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AL ends JS boycott today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Main opposition Awami League ends its prolonged parliament boycott yesterday when Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Sheikh Hasina leads 58 of her party lawmakers to the session for the first time this evening.

With the joining of the AL lawmakers in the current budget session, the Jatiya Sangsad, constituted through last October's general elections, would have full-house participation for the first time.

Before the AL deputies enter the House, they would chalk out their strategies at a meeting of the AL Parliamentary Party (ALPP) scheduled for a 6:00pm start before the House begins at 7:00pm. Sheikh Hasina will chair the ALPP meeting at Opposition's Meeting Room on the 9th floor of the Sangsad Bhaban.

A joint meeting of the AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC) and the AL Parliamentary Party (ALPP) on June 20 took the decision to join the parliament.

However, the date of joining was fixed at a meeting of the ALPP held on June 22. Meanwhile, AL observed its 53rd founding anniversary yesterday.

Justifying AL's joining the House

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Speedy trial law disputed

HC asks govt to reason against its repeal

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court Division yesterday asked the government to explain why the Offences Disrupting Law and Order (Speedy Trial) Act 2002, "being inherently borne to arbitrary and discriminatory application", should not be declared "unconstitutional and void".

Issuing a rule, to be returnable within a week, the court also asked the government to explain whether

the law is "violative of fundamental rights" granted under articles 27, 31, 32 and 35 of the Constitution.

The rule was issued after the court stayed proceedings of a case under the new law following a writ filed by a lawyer.

Matiur Rahman, president of Lalmonirhat Bar Association, filed the writ challenging "the vices of the law" and his implication in the criminal case under the law passed by the current parliament.

A Division Bench of the High Court composed of Justice Abdul Matin and Justice Marziul Haque passed the stay order and issued the rule.

The respondents to the rule on behalf of the government are the law secretary, the home secretary, and the superintendent of police and the officer-in-charge of Lalmonirhat.

One sub-inspector of the Lalmonirhat Police Station impli

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B. Chy tells The Daily Star "Was my ouster a plot against BNP?"



Prof AQM Bazruddoza Chowdhury

NAZRUL ISLAM

Immediate past president Prof AQM Bazruddoza Chowdhury yesterday said that he was analysing whether or not his ouster was a "conspiracy against the BNP and democracy".

"My well-wishers and relatives are saying this is not a conspiracy against me, but against BNP and democracy. I am analysing this now," he said in an interview with The Daily Star at his KC Memorial Clinic where he has resumed practice as a physician.

"I could have stayed in the presidency, and there was no ground for my removal from the office constitutionally. But it could lead the nation towards a serious crisis", he said. "I have resigned for the sake of people's interest."

None of his political colleagues with whom

Chowdhury worked for over two decades contacted him in person or over phone since his resignation on Friday.

But scores of people from his constituency, his relatives and patients called on him at the clinic at Baridhara, where Special Security Forces (SSF) and police are still on duty.

He said the Constitution says the president must act neutrally and will be above fear and favour in discharging his responsibility.

"How can I act in favour of a party after holding the top constitutional post?" he posed the question referring to the allegations that were raised by the BNP Parliamentary Party for his removal.

Asked whether he believes the young lawmakers initiated the move in the BNPPP, the veteran politician posed a counter question, "Do you really believe it?"

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Democracy at stake, Hasina tells rally



Awami League President Sheikh Hasina waves to a public gathering at Paltan Maidan in the city yesterday.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing her deep concern over the future of parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh, Leader of the Opposition in the parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday told a city rally that her party would join the Jatiya Sangsad today (Monday) to protect the people's interest.

Referring to the unceremonious exit of AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury from the highest office of the state, the opposition leader said, "Only the parliament can impeach the president. How could the parliamentary party of the BNP take a resolution and ask the president to quit?"

"Democracy, earned at the cost of many a martyr, is at stake today. The countrymen will resist any ploy to impair parliamentary democracy," said Hasina while addressing a mammoth rally at the city's Paltan Maidan to celebrate the 53rd founding anniversary of the AL.

She alleged that the ruling BNP was heavily misusing state power and had resorted to 'politicisation' and nepotism.

Sheikh Hasina, whose party has been boycotting the 8th parliament since its maiden session, explained the reason for AL's decision to join the House.

She reasoned that AL lawmakers would join the parliament this

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PM orders probe into 'death threat' to Babar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday ordered an inquiry into the reported death threat to State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar, highly placed political source said.

The government has also taken into consideration the legal consequences of the facts of a general diary filed by the state minister.

