

OIC Secy-Gen Qatar enthusiastic about Bangladesh's candidature

UNB, Dhaka

Qatar has made "enthusiastic response" in support of Bangladesh's candidature for the post of OIC (Organisation of Islamic Conference) Secretary General.

The response came from outgoing Ambassador of Qatar in Dhaka Abdullah Al Mana following a request by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday.

Khaleda Zia requested the ambassador to extend his country's support to Bangladesh's candidature when he made a farewell call on her at the PM's office in the afternoon.

Qatar is now the current Chairperson of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

Bangladesh has nominated Salauddin Quader Chowdhury MP, the PM's Parliamentary Affairs Advisor, as candidate for the OIC Secretary General.

Laying emphasis on the unity of Muslim Ummah, the prime minister called for making the OIC more active and stronger, assuring Bangladesh's continued strong support and cooperation to that effect.

The prime minister also requested Qatar to increase investment in Bangladesh and expand the trade volume. In this regard, she mentioned various incentive packages and facilities offered to foreign investors.

She told the envoy that

Bangladesh produces good quality jute, ceramics, pharmaceuticals and agricultural products.

The prime minister also requested the ambassador for his assistance in promoting more manpower export from Bangladesh to Qatar where some 60,000 Bangladeshi workers are currently employed in various fields.

Both Khaleda and Al Mana hoped that the existing excellent relations between the two countries in various fields, particularly trade and investment, would further deepen and expand.

Bilateral, regional and international issues also featured in the discussion.

The prime minister said she would take the initiative to arrange a Bangladesh trade fair in Doha following a request by the ambassador in that regard.

The prime minister congratulated Qatar for introducing a newly framed constitution in the country.

The ambassador praised the progress Bangladesh achieved in various sectors under the leadership of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. He hoped the advancement would continue and wished her success.

The prime minister conveyed her greetings to Amir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani and the Prime Minister of Qatar, and invited them to visit Bangladesh.

PM's Principal Secretary Dr Kamal Siddiqui was present during the meeting.



PHOTO: STAR

The Central Road has become a commuter's nightmare with most of it dug-up and left unattended.

Two newspapers

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mouthpiece Dainik Dinkal, carried the same item. Following is the list of the papers with their headlines:

1. Janakantha: 'Withdraw name of SQ Chy from OIC Secretary General post'

2. Prothom Alo: Request for withdrawal of SQ Chowdhury's nomination for OIC Secretary General post'

3. Ittefaq: Awami League opposes nomination of Salauddin Quader Chy for OIC Secretary General post

4. Bhorer Kagoj: Awami League's protest by giving letter to the prime minister

5. Jugantor: Awami League's hard stance against SQ Chy's nomination

6. Inquilab: Withdraw nomination of OIC secretary general

7. Banglabazar Patrika: Demand to withdraw SQ Chowdhury's nomination for OIC Secretary General post

8. Dainik Dinkal: Nomination of OIC Secretary General— Sheikh Hasina's letter to the Prime Minister (UNB)

9. Aiker Kagoj: Withdraw nomination of SQ Chy from OIC Secretary General post

10. Sangbad: Awami League's letter to the Prime Minister

11. The Bangladesh Observer: OIC Secy-Gen: AL requests PM to cancel nomination of SQ Chowdhury (UNB)

12. The Bangladesh Today: AL's letter to PM: Request for changing nomination of SQ Chy (UNB)

13. News Today: AL sends letter to PM: Cancel SQ Chy's nomination

14. The Daily Star: AL sends letter to govt to drop SQ Chy from OIC job race

BNP leaders

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all newspapers, but SQ Chowdhury filed the case against only two editors.

It is quite surprising that other newspapers have not been included in the case, they pointed out.

They further said filing of the case with Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil as a co-accused was a suicidal error, particularly because Chowdhury tried to align the two popular newspapers with the opposition party.

Sources said most of the BNP policymakers expressed their dissatisfaction over the filing of the case and saw it as an attempt to harass the prominent editors that would push the two major dailies towards the AL camp.

Several policymakers of the BNP said almost all the newspapers carried the report on the AL's letter to the government and are still reporting against the nomination (for OIC secretary general) of a "most controversial" man having an anti-liberation background.

They said it was not wise for the party leadership to permit SQ Chowdhury to go for legal action against the two editors, respected both at home and abroad.

Talking to The Daily Star, a front-ranking BNP leader said, on condition of anonymity, "I do not understand who is running the party. Nor do I know who has advised SQ Chowdhury to file such a silly case against the two editors and the AL general secretary... have they thought of its future implications?"

He said some anti-liberation elements in the BNP have long been engaged in provoking the opposition, media and civil society, causing serious damage to the image of the party.

The leaders said people would definitely think that the case was an attempt to undermine the freedom of press.

