

Qazi Faruque

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of the country.

The Proshika chief, now in jail hajat, might be taken to the BAC for interrogation today or tomorrow, sources said.

A National Security Intelligence (NSI) team arrested Faruque in High Court area and detective police nabbed Proshika Vice President David William Biswas in Savar on Saturday last in connection to two out of the 15 cases filed by BAC Inspector Abdul Majed with Pallabi Police Station on May 16.

David, too, was produced before the same court yesterday with prayers for police remand. But, the magistrate ordered him to be sent to jail on ground of ill health.

CMM Shamim also directed the investigation officers (IOs) of the cases to produce Faruque before the court on May 27.

After the remand order was issued, the defence lawyers submitted petitions to bar interrogation of Faruque by the Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC). The court put the requests on record.

In one of the two graft cases, the BAC accused Faruque of misusing, in connivance with Proshika Senior Vice President Mahbubul Karim and David, their executive power, raising their salary scales and embezzling money from the NGO's poverty alleviation fund.

In the second case, it was alleged that Faruque, Mahbubul Karim and David misappropriated Tk 1,475,275 from the organisation's fund. In fiscal years 1999-2000 and 2000-01, they allegedly paid a total of Tk 416,175 as income tax on salaries of 12 Proshika consultants from the NGO's fund instead of deducting and paying that from their salaries. According to the case, Proshika also did not pay Tk 13,950 to the National Board of Revenue due as income tax of its contractors and distributors.

Moving Faruque's bail petition in the CMM court, Tania Amir said the government started investigation into different alleged irregularities

and corruption in Proshika on December 13, 2002. After one year of probe, the Bureau of NGO Affairs sent a letter to Proshika on December 3, 2003 accusing its president and some other staffs of 55 cases of irregularity and corruption. Claiming the accusations to be out of the NGO Bureau's jurisdiction and unspecific, Proshika filed a writ petition with the High Court on December 14, 2003.

Tania said the writ petition filed with the High Court Division challenging those 55 allegations was still pending and claimed the 15 cases filed by the BAC had no merit at all.

Law enforcers yesterday had to disperse Proshika employees loyal to Faruque twice from Mukhtangan and in front of the Jatiya Press Club where they gathered to protest his arrest.

Witnesses said police cordoned off the entrance to Mukhtangan when Proshika employees started to gather there at around 11:00am and asked the people whether they were loyal to Faruque or not. As five of the gathering -- Alamgir, Saidul, Saiful, Ebadat and Ranjit -- affirmed their loyalty to the Proshika president, police picked them up and dispersed more than 25 others from the spot.

Proshika officials said the five arrestees were Proshika employees, but police said that was yet to be confirmed.

The NGO workers driven away from Mukhtangan gathered again in front of the press club. As they tried to form a human chain there amidst rain, law enforcers dispersed them again and also forced Faruque's wife to leave by a car.

At the same time, another group of about 30 people claiming to be Proshika employees formed yet another human chain at National Eid Gah gate, adjacent to the press club, under police cover. They demanded Faruque's removal from Proshika and end of its political activities. They also distributed leaflets containing details of their demands.

Gen Sanchz aware

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when CBS "60 Minutes II" broadcast photos of American guards abusing and sexually humiliating Iraqi prisoners who were naked except for hoods covering their heads, including a group stacked in a human pyramid.

American and British troops will continue to enjoy immunity from prosecution in Iraq even after the country's sovereignty is handed back to its people on June 30, a report said late Saturday.

Coalition troops will be protected against any legal action despite widespread allegations of torture and abuse of Iraqi prisoners by the occupying forces, the Observer newspaper said, citing unnamed military sources.

The concession was agreed due to fears that the legal situation in Iraq could become complicated following

the handover of sovereignty, the British Sunday newspaper said.

"We wanted to ensure that British troops maintained the immunity they already have under Order 17," a London-based official told the newspaper.

Order 17 was an agreement issued by the Coalition Provision Authority which granted legal immunity to British and US troops in Iraq. This will now be extended to any foreign troops in the country after June 30, the Observer said.

The Independent meanwhile reported yesterday that British troops in Iraq systematically beat and tortured a group of prisoners in the presence of an officer, contradicting claims that any abuses were caused by rogue soldiers.

(AP, AFP, REUTERS)

AL's labour wing

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front organisations at the regional level before its central unit takes over in June with a series of agitation programmes, according to the party high-ups.

The AL and left-leaning 11-party alliance enforced a half-day hartal in Rajshahi Division yesterday demanding immediate arrest of Bangla Bhai, the dreaded operations commander of Islamist outfit Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), and his militants. The AL has also asked its Rajshahi division unit to mobilise people against the JMJB.

