

GD against Ershad

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Uttara, neither did he threaten Trisha.

One of the lawyers for Bidisha yesterday, meanwhile, petitioned with the High Court (HC) for a freeze on further arrest and harassment of Bidisha even if the police file fresh cases against her.

Hearings on the case are likely to be held on Saturday, her counