'Action against lawmakers if graft allegations found true'

Says Obaidul Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Road Transport and Bridges Minister and Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said action will be taken against Awami League lawmakers who were facing corruption inquiry by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) if the allegations against them were proven.

"We will sack them if the allegations are proven," Quader said at a press briefing at his secretariat office yesterday, after a reporter asked him whether AL will take action against the MPs whose bank statements have been sought by the National Bureau of Revenue and against whom ACC has launched inquiries.

Asked whether the image of the government is being tarnished due to the arrests of party leaders, Quader said he does not think so.

"The government is showing courage. This [the ongoing drives] would rather brighten the image of the government and the party," he said.

Talking about the implementation of Road Transport Act-2018 from November 1 before formulation of its rules, he said the rules would not contain anything contrary to the law.

'WOULD HAVE SHOWN HER DUE RESPECT, HAD I KNOWN'

Replying to another question, Quader said he was unaware that Hasina Mohiuddin -- widow of former Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) mayor late ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury -- was "forced off the stage" at a programme in the port city which he later attended on Sunday.

"Had I been aware, I would've given her the due respect... I would've allowed her on the stage," Quader said.

CCC Mayor AJM Nasir Uddin allegedly "forced" Hasina Mohiuddin, also president of Chattogram City Mohila Awami League and mother of Deputy Minister of

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THE IRONY ... A local bus stops to pick up passengers in port city's Agrabad, right in front of a sign that reads "No vehicle should stop here", put up by the traffic department of Chattogram Metropolitan Police. A traffic police stands right next to the sign, but neither the bus driver nor commuters seem least bothered. The photo was taken from Badamtoli intersection yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

ACC summons ex-secretary over swindling expat

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has summoned a former secretary of the LGRD ministry for quizzing in connection with swindling an expatriate, a third attempt at investigation by the anti-graft body that did not bring fruit twice before, according to sources.

While he was secretary of the ministry of local government, rural development and cooperatives, Dr Proshanto Kumar Roy allegedly introduced himself as managing director of two ready-made garment companies, and took Tk 25 lakh from one Enamul Haque, an expat businessman, for investment in 2012.

Subsequently, Enamul learnt that it is illegal to carry out both government service and business at the same time, and asked the secretary to return the money. He also served a legal notice on Proshanto, in response to which the former secretary served another legal notice on the businessman, seeking Tk 5 crore for defamation.

ACC began an inquiry into the matter in 2016. At least two top-level ACC officials, inquired into the matter, which did not see any light, a source added.

ACC has now tasked deputy director Jahangir Alam with the investigation. On Sunday, Jahangir issued a letter to Proshanto for quizzing over the matter, a copy of which was obtained by The Daily Star.

The letter reads: "There are allegations of amassing wealth beyond known source of income and taking money from an Australian expatriate introducing yourself as managing directors of Denim Polymer Industries Ltd and Denim Export Processing Ltd, despite being a government official. For the sake of proper inquiry, it is necessary to record your statement over the allegation. Against the backdrop, you are requested to appear before ACC at about 10am today."

"If you fail to appear at the time to give your testimony, it will be assumed that you do not have any statement," reads the letter.

Proshanto received the letter the same day of issuance.

"The allegations against me are completely baseless," said Proshanto, when contacted.

"I have over 100 bighas of land. Each bigha will cost at least Tk one crore. Had I taken Tk 25 lakh, wouldn't I have repaid it?" he said.

About the business venture, he said he did not run a business at that time, rather he worked as a "mediator" between Enamul and Neamul Bashir, owner of Denim Polymer Industries Ltd and Denim Export Processing Ltd.

PM to brief media today

UNB, *Dhaka*

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will brief the media this afternoon on her just concluded Azerbaijan tour for attending the 18th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

"The press conference will be held at Gono Bhaban at 4pm," said the PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim.

Sheikh Hasina attended the NAM Summit on October 25-26 in Baku, capital of Azerbaijan.

She also held meetings with a number of NAM leaders, including prime ministers of Iran, Malaysia and Nepal.

During her tour, the PM held a bilateral meeting with Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev in the Presidential Palace.

After the meeting, Bangladesh signed an instrument with Azerbaijan to boost cultural ties between the two countries.

Bangladesh State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid and Azerbaijan Cultural and Tourism Minister Dr Abulfas Garayev inked the deal on behalf of their respective sides.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev witnessed the deal-signing ceremony.

Biman spreads its wings to Madina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Process is underway to spread Biman's wings to another five international destinations including Manchester, Tokyo and New York by next year, State Minister for Civil Aviation Mahbub Ali said yesterday.