More agitation will follow shortly to force the government to arrest Bangla Bhai and his vigilantes, said an AL leader, wishing anonymity.

Leaders of all major opposition parties at a national dialogue in the capital yesterday also issued a week's ultimatum to the government to take legal actions against the self-styled vigilante outfit. They warned of fresh agitation programmes from an all-party rally at Rajshahi if the government fails to meet the deadline.

The AL's Sylhet district unit, meanwhile, has called a daylong hartal in the division for May 27 to protest against the bomb blast at

Hazrat Shahjalal Shrine.

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, a political secretary to Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina, told The Daily Star that they view the recent incidents as a total breakdown of law and order. "These are not isolated events. The government has proved its absolute inability to govern the country."

The AL's labour front had planned to enforce industrial strikes and hartals for three consecutive days, from June 9 to 11, but thought better of it considering the ongoing public examinations.

It is demanding immediate arrest of the accused in Ahsanullah Master murder case, a stop to harassment of opposition activists in Gazipur and withdrawal of cases against adherents of the AL and its front organisations after the impromptu protest that followed the assassination.

Ahsanullah was former president of Jatiya Sramik League.

The Sramik League is also weighing the possibilities of a foot march toward the Jatiya Sangsad on June 15 and a 72-hour hartal in the last week of June if its demands remain unrealised.

Even Khadims knew

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stated that the high commissioner would offer Juma prayers from 12:45pm to 13:45pm, "without naming the exact place or mosque."

"Though the mosque where he would offer the Juma prayers was not named, we understood it would be the shrine's mosque, as otherwise there was no point in sending the schedule to us," Kowsar reports.

Local administration and police on the other hand claim Choudhury went to the shrine and offered the Juma prayers on an impromptu decision. Facing a barrage of intense criticism for the apparent lack of protective measures to thwart the bomb attack and resulting casualties, a police official said, "The programme was not a scheduled one, but was fixed hastily."

But, the fact is the British High Commission on May 19 sent Choudhury's visit schedule to the local administration, and it was they who distributed its copies. And as the administration sent the schedule's copy to the shrine authorities, they, in

no way, can claim to be unaware of its implication and his intended visit to the shrine, an administration source said.

Abdul Hye Khan, Choudhury's maternal grandfather, said, "I was holding Anwar's right hand while we were coming out of the shrine. A police pick-up was standing outside the shrine and I didn't find any policeman other than a sub inspector and two constables."

Hye suspects a beggar who had persistently been seeking alms from the high commissioner and refused to budge off might be associated with the attack. "I suspect that it was his [the beggar's] assignment to halt Anwar in his tracks."

"I go to the mazar everyday for prayers, and I know all the beggars by face. But this man was not one of them. I even told him 'You are not a beggar,' Hye reasons.

He described the beggar to have a strong build, aged about 40 to 42, with a trimmed beard, short hair and was wearing a green kurta.

5 Indians

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on a 10-day remand. Metropolitan Magistrate Abdur Rouf Khan granted them as many days for interrogating the five.

Police in the forwarding report said the Indian citizens holed up on the roof of the aircraft's toilet to carry out subversive activities against the national flag carrier.

"It is a very sensitive incident and will take time before the reason for their holing up inside the aircraft is known," said Golam Rasul, deputy commissioner, north zone, of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).

"We have quizzed some information from the five arrestees, which will be cross-checked," he said.

Another DMP official said they are also checking with Hong Kong authorities whether the five Indians had gone there and the reason for their return.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Nasir Uddin said in an interview with the BBC yesterday that 76 passengers arrived in Dhaka from Hong Kong in the aircraft. Seventy-one of them disembarked but the rest five holed up on the roof of a toilet.

The minister said the aircraft was scheduled to fly for London and the prime minister was scheduled to take the same plane to China today on its return from the England capital, the state minister said.

Biman suspended four crew and the chief purchaser for neglect of duty, the minister added.

The five, all Sikhs, first came to Dhaka from Kolkata by road last week. From here, they went to Hong Kong last Sunday and flew back Friday night.

A high official of police, quoting the arrestees, said a gang had assured them to send to London in exchange for a hefty sum of money.

Kula for Mannan

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Commission (EC) on Friday.

The RO on Thursday refused to allocate "Kula" to Abdul Mannan as his election symbol. The RO cited the EC's not recognising BDB as a political party as the reason for the decision.

BDB's another candidate Mahi B Chowdhury, who is contesting from Munshiganj-1 constituency, however got "Kula" as the election symbol. Mannan was denied as several candidates demanded the same symbol.

Talking to The Daily Star, the BDB candidate, Abdul Mannan, said the RO with connivance of the ruling party candidate 'hijacked' his party's election symbol.

"Now I am happy with the judgment of the High Court division bench. People's right was established through this," Abdul Mannan said greeting the judgment.

Meanwhile, Mannan met top echelons of Awami League on Saturday night and sought support for the BDB candidates in the by-elections.

Sources said Awami League high ups directed its leaders and activists to work for BDB candidates in Dhaka-10 and Munshiganj-1 constituency.

Awami League is boycotting the elections.

Scotland Yard

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background to hold such a senior diplomatic post.

RAID AND ARREST
Sylhet police and paramilitary forces raided the house of one Jewel in Shibganj Senpara in the city but could not arrest him, after he was named in some newspapers as the mastermind behind Friday's blast. The police declined to comment on the raid.

Police halted a procession of Bangladesh Chharta League (BCL) in the city's Chouhatta area as it was heading for the Court Point area to join a protest meeting organised by city and district units of the main opposition Awami League.

The demonstrators went on the rampage, damaging a microbus and a car and pelting shops with stones.

The police picked up five activists of AL's student chapter: City BCL Joint Convenor Iliasur Rahman, Organising Secretary Abdul Latif Ripon, Library Secretary Shamsul Islam, members Azad Hossain and Kamal Hossain.

Both ruling four-party alliance and the AL could not hold their scheduled programmes, as police ringed the Court Point area to deter any attacks and counter attacks between the two rival groups.

Eight people, who suffered wounds in Friday's blast, were released from MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital after police recorded statements from them.

Tigers toiling

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on day one. With the pitch easing up and the bright sun drying the outfield, runs came fast.

The Bangladeshi bowlers also lost the discipline they showed on the first day and Joseph and Bravo punished anything short and wide.

And that's why 147 runs were scored in the first 35 overs bowled on the Sunday compared to 81 in 40 overs on Saturday.

Joseph was batting on 110 but was lucky. He was dropped twice on the morning, once when he was on 88 as captain Rajin Saleh failed to hold on to a pull off Alok Kapali in the leg-spinner's first over. After he had reached his hundred, Alamgir Kabir muffed a skier off Tapas Baisya at mid-off.

Bravo was on a solid 98 with the Board XI reaching 231-2 in 78 overs just before lunch.

Police escort JMJB

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The memoranda protested 'fabricated reports by a section of the media and several political parties'. The JMJB leaders threatened to kill journalists for 'misreporting'.

"We are pledge-bound to eliminate outlaws. We will stay as long as the outlaws are here. But reporters are falsely accusing us of killing, torture and oppression. They (journalists) do not know that their pen might stop someday," said Professor Lutfar Rahman, a JMJB spokesman leading the huge mob.

The JMJB termed its activities 'a great initiative to eliminate outlaws and terrorism' and demanded immediate arrest of those who were 'spreading false and motivated reports on the JMJB leaders'.

The memorandum addressed to State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar said the JMJB brought back peace to the outlaw infested areas, but a section of the press and some political parties are misleading the nation.

"Curbing terrorism is not the work of the government alone. The brave people of Bagmara united against the terrorists and are helping the law enforcers eliminate the outlaws as none of ruling or opposition parties are able to resist the organised outlaws," it said.

The home ministry had ordered police to arrest Bangla Bhai only last week in the wake of his lawlessness and killing spree. Bangla Bhai and his self-styled spiritual leader Abdur Rahman were not present during the showdown.

The first rally of the JMJB was

addressed by the chairman of Bakuria union parishad and Bagmara BNP Joint Secretary Besharat Ullah, among others. They offered afternoon prayers at the Eidgah Maidan and held the other rally at Gourhanga Rail crossing in the evening before they left for Naogaon.

Earlier, they laid siege to the deputy commissioner's office for half an hour since 3.30pm and chanted slogans: "There is no Bangla Bhai, we all are Bangla Bhai. Catch and slaughter sarboharas".

On the support of several lawmakers to the JMJB, the memorandum said the lawmakers' names were published to harm their popularity.

"All political leaders including ministers and lawmakers irrespective of parties are supporting us," it said.

Receiving the memo, the Rajshahi DC and DIG told the team that they would send it to the higher authorities.

The SP welcomed the team and said, "We (police) hail you (JMJB) as you are helping us eliminate the Sarboharas (outlaws) from Rajshahi. We must cooperate with you in the coming days so that people can rest without fear."