"Steps will be taken after proper inquiry into the matter," said one competent source.

Meanwhile, the state minister yesterday took up the matter with the parliament.

Drawing the attention of Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar to press reports about the threat to his life, Babar made a statement in the House as per Article 300 of the parliament's Rules of Procedure.

The state minister earlier filed a general diary (GD) with the Ramna Police Station accusing Nurul Islam Babul, owner of Jamuna Group, of issuing the death threat on the night of June 5.

He however said the government would lawfully deal with such evil elements.

According to the state minister, Babul told him over telephone that it was he (Babar) who had opposed the decision to issue government licence to the Jamuna Distilleries for liquor production and that, for this, he would have to face the consequences.

"It is the manifestation of our real social problems. The influential

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Tarique to polish grassroots BNP

Party leaders celebrate his appointment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newly appointed Joint Secretary General of the ruling BNP Tarique Rahman yesterday said he will work to take the party to the grassroots level and undertake a countrywide tour soon for this purpose.

"The people of the country want political parties to follow proper political norms and I will try to establish that through my activities," he said at a big gathering of party leaders, activists, supporters and

people in front of the BNP central office at Naya Paltan in the city yesterday.

Some 10,000 people gathered there to hail his assumption of the party post.

In an interview with the BBC, Tarique said his emergence in politics is not a result of political dynasty. "I have been involved in politics for the last eight/nine years and tried to carry out the responsibilities given to me."

He said senior leaders and those

who have sacrificed for the BNP have not been disappointed at his becoming the joint secretary general (No. 1) of the party. "All the BNP activists have spontaneously welcomed me."

Replying to a question whether his appointment had anything to do with the resignation of Prof. AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, he said this was separately discussed at meetings of the BNP Parliamentary Party and Standing Committee

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Thai PM due July 9 to talk road link

M ANWARUL HAQ

Communication networking, increased investment in the private sector and joint business cooperation will figure prominently in official talks during the forthcoming visit of Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra to Bangladesh.

Shinawatra will come to Bangladesh on a three-day official visit beginning on July 9, with an entourage comprising dozens of businessmen.

An important focus of the talks by the Thai prime minister will be on



Thaksin Shinawatra

wrap-up arrangements with the Bangladesh government to open a direct road link with Thailand through Myanmar.

The proposed surface link will proceed from Dhaka to Chittagong and enter Muangdaw at a point above the Naaf River through Cox's Bazar. The road link will be the second Asian Highway, connecting Dhaka and Bangkok directly.

Chittagong-Chiang Mai Connection

In another effort in communication networking, Bangladesh and

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Surprise in store in semis!

REUTERS, Seoul

Surely not even FIFA's World Cup computer game could have produced the semifinal line-up that has emerged at the real thing as the last four defied expert opinion, betting odds and, in South Korea's case, belief, to get through.

The South Koreans, previously without a win in 14 games over five tournaments, have somehow beaten Poland, Portugal, Italy and Spain to carry the flag for the co-hosts after Japan were knocked out in the second round at the hands of Turkey.

Asia's first semifinalists are now on the verge of the most incredible story in the history of a tournament first organised by soccer's world governing body in 1930 in Uruguay.

Turkey, in only their second World Cup and their first since 1954, recovered from a start that would have floored many teams but have

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England manager Sven-Goran Eriksson (R) waits on the team coach next to his girlfriend (name unavailable) and captain David Beckham (C) after the team arrived home at Heathrow airport in London yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Saifur seeks press help on governance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming free press the main safeguard for democracy, Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday said it is the duty of the press to help the government move on the right track by pointing out its mistakes.

"Without press freedom, it is not possible to practice democracy. It is the duty of the press to identify irregularities within the government and help it rectify them," Saifur Rahman said while talking to a group of newsmen at his Finance Ministry office in the city.

However, he said sometimes the press quotes him out of context and creates confusion. "But even then," he said "I feel comfortable talking to the press with an open mind as I believe in openness. Without openness no government can work in a democracy."

The minister quoted some newspaper reports published yesterday quoting him as saying that the state is the biggest terrorist.

"I am a bit hurt the way some newspapers quoted me out of context," Saifur Rahman said.

"Actually what I said is that when there is no rule of law and no mechanism of accountability, the state becomes the biggest terrorist. In fact, this was an ideological discussion with some leading economists and the press to focus on the future development strategy," he added.

The minister on Saturday launched discussion on the national

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Grameen Match Report

DHL Spec Report