priorities of the Bangladesh government. As a result, we can't concentrate on financing the projects," said a representative of a Chinese firm.

Sources in Bangladesh and Chinese governments said a few influential lobbyists including a former minister, who have businesses with some Chinese firms, were behind the changes in the priority list. They managed officials in the finance ministry

and the ERD to charge the priority order as they have business interest in some top projects.

Talking to The Daily Star, a Chinese embassy official said they have nothing to do with the priority list as it is up to the Bangladesh government to prioritise its projects. But changes to the list might delay the financing, which in turn would affect the project tenures, he added.

Apart from the first two, the 13 other priority projects of the first list were replacement of overloaded distribution transformation for providing reliable electricity in RE system; reducing system loss by replacing 5 million Electrical Mechanical Energy Meters with Electronic Energy Meter; procurement of rescue equipment for earthquake and other disasters; strengthening of research and piloting of BINA-developed promising crop varieties; water supply, sanitation, drainage and solid waste management for small municipalities; development of national ICT Infra-

Network for the Government of Bangladesh Phase-III (Info-govt); construction of a new inland container depot (ICD) near the Dhirasram Railway Station; Dasher Kandi sewerage treatment plant; reinforcement, rehabilitation and augmentation of 33/11 KV substations under the Dhaka Power Distribution Company (DPDC); Ganges Barrage Project; Mohora water supply extension project of Chittagong WASA; development and widening of various important roads, construction of RCC-covered drain with footpath and foot bridge in Sylhet City Corporation area; and reinforcement and augmentation of 132/33 KV grid sub stations under the DPDC.

In the new list, construction of an elevated chord line from Dhaka to Comilla was included as a priority project to be implemented at a cost of \$1.5 billion.