

Mufti Hannan

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Sayem near the Bashundhara project on September 19, 2003.

On completion of the five-day remand, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) produced them with the help of the Rapid Action Battalion before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka with a prayer for a 10-day remand.

Hannan and Mafiz were on remand in connection with the killing of Arif alias Dil on November 5, 2001 while Mizan in connection with the bomb attacks on CPB grand rally at Paltan on January 20, 2001, and was placed on 14 days' remand in two phases.

Moreover, Hannan was remanded for 120 days' in connection with the cases filed with different police stations in the city for bomb blasts across the country on August 17 last year.

On the other hand, CID Inspector and IO of the CPB bomb blast case Syed Momen Hossain said Mizan gave important information on the bomb blasts and the information was being verified.

Therefore, he should be confined in the jail custody until the investigation completes, the IO said.

In the yesterday's forwarding report of the Badda double murder, CID Inspector and IO Abdul Baten said Hannan and two others were directly involved in the killings. They, along with their accomplices, killed the victims and dumped the bodies into a canal adjacent to the Bashundhara project. So, they need to be questioned to find out the clues to the killings and whereabouts of their accomplices, the IO added.

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Caretaker chief

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advisers, keeping the vital ones under his control.

He holds the Chief Adviser's Office, Armed Forces Division, Cabinet Division, EC Secretariat, NGO Affairs Bureau, defence, establishment, foreign affairs, home and education ministries and Bangladesh Public Service Commission.

Butenis meets JP

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four-party alliance if all the parties and alliances participate in the next polls.

Butenis met former president Ershad as part of her continuous talks with major party leaders about the political situation in the country and the general elections. Earlier, she met Awami League President Sheikh Hasina and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

During the meeting, Ershad told Butenis that his party would participate in the coming elections and will help the caretaker government hold a free and fair election.

Jatiya Party (JP) Secretary General Ruhul Amin Hawlader and Vice-chairman Golam Moshir were also present during the meeting.

Following the meeting, Butenis told reporters, "I hope all the political parties participate in next election."

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Patricia Butenis also met Jamaat-e-Islami chief Matiur Rahman Nizami yesterday and urged all political parties not to resort to violence.

"I don't think any problem can be resolved through violence," she told reporters after almost an hour-long meeting at the Jamaat central office.

Iranian Ambassador to Bangladesh Mohammad Beheshti

After hearing both sides, Metropolitan Magistrate Towfiq Alam placed Hannan, Mafiz and Mizan on an eight-day remand.

Earlier on September 10 and 16, Hannan, Mafiz and Mizan were shown arrested in the Ramna Balamul blast case and a court placed them on a 13-day remand.

On September 19 and 21, Hannan and Mafiz were shown arrested in connection with the bomb blasts at the rally of Communist Party of Bangladesh at Paltan on January 20, 2001, and was placed on 14 days' remand in two phases.

Moreover, Hannan was remanded for 120 days' in connection with the cases filed with different police stations in the city for bomb blasts across the country on August 17 last year.

Teachers

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operate, ignoring 7000 other institutes.

On his last day as minister on October 29, Farruk approved the establishment and operations of East Delta University in Chittagong, owned by former livestock and fisheries minister Abdullah Al Noman and Dhaka-based ASA University, owned by an NGO, ASA. It had been decided earlier not to allow any new private universities or institutes to operate.

BNP cadres have captured the governing bodies of all schools, colleges, technology institutes and madrasas and they will try to engineer the next general election, Quazi Faruque said.

"Through issuing an ordinance, the caretaker government should remove all the governing bodies within seven days and give the responsibility to the deputy commissioners and upazila nirbahi officers (UNOs) for ensuring free and fair election," he added.

NFTE leaders Azizul Islam, Prof Asadul Haq, Prof MA Sattar, Prof Mohammad Ali Chowdhury Manik, SMA Jalil and Prof Sirajul Haq Alo were present at the conference among others.

Meanwhile, NFTE will hold a representatives' meeting of six divisions in the capital on November 9 instead of holding a grand rally.

Monfared also met the JP chief later at his office. They discussed issues of bilateral interest and international issues, a JP leader told reporters. They also discussed holding the next elections in Bangladesh in free, fair and impartial manner.

Ershad met Khaleda on Wednesday and discussed the terms and conditions of his joining the BNP-led coalition. BNP Senior Secretary General Tarique Rahman also held a meeting with Ershad on Tuesday. The JP chairman is taking his time to discuss the matter with his party leaders. He told reporters that discussions are going on before a final decision is made.

Meanwhile, the extended meeting of JP scheduled for November 4 and 5 has been suspended until further notice. A fresh date for the meeting would be announced later, a party press release said. JP district unit presidents and general secretaries were supposed to join the meeting. JP sources said the meeting was suspended due to the current volatile political situation.

Amnesty

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Asking for impartial and immediate investigations into recent acts of killing, arson, ransacking of homes, shops and offices and targeted political violence, the world's largest human rights organisation said these reported incidents of violence strongly demonstrate the need for human rights to be the cornerstone for political programmes.

"All political parties must promptly address every report of involvement of their members in these acts of violence and cooperate fully with measures to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice," the AI said in a public statement on Wednesday.

The AI also noted that during a recent public briefing to all political parties on the crucial role they can play to stop human rights violation in Bangladesh, it had recommended that all the parties take responsibility for preventing their members from committing human rights abuses and bring to justice anyone involved, regardless of their party affiliation.

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Ershad may join

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JP (Ershad) was a component of the four-party alliance when it was formed in 1999, but the former military ruler quit it in April 2001, several months before the last general election.

Meanwhile, Ershad yesterday said his party is preparing to participate in the next general elections.

He was talking to reporters following a meeting with US Ambassador to Bangladesh Patricia Butenis at his Banani office.

Butenis met Ershad as part of her continued talks with leaders of major parties about the political situation in the country and the general elections. Earlier, she met Awami League President Sheikh Hasina and BNP chief Khaleda Zia.

Ershad told Butenis that his party would contest the upcoming elections and will help the caretaker government hold free and fair polls.

Ruhul Hawlader and JP Vice-chairman Golam Moshir were also present at the meeting.

Later, Butenis told newsmen, "I hope all the political parties will participate in the next election."

The US ambassador also met Jamaat-e-Islami chief Matiur Rahman Nizami yesterday, and urged all political parties not to resort to violence.

"I don't think any problem can be resolved through violence," she told reporters after almost an hour-long meeting at the Jamaat central office.

Iranian Ambassador to Bangladesh Mohammad Beheshti Monfared also met the JP chief later at his office. They discussed issues of bilateral interest and international issues, a JP leader told reporters. They also discussed holding the next elections in Bangladesh in free, fair and impartial manner, a JP leader told reporters.

BNP-led

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at the presidium office of the party.

LDP also questioned why the chief adviser (CA) holds the vital ministries and departments that are to play a pivotal role in holding a free and fair election. "What's the reason behind this? Doesn't he have confidence in all his advisers or couldn't he find anyone competent for the posts?"

"What Mannan Bhuiyan said after the 14-party combine placed the 11-point demand to the chief adviser was beyond his authority," said Badruddoza, adding he (Mannan Bhuiyan) was not asked to reply on that as 14-party did not place their demands to Mannan Bhuiyan.

"We are confused and suspect if they are running the caretaker government," said a sceptic LDP chief, also a former president.

LDP demands termination of the chief election commissioner, the three other election commissioners and the secretary to the EC immediately and reconstituting the Election Commission.

LDP also demands termination, punishment and transfer of the police officers who went overboard with their abuse of power during the demonstration programmes of the opposition parties in the last five years.

Maj (Retd) Abdul Mannan and Feroz M Hassan were present among others at the press conference.

Contracts, projects

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activities and get their priorities right, observed Akbar Ali, a former cabinet and finance secretary.

He said the government expenditure is more than its revenues and for this, the caretaker government will spend on a priority basis over the next three months.

"Our main objective is to leave a stable economy for the next government," he added.

He said not for mere three days, rather for the next three months the caretaker government should be under strict watch so that it can perform its duties properly.

"An elected government is accountable to the people who evaluate its [government's] performance through election," said the adviser adding, "As we are not an elected one, we should be kept under some kind of surveillance by the political parties and the people at large."

Asked about the skyrocketing prices of essentials, he said he is hopeful the prices will come down shortly.

"I am lucky to be in charge at a time when various seasonal vegetables are becoming available in the market and this will obviously help to reduce the prices," he said.

CEC to consider

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commissioners are constitutional posts and we have been appointed through a special process," Aziz told reporters at his office yesterday.

"We have been working based on that process and our work will continue until the election is over," he said, hinting at his unwillingness to resign, when newsmen asked about his reaction over some caretaker government advisers' opinions in favour of reconstituting the Election Commission (EC).

"This is a constitutional post and I believe all the advisers know that fact. There are some rules that should be followed here," he said.

"I do not believe that the advisers think the disputes relating to the EC would be removed if I resign," he said, adding, "I cannot say anything beyond the constitution and they should not also."

"If the advisers request me to resign, I will consider their request," the CEC, however, said after a while. "But so far, there has been no contact between the caretaker government and me," he said.

"How can you say a free and fair

Akbar reached his secretariat office at about 9:30am yesterday and met secretaries of finance division, commerce and telecommunications and some other high officials.

The other advisers of the caretaker government too formally began their work yesterday. They were allocated portfolios on Wednesday night.

Senior officials made courtesy calls on them.

Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury, adviser for power, energy and mineral resources, entered the secretariat at 10:00am. He told reporters that first he will try to understand how much could be done during this short period and set his plan of actions accordingly.

Information, Water Resources and Religious Affairs Adviser Mahbulul Alam and Health and Family Welfare Adviser Prof (Emeritus) Sufia Rahman also talked to the press on their first day in office.

They said they will remain busy mostly with the election-related activities during the 90-day period.

election is not possible under my authority?" the CEC threw a counter question to the reporters who referred to observations of different political parties and civil society groups.

The CEC declined to comment on how long it will take to print the updated voter lists with photos of the voters.

Asked if he thinks that the election will be a meaningful and fair one in case the 14-party combine boycotts the election, Aziz said, "This is a hypothetical question and its answer would also be hypothetical." But he did not say the answer.

On clean candidates, Aziz said, "Those who will nominate the candidates four-know better than us who is honest and who is not. They also know about the income and expenditure of their candidates. The Anti-Corruption Commission also has better mechanism to find out the information."

He expressed dissatisfaction over a flurry of questions from the newsmen. "I will inform you if I have something new," he told the reporters.

Jail Killing Day today

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and AHM Qamaruzzaman, minister for home affairs, relief and rehabilitation, were gunned down inside the Dhaka Central Jail.

The day is known as the 'Jail Killing Day'.

Only 79 days after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family on August 15, 1975, the power usurpers took the desperate bid.

A murder case was filed with Lalbagh Police Station the following day, but the then government halted the process of trial by promulgating an ordinance that indemnified the assassins which apparently blocked the investigation and trial of the killings for about 21 years until the law was scrapped during 1996-2001 Awami League rule.

The trial was also delayed due to judicial tangles.

On October 20, 2004, a Dhaka court sentenced three to death, awarded life imprisonment to 12 and acquitted five in the long-awaited verdict of the historic Jail Killing Case.

Those to walk the gallows are resalder (ret'd) Muslemuddin, dafadar (dismissed) Marfat Ali Shah and dafadar (dismissed) Abdul Hashem Mridha, all on the run.

Former BNP lawmaker KM Obaidur Rahman, Shah Moazzem Hossain, Nurul Islam Monzoor, Taheruddin Thakur and additional secretary of foreign ministry Khairuzaman, who were freed on bail soon after the BNP-led four-party coalition came to power, were relieved of the charges.

Three of the 12 awarded life term imprisonment — Lt Col (dismissed) Syed Faruk Rahman, Lt Col (ret'd) Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan and former (ret'd) Bazul Huda — were sentenced to death in Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman murder case.

Call for removal

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Medical University (BSMMU) on November 17 transparent and fair.