Symphony: Saifur

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programme that would not lead to runaway inflation.

More credit flow to the private sector will be a key challenge, as investment stagnated this fiscal. This is also linked to a bulk of cross-cutting issues -- institutional reforms being one of them; making credit less costly and turning the wheels of production smoothly by snapping the red tape are among others.

Understandably, Saifur has reasons to feel sprightly. Macroeconomic indicators show well for him. A year ago, when the revenue target was set 20 per cent higher for this fiscal, many were sceptical. Eleven months down the line, the target has been surpassed by Tk 11 crore with the growth mark reached.

Saifur has already fielded a bloated ADP for next fiscal. At Tk 20,300 crore, he banked on availability of funds from the World Bank and the IMF to shift to this high ADP growth of 19 per cent from this fiscal's revised ADP. Spending on prioritised and quality projects would give the needed growth boost. Otherwise, as Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud has pointed out, the "Dutch Disease" syndrome might surface.

Now, all this stability had been achieved on the low level of equilibrium, as Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya said. But the scenario will unfold in a different way when the gear shifts upward. There comes the chance to prove finesse in balancing inflation, borrowing, fiscal deficit, credit expansion, ADP implementation and export drive.

On the back of the thick of the statistical mist come the reforms -- already done and to be done. Saifur had been bold enough to privatise a number of loss-making state-owned enterprises and shut down the Adamjee Jute Mills. More to come. And more have been agreed upon with the donors as part of the financing deal. The wide-ranging reforms are awaiting the nationalised commercial banks, one of them to be privatised. In presenting the budget, Saifur will have to tell the nation what more are there on the agenda, some of which are likely to draw flak from those at the receiving end.

The next year will prove how successfully Saifur can conduct the orchestra of reforms and management to create the investment symphony.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) had a little to contribute to this picture. Till February of this fiscal, \$26 million flowed in as FDI, which is 37 per cent lower than that of the same period of last fiscal. Last fiscal's FDI was then again 62 per cent lower than the previous year's.

But here also lies a challenge. Saifur has to think ways and implement them to put exports on a fast track. If that cannot be achieved, the fiscal balance will come under fresh strains and investment too. Then Saifur has to look inward and support the import substitute industries. That is also linked to an effective demand growth, more strongly in

BSS news editor Delwar Hossain dead

BSS, Dhaka

Mohammad Delwar Hossain, a News Editor of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), died of cardiac arrest yesterday. He was 53.

A valiant freedom fighter, Delwar Hossain, felt pain in the chest at around 1:30 pm his residence at Mirpur. He was rushed to Heart Foundation Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

Delwar left behind his three daughters, wife, six brothers, a sister and a host of friends and relatives.

The first namaj-e-janaza for Delwar was held at Uttar Kafur Jame Mosque after Asr prayers while the second at the National Press Club after Maghreb prayers.

Delwar's body was taken to his village home at Gazaria in Munshiganj for burial.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has expressed profound shock at the death of Delwar Hossain.

In a message yesterday, the prime minister expressed deep sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for peace of the departed soul.

Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) yesterday expressed profound shock at the death of senior journalist Delwar Hossain.

In a condolence message, DUJ President Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan and General Secretary Omar Faruque expressed deep sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for peace of the departed soul.

Chairman of the Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) Quamrul Islam Chowdhury and General Secretary Mofizur Rahman have expressed deep shock at the death of Delwar Hossain founding member of FEJB.

They conveyed their deep sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

Cop injured in bomb attack in city

UNB, Dhaka

A policeman was injured in a bomb attack by some youths on the city's English Road yesterday.

Police said Sergeant Rafiqul Islam challenged two youths as they were crossing the road in a motorcycle at around noon and seized the vehicle.

Later, a group of five youths appeared on the scene and hurled bombs at the police that left Constable Shahiqlul Islam injured.

The youths also took away the motorcycle.

Major parties

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cess mandatory.

The parties that have applied for registration so far are Jatiya Party (Ersahd), Jatiya Party (Monju), Bangladesh Jatiya Party (Naziur), Bangladesh Muslim League, Bangladesh Krishak Shramik Awami League, Bangladesh Liberal Democratic Party, Jaker Party, Krishak Shramik Janata League, Muslim League, Jatiya Janata Party, Samridha Bangladesh Andolon, Islami Shikkhatantrik Dal, Ganatantri Party, Bangladesh Progressive Party, Liberal Democrats' Party, Bangladesh Janata Party, Islami Front, Jatiya Tanti Dal, Khelafat Andolon, Social Democratic Party, Quran Sunnat Bastabayan Party, Gano Congress, People's Freedom Party, Forward Party, Islamic Front, Islami Shasantantra Andolon, People's Action Party and Bangladesh Labour Party.

Editor of Daily Star

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The court said it would give order upon reviewing relevant documents and statement of the plaintiff.