Talking to newsmen, the SP termed the JMJB men 'common people who took up sticks to save themselves'.

Prof Lutfar Rahman told newsmen that they had no political ambition.

Opposition ultimatum

FROM PAGE 1
political parties including the main opposition Awami League (AL) and a number of leading academics, journalists and writers took part in the deliberations.

At the end of the discussions, the participants announced, if the government failed to meet their demands, the opposition parties would organise a grand rally in Rajshahi on May 31 and launch a fierce movement from there.

Speakers at the dialogue called for a broader unity of pro-liberation forces to root out the ultra-communal forces which have been gradually stretching out their tentacles across the country in a planned manner in a bid to establish a communal government, destroying the spirit of the liberation war.

Besides the AL and the WPB, leaders of Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Inu), Gano Forum, Bangladesh Samyabadi Dal (BSD), Ganoatantrik Majdur Party (GMP), Gano Azadi League (GAL), Forward Party and Krishak Shramik Samajbadi Dal (KSSD) took part in the discussion.

"Keeping aside all ideological differences, we should come forward and unite with the spirit of the liberation war to resist the surge of communal forces," said AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil.

WPB President Rashed Khan Menon said, "In the name of preventing activities of outlawed political outfits, the JMJB has taken law in its hand and is committing crimes act time and again. The administration's collaboration with it has also

Launch disasters

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blame the officials for allowing it ply for the last 22 years.

In another example, the department did not publish the probe report on MV Mitali-3, which sank in the Buriganga near Pagla in April last year with over 350 passengers.

As many as 131 bodies were recovered after the disaster. Unofficial estimates counted over 200 the death toll, as strong stream washed away many bodies.

The committee accused launch in-charge master Mohammad Shajahan and owner Abul Hossain Chowdhury of the accident but they are still to be punished.

The sources also blamed the government for allowing 40 big launches operate with faulty design, which have been identified as D category launches after the disaster of MV Salahuddin.

The government imposed restriction on the launches only to withdraw it following the pressure from an influential quarter of the launch owners association. The quarter is believed to have close connections with the government high-ups.

The government is also sitting idle on the issue of introducing local classification society for standardisation of inland ship design. Although it claimed a tender around eight months back, it is yet to task any company with the job, shipping ministry sources said.

Israeli minister

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destroyed had tunnels dug (under them)," he stressed.

He said Palestinian groups were using these tunnels to smuggle in ammunition and anti-tank weapons. "We must stop it," the defence minister continued. "Part of the munitions smuggled in were RPG rockets that hit our tanks, and we lost 11 soldiers."

A total of 43 Palestinians have been killed since the start on Tuesday of Operation Rainbow, an offensive aimed at arresting militants and halting weapons smuggling.

(AP, AFP)

Altaf terms FBCCI article change a non-political move

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury yesterday dismissed the suggestion that the recent government order for incorporating a clause in the Memorandum of Articles of Association (MAA) of the FBCCI was politically motivated.

The minister told a press briefing at his office in Dhaka yesterday, "The government does not intend to make any new rule. The order was issued only to make a clarification of a provision that is already there."

The commerce ministry on May 17 issued a letter to the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) president, asking him to take steps to incorporate a clause in Article 14 of its MAA within four weeks.

The clause if incorporated would enable the members of its board to remove the president or the vice-president if their conducts are deemed detrimental to the interest of the federation.

In reply to a query, Commerce Secretary Suhel Ahmed said last year's reforms in the FBCCI election procedure were not carried out with an intention to see a government favourite candidate holding the top post of the FBCCI.

"Rather it was done with a view to making a fair representation of some leading chambers and associations in the country's apex trade body," he added.

An emergency board meeting of the FBCCI on Saturday decided to convene an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) on June 12 where around 1200 general members will decide on whether the clause will be incorporated in the MAA.

Proshika

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fate of the people related with Proshika. "We don't think about that," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

The alliance government kept Proshika on its toes, blocking the donor funds, arresting workers, raiding offices and threatening it with cancellation of registration.

The whole Proshika family came under unbelievable stress when the BNP-led coalition government accused the NGO of playing a role in an Awami League 'conspiracy' to topple the government.

Proshika's Acting President Mahbubul Karim could not be reached, and Director Zainul Abedin refused to predict the future of Proshika. "Do not involve me in this, no way."

However, Md Abu Sayed, a co-ordinator at Proshika said, "We cannot think of an alternative leader for Proshika other than Kazi Faruque. If he is not there, the organisation is going to suffer terribly."