Terminating the vice chancellor (VC), pro vice chancellor and treasurer of the BSMMU 'partisan' and 'corrupt', the SCP said they should be replaced by honest and competent persons.

Reading out a written statement, Iqbal Arslan alleged that the VC was directly involved in the incident of setting fire to his office room on Saturday and demanded proper investigation.

Besides, complaints against Dab General Secretary AZM Jahid Hossain must also be probed, he said.

The SCP demanded restructuring the 'corrupt' and 'politically influenced' administration in Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH), Red Crescent Holy Family Medical College and Hospital, Dhaka Shishu Hospital, Dhaka National Medical College and Hospital and different private hospitals.

Advisers for EC

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thinking about the legal aspects in this regard," he added.

Adviser M Azizul Haque told reporters that the caretaker government cannot force the CEC out of his office but can request him to resign. "The chief election commissioner issue should be handled in line with the constitution as there are some barriers," he said.

The advisers' desire to make the EC effective echoed the longstanding demand of major political parties and the civil society.

CEC MA Aziz, meanwhile, told reporters yesterday that he would consider if the advisers ask him to resign from his post.

The advisers' council meeting also discussed issues of reshuffling the administration and improving law and order, and focused on creating an environment acceptable to all political parties for the polls within next 15-20 days.

"We will have to create a level playing field to ensure participation of all political parties in the next parliamentary elections," Adviser Dhiraj Kumar Nath said.

On improving law and order, Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Hasan Mashud Chowdhury told reporters, "We will keep continuing vigilance on the law and order situation."

Sources said adviser Dr Akbar Ali Khan proposed forming separate committees on reshuffling of administration, and law and order.

At the meeting President and Chief Adviser Prof Iajuddin Ahmed asked the advisers to work efficiently and the advisers also assured him of their dedication to run the ministries assigned to them.

On the first day in office yesterday, a number of advisers expressed determination to remain free from any corruption.

THE WAY EC BECAME CONTROVERSIAL

Since his appointment to the post on May 23 last year, CEC Aziz locked horns with the then two election commissioners over preparing a fresh voter list ignoring High Court directives. The Supreme Court finally declared the draft of the controversial fresh voter roll illegal.

As the two election commissioners had been strongly opposing preparation of the fresh voter list, the government in a hasty move appointed justices Mahfuzur Rahman and SM Zakaria as election commissioners on January 16 this year apparently for CEC Aziz to win majority in the commission.

From the very first day at office, the newly appointed election commissioners supported Aziz's move to prepare the fresh voter list, the draft of which was published on May 3. The draft list prepared at a cost of over Tk 40 crore rolled 9.13 crore voters which triggered enormous controversy over its accuracy.

On May 23, the Supreme Court cancelled the draft.

The EC later updated the existing voter list—this time also amid wide-spread controversy—and came up with a staggering 9.32 crore voters giving rise to doubts over its accuracy.

The EC is yet to complete the printing of the updated voter list.

Prof Yunus

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Prof Yunus returned home on Tuesday after a two-week visit to South Korea, China and Japan. He expressed satisfaction over performance of the chief adviser.

"He is doing a wonderful job. I will give him an A+ for what he has done," Yunus commented on Iajuddin Ahmed.

Shibir leader

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venue at same time.

According to our Noakhali correspondent, 20 people were injured as two factions of local BNP clashed at Soniamuri upazila headquarters yesterday.

Witnesses said the clash erupted when the supporters of Barkat Ullah Bulu, former adviser to the women and children affairs ministry, attacked a rally of the supporters of former lawmaker M Hashem at about 3:30pm.

The injured are undergoing treatment at upazila health complex and clinics.

Local administration imposed Section 144 in and around the upazila headquarters to avert further clash. Additional police have been deployed.

Hasina

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polls. And the caretaker government will have to accomplish all these tasks neutrally," Hasina said in a press statement.

The AL chief said the caretaker government will have to make the voter list flawless by restructuring the Election Commission, cancelling the 'fake' voter list and distributing voter identity cards.

She also demanded use of transparent ballot box in the elections.

Hasina alleged that the immediate past BNP-Jamaat alliance government had tried to appoint a partisan caretaker chief to cling to power, but the people under the leadership of Awami League and 14-party combine foiled the evil attempt through a tough movement.

Panama to get Security Council seat

AFP, United Nations

Panama was expected to be officially nominated yesterday for a post on the UN Security Council after deadlocked Guatemala and Venezuela gave up their bids.

The Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC) of the United Nations was set to meet Thursday to endorse Panama as a compromise candidate after 47 votes in the General Assembly failed to produce a winner for the seat.

Ecuador's UN ambassador Diego Cordovez announced late Wednesday that Guatemala and Venezuela had agreed to give up the chase after a heated contest driven by regional geopolitics and the deep enmity between Washington and Caracas.

Cordovez made the announcement after he mediated talks at Ecuador's United Nations mission between Guatemalan Foreign Minister Gert Rosenthal and his Venezuelan counterpart Nicolas Maduro.

"The two foreign ministers have agreed on two issues," said Cordovez, who mediated between Venezuela and Guatemala.

"Both will withdraw their candidacy to the Security Council, and second, Panama will be the country that the three of us will present to the (GRULAC) group" to represent the region, he added, with Rosenthal and Maduro at his side.

All three men said that Panama had accepted the offer.

Panama is a country "very close to Venezuela for historical reasons, and is welcome at both ends of our continent," Rosenthal said.

"We are leaving as friends with Venezuela," he added, shaking hands with Maduro.

Guatemala, which Venezuela sought to portray as a US puppet, won all but one round of voting in the 192-member General Assembly over the past three weeks for the non-permanent council seat being vacated by Argentina on December 31.

But it failed each time to obtain the required two-thirds majority needed to win the rotating council positions, one of ten.

US Ambassador John Bolton campaigned heavily for Guatemala, fearing that Venezuela under leftist President Hugo Chavez would use a council seat to oppose US measures and openly attack the United States.

Chavez, who used an address to the UN General Assembly last September to call US President George W. Bush the "devil", had characterised his ability to stymie Guatemala's candidacy as a victory over US imperialism.

Many diplomats felt Chavez hurt his cause with his undiplomatic comments, but Rosenthal also acknowledged that Washington's support for Guatemala was "a double-edged sword." He added: "Guatemala has waited 61 years to be a member of the Security Council and can wait five more."

Guatemala is one of the few UN founding members that has never joined the Security Council.

Venezuela's Maduro said that "the most important thing is that Latin America and the Caribbean

are able to have a sovereign dialogue to reach a dignified consensus."

A spokeswoman for the General Assembly said before the compromise was announced that the General Assembly would vote on the issue Tuesday. But diplomats later said the vote could be brought forward in view recent developments.

The Security Council is made up of 15 members, including five veto-wielding permanent members -- China, the United States, France, Britain and Russia -- and 10 non-permanent members.

Syria, Iran dismiss US accusation on Lebanon

REUTERS, Damascus

Syria and Iran yesterday dismissed a US accusation that they are trying to topple Lebanon's government with their Lebanese ally Hezbollah.

Hezbollah said the US backing of the government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora was "a blatant interference" in Lebanon's internal affairs and vowed to pursue its demand for a national unity government.

"This pure vilification is meant to raise turmoil in Lebanon and cause fallout with Syria, which paid with blood to maintain Lebanese independence and sovereignty," an editorial in Syria's government newspaper Baath said.

The White House said on Wednesday Washington had evidence that Syria, Iran and their allies in the Shi'ite Muslim group were preparing to topple the Beirut government, which is dominated by US-backed politicians.

The comments came a day after Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah gave Siniora and his majority allies until the middle of this month to agree on the formation of a unity government or face protests demanding a new election.

"We do not care about such accusations. They're worthless," Syrian Expatriates Minister Buthaina Shaaban told reporters. "They are practicing terrorism while accusing others of it. The problem in Lebanon is US and Israeli interference."

Aziz, ECs

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about the 14-party ultimatum to the chief adviser to fulfil its 11-point demand.

She alleged that AL wants to cause uproar because they know people are not going to support them for the violence they carried out in the last several days.