At this stage, Chowdhury's counsels and party workers created chaos, demanding immediate issuance of warrants. The court later gave the orders verbally.

The two editors along with their lawyer Dr Kamal Hossain and the AL leader along with his lawyer Barrister M Amir Ul Islam appeared before the court at 5:00pm and sought bail.

During the bail hearing, Dr Kamal said the case was filed as part of an attempt to harass them professionally. The case itself is a violation of the freedom of the press, he said.

"The sections under which the case has been filed were enacted in the 19th century and no warrant could be issued under those," he said, pointing out that a procedure to change those was underway.

Dr Kamal said the case stemmed from a letter written to the prime minister by the general secretary of the largest opposition party and a legislator with the suggestion of cancelling the nomination of Chowdhury for the secretary general of the OIC.

The two editors have run the news along with extracts from the letter, said Dr Kamal. "What is the crime here?" the prominent lawyer asked, adding the people had the rights to know the content of the letter.

He stressed that the editors had upheld people's right to know and performed their professional duty for which they should be commended.

Making his submission for Jalil, Barrister Islam pointed out that the plaintiff did not send any rejoinder to the newspapers after publication of the stories.

"He did not make any comment on part of the news about his controversial role during the Liberation War. Not only The Daily Star and the Prothom Alo, but other newspapers also mentioned that and are still continuing to do so," he said.

After hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Emdadul Haq granted them bail on a bond of Tk 20,000 with two guarantors for each.

Earlier, the magistrate took the case into cognisance upon hearing statements of Chowdhury and issued a bailable warrant of arrest against them.

"The AL has taken the lease of patriotism. We're aware of terrorism on streets. Now we have terrorism by the media. To protest information terrorism, I have taken this legal step," Chowdhury told the press after filing the case.

On June 3, The Daily Star along with 13 other newspapers published the AL general secretary's letter. Some newspapers published its full text, while others, including The Daily Star, carried relevant extracts. But the defamation case was lodged only against the two newspapers.

After getting the bail, the AL general secretary said, "No-one

Textbooks

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curriculum research and development wing, the textbook approval authority (TAA) and the printing and distribution wing.

Having a separate TAA would help produce quality textbooks, the experts said.

9 criminals

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creating panic in the neighbourhood.

OC Mustafizur Rahman received bullet in one hand as he went forward and encircled the criminals.

The criminals were however overpowered by police who arrested Yunus, and his accomplices Atiquzzaman, Pintu, Nizamuddin, Shaiful Islam, Akhter Hossain, Sabbir Hossain, Rajiv and Mintu Kumar Sarker.

Police also seized two firearms, including an LG, 12 bullets and 700 bottles of pshensidyl.

Local people, who have long been terrorised by Yunus and his gang, welcomed their arrest.

Hartal today

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and the AL secretary held at the party's Dhanmondi office on Tuesday night.

AL Organising Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury, however, said the hartal call had nothing to do with the budget session of the parliament and hinted at the AL's launching a separate movement, should the government present an anti-people budget.

The hartal call came on the heels of the recent killing of a former AL lawmaker and Natore district unit leader Momtaz Uddin Ahmed and an attack on former lawmaker and whip Mujibul Haq in Comilla.

The AL is not attending today's budget session.

Sheikh Hasina, the party president, is scheduled to return home on June 14 and chair a meeting of the AL parliamentary party to decide whether or not to join the rest of the budget session.

The AL held a workers' meeting

will be able to suppress us by filing cases."

"We will continue our legal fight and our activities regarding the OIC nomination will go on. We will support the government in all respects if a person acceptable to people is nominated for the post," he said.

The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam said, "For free, responsible and patriotic journalism, I will do whatever necessary."

The Daily Star published part of the letter like many other newspapers, Anam added. "We ran the story to fulfil our commitment to people's right to know and to uphold the spirit of responsible journalism. But it's a matter of surprise that the case was filed against The Daily Star and the Prothom Alo," he said.

Traditionally, people come up with rejoinders, if newspapers carry misleading information. But the case is an exception, Anam said. "I think it is a threat to press freedom."

After getting the bail, Editor of the Prothom Alo Motiur Rahman said Chowdhury went straight to the court without sending any explanation or rejoinder to the newspapers. The normal process is to inform the newspaper before going to the court if wrong information is carried, said the Prothom Alo editor.

"It's a clear case of harassing the free press," said Rahman, who also vowed to continue the legal fight for free journalism.

He said that as a journalist it was his duty to publish news. Personally, he thought Chowdhury's nomination for the OIC post was not proper.

Advocates Syed Rezaur Rahman, Sahara Khatun, Syed Ahmed Gazi, Abdul Haq Bhuiyan, Monjur Alam, Jobaidul Islam and Newazul Bari and a large number of lawyers appeared for the accused.

Advocates Sanaulah Mia, M Masud Ahmed Talukdar, Additional Public Prosecutor of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court Golam Mostafa Khan, Md Khorshed Alam and Md Ali appeared for the plaintiff.

Youth shot by muggers at Gandaria

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Muggers yesterday shot a youth at Sutrapur as he had no money with him.

The incident took place when Monirul Islam, a madrasah student, was returning home at Satish Sarker Lane from an adjacent mosque in Gandaria after Fazr prayers.

Three armed muggers halted Monirul and asked for money thirty yards from his residence. He told them he had no money.

Angered at this, one of them shot him in his abdomen and fled the scene leaving him in a pool of blood.

Locals took him to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Sutrapur police said no case was filed or none was arrested in this connection.

Audit objections

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month after 19 months of dilly-dallying, and those are yet to hold any meeting. And, 629 audit reports and 149 accounts-related reports are calling for the attention of the current committees.

The Committee on Estimates is supposed to prepare budget proposal and scrutinise the budget details put forward by various government departments and organisations. But it remains virtually inactive. In the seventh Jatiya Sangsad, this committee's task was confined to reviewing the approved macro-level budgets of various development projects.

Similarly, the Committee on Public Undertakings has failed to play any active role in curbing corruption and irregularities in government organisations.

BNP killing

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of Natore and attack on Mujibul Haq of Comilla are part of the BNP plan to crush its opponents.

The leaders were addressing the opening session of the Triennial Council of the Dhaka Bar unit of Bangladesh Awami Ainjibi Parishad, a forum of lawyers backed by the AL.

General Secretary of the party Abdul Jalil reiterated his party's opposition to the nomination of Salauddin Quader Chowdhury for the post of secretary general of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

Salauddin Quader opposed the Liberation War and he has a questionable past, Jalil said. "As per my party decision, I have sent a letter to the prime minister opposing his nomination", he added.

Barrister Amirul Islam said, "We are living in a society where collaborators of Pakistani occupation forces during the Liberation War file cases for calling them Razakar (collaborator)".

Acting AL President Zillur Rahman was the chief guest at the council. It was addressed by party leader Amir Hossain Amu, Rahamat Ali, Abdul Baset Majumder, Wazer Faruk, Syed Rezaur Rahman, Mohammad Israilil and Mir Habibur Rahman.

Suicide bombing

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Palestinian terrorism which must be stopped immediately by the Palestinian Authority."

The spasm of violence came as Israel defended itself against a rare US rebuke for its attempted killing of Rantissi.

Sharon had ordered aides to turn over intelligence to US officials to back accusations that Rantissi, the public face of the radical Islamic group Hamas, had been coordinating attacks on Israelis.

"This information is intended to show that Rantissi was not just a ticking bomb but a factory of ticking bombs," a senior Israeli security source said.

Blix

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their discovery in Iraq of cluster bombs and drones in the run-up to the US-led war.

Blix, who retires in three weeks, told The Guardian that he is convinced that there are people in Bush's administration "who say they don't care if the UN sinks under the East river, and other crude things."

Rather than seeing the UN as a collective body of decision-making states, Blix said Washington viewed it as an "alien power, even if it does hold considerable influence within it."

Blix said he "remained agnostic" when asked if he believed weapons of mass destruction (WMD) would ever be found in Iraq.

He said the prospect of them being uncovered was passing by "quite fast and instead of talking about (finding) WMD they're talking about the programmes. We know for sure that they did exist ... and we cannot exclude they (the coalition) may find something."

Taskforce proposes Tk 845 cr fund to combat Hepatitis-B

BSS, Dhaka

A taskforce of the National Steering Committee on prevention and control of Hepatitis-B handed over a draft policy to Minister for Health and Family Welfare Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain at his office here yesterday.

The draft policy proposed a budgetary allocation of Tk 845.21 crore to implement the countrywide Hepatitis-B immunisation programme for people of up to 29 years of age, an official hands out said.

The policy proposed that Tk 283.07 crore of the total amount be earmarked for immunisation of children of up to five years of age, Tk 4.53 crore for awareness programme and Tk 1.53 crore for the baseline survey.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain said the draft policy would soon be finalised after review. "Such a policy will greatly help in getting assistance from the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) to control and prevent Hepatitis-B virus in the country," he said.

State Minister for Health Mizanur Rahman Sinha, Health Secretary Md. Fazlur Rahman, senior officials concerned and leaders of Bangladesh Medical Association were present.

Welfare land

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tee Chairman Delwar Hossain Saidee of Jamaat-e-Islami, was attended by State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharraf Hossain Shahjahan and other members from the ruling alliance and Jatiya Party (Ershad).

The Awami League has no representative in this body.



PHOTO: STAR

Trade unionists of the Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation yesterday protest against the decision to stop coach service to the northern region.