The Area Development Centres (ADCs) in Dhaka are not operating fully while the offices in Pallabi remained inoperative since the police raid in early May.

A Proshika official, preferring anonymity, alleged alliance cadres have been giving threats to staff at 200 ADCs across the country for Proshika's 'conspiracy' against government.

"A large number of our female staff are afraid of coming to work now. The incidents of intimidation were reported," the official said.

The emergence of a renegade group led by a deputy director, who demanded removal of Faruque on grounds of financial irregularities, has made matters worse for the NGO.

Staff alleged that renegade leaders are out to remove Kazi Faruque because they owe significant sum of money to Proshika and have animosity against the feisty president.

They also said Faruque's son got stipend from Proshika's scholarship scheme under which rebel leader Shahadat Hossain's daughter is also studying abroad.

Shahadat however denied the claim, saying that these scholarships were given to some staff of Proshika as a cover-up to Faruque's extravagant spending for his family.

The government blocked donor funds of Tk 300 crore for Proshika alleging fund embezzlement in certain projects since 2002. However, several government investigations failed to back up the claim substantially.

Paris airport

FROM PAGE 12
Laurent Vibert.

"It seems to have happened very quickly some people heard a noise before it happened."

Another fire-fighter said: "It's like a scene after an earthquake."

The French government ruled out a terror attack but said the cause of the accident was unknown.

Most victims were believed to be passengers arriving or waiting to depart at the busy terminal, while three policemen were hurt. Ambulances and fire brigade vehicles rushed to and from the terminal as the injured were ferried to hospital.

Top business leaders

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including British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Chowdhury, the business leaders said the atrocious incident endangered the life of a diplomat, ruining the image of Bangladesh as a free, democratic and liberal nation.

"We stand united against such a heinous and dastardly act and earnestly request the government to probe the matter immediately and take stern action against those responsible," the press release said.

The business leaders also prayed for salvation of the souls of the dead and quick recovery of the wounded, including the Bangladesh-born British envoy.

Signatories of the press release are International Chamber of Commerce President Mahbubur Rahman, Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Fazle RM Hasan, Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Kutubuddin Ahmed, Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Amir Humayun Mahmood Chowdhury, American Chamber of Commerce President Aftab Ul Islam, Bangladesh Textile Mills Association Chairman MA Awal, Bangladesh Insurance Association

Taiwanese office

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to close the so-called Taipei Representative Office in Bangladesh.

"We highly appreciate Bangladesh's position of adhering to 'One China' policy," he added.

When contacted, Foreign Affairs Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury, however, declined to comment on the issue.

The decision to close down the Taiwanese business office was taken ahead of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's visit to China, diplomatic sources said.

During her four-day Shanghai visit to attend the Global Learning Process and Conference on Scaling up Poverty Reduction, Khaleda is expected to hold talks with the Chinese premier.

Portfolios delayed

FROM PAGE 12
Although the Congress-led coalition is in a minority in the 545-member chamber, it has been promised the support of left-wing groups which will give it a comfortable majority.

The uncertainty over ministerial portfolios forced India to seek postponement of nuclear arms talks with old enemy Pakistan, which had been expected early this week in the Indian capital.

The talks are now likely to be held next month.

Singh's first full day in office was marred by renewed violence in the Indian sector of disputed Kashmir. A bus ran over a land mine on a key highway, killing 28 people, including 19 soldiers.

PEACE PROCESS
Singh has vowed to carry forward the peace process begun last year with Pakistan. The two sides have gone to war three times, twice over Kashmir.

Singh, a former finance minister, was chosen to head the country after Congress's Italian-born leader, Sonia Gandhi, torch-bearer of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, declined the job following attacks by Hindu nationalists over her foreign birth.

The Congress Party is expected to retain other key portfolios along with finance. Former diplomat Natwar Singh is likely to be made foreign minister and former parliamentary speaker Shivraj Patil is tipped to be defence minister.

The allies have 25 seats in the council of ministers and are likely to get mostly portfolios which provide domestic clout.

Kashmir blast

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Srinivasan said about half of those who died were killed by the blast and the other half died in the fire that it sparked. The three civilians injured had been travelling in the other bus.

"The entire area has been sealed off and a massive search is under way (for those who planted the mine). We are not going to spare them," Srinivasan said.

Traffic was immediately stopped on the strategic 300-kilometer (186-mile) highway linking Srinagar and Jammu, holding up thousands of vehicles, witnesses said.

The attack was the deadliest since then prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, surprising many in his Hindu nationalist base, visited Kashmir in April 2003 and offered a "hand of friendship" to rival Pakistan, which also controls part of the Himalayan territory.</