The junior minister said this while inaugurating Dhaka-Madina direct flight at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. Madina is the second destination in Saudi Arabia after Jeddah.

"Another step to extend Biman Bangladesh Airlines' network has been implemented today through inauguration of Dhaka-Madina flight," Mahbub Ali said.

He also added that the ministry and other respective organisations are working to initiate Biman flights to Manchester, Tokyo, New York, Colombo and Male by 2020.

With Madina, the number of international destinations of the flag carrier is now 16, Biman sources said.

The state minister said the government has taken the decision to establish direct air connectivity with Madina because of the increasing number of pilgrims.

Besides, he said, the new route will also benefit a large number of Bangladeshi expatriate workers who are residing in Saudi Arabia.

Civil Aviation Ministry Secretary Mohibul Haque said Biman will have to concentrate on the aviation market in the

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Stop illegal use of stone crushers in Sylhet: speakers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Sylhet*

Adequate steps must be taken to immediately shut down illegal use of stone crushing machines in Sylhet to protect public health and environment, said speakers yesterday.

They were speaking at a discussion at a seminar hall in Sylhet city. Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (Bela) in association with Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency organised the event.

Speakers said a High Court order of January 2017 ordered the government to remove all unauthorised stone crushers from Sylhet and shift those to a separate zone. The order was supposed to be implemented within three months but the administration is yet to do so, they said.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bela, said illegal operation of stone extraction and using such machines must be stopped. There are at least 2,000 stone crushing machines operating in six upazilas of Sylhet. Most are run illegally, she added.

M Kazi Emdadul Islam, deputy commissioner of Sylhet, said, "Bangladesh imports 80 percent of the stones used, but crushing is mostly done in the country. Stone extraction and crushing must be stopped and the country should import stone in crushed form. Workers of this sector should also be rehabilitated."

Bela Regional Coordinator Shah Shaheda Akhter presented the keynote speech. Bapa Sylhet district unit vice-president Shahidul Islam Sahin also spoke at the event.

Pabna univ students boycott class, exam

Demand withdrawal of show-cause notices against 3 teachers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

A group of Pabna University of Science and Technology students yesterday besieged the administrative building, demanding withdrawal of show-cause notices issued against three teachers over their "controversial" remarks on social media.

Boycotting the day's classes and examinations, over hundred students shouted slogans against the vice chancellor and staged demonstration for three hours, starting around 10am.

On Saturday, university authorities issued the notices, bringing allegation that the teachers' comments on Facebook had defamed VC M Rostom Ali.

The teachers -- Kamrul Hasan of urban and regional

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Asset DEVELOPMENTS

Students of Viqarunnisa Noon School and College hold up colourful signs to raise awareness about climate change.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

No pollution the only solution

Viqarunnisa students rally for awareness

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Students of Viqarunnisa Noon School and College (VNSC) yesterday rallied to raise awareness on climate change.

Over 300 students along with their teachers paraded the school campus in the capital, chanting slogans like, "No pollution, the only solution" and "Pollution-free is the way to be."

During the 30-minute programme, they formed a human chain around the school, holding banners with slogans reminding people consequences of indifference to pollution.

"The young generation will have to face the consequences of the pollution caused by industrialisation and urbanisation in the name of development. We want to stand against this," said Nuzhat Nusaiba, a ninth-grader at the school.

Another student Samahat Nubah said, "Change comes from within. We are starting from our place of education which is close to our hearts. We are sure we can bring change and make our future better if we are together."

VNSC Principal Fouzia Rezwan along with other teachers attended the programme.

HARASSMENT AT DHAKA AIRPORT

Contact magistrate, police right away: CAAB chairman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman yesterday assured that immediate action will be taken if any passenger faces harassment or suffering at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA).

The CAAB boss made the remark at a public hearing programme on improving the standard of service to passengers at HSIA.

Top officials of HSIA and different airlines were present at the programme to give prompt reply to complaints.

Delay in collecting luggage, baggage getting lost, and theft of valuable items from suitcases are common allegations by passengers who have travelled through HSIA.

The CAAB chairman requested passengers to get assistance from executive magistrate or members of law enforcement agencies at the airport if they face these issues.

"We want safe journey. We want safe airport. But sometimes people like us face different types of sufferings," said Shahidul Alam, a Saudi-bound passenger.

In reply, the CAAB chairman said, "Sufferings of passengers have reduced in recent times. We are working sincerely to reduce it further. Apart from some exceptions, we have brought positive change in the service quality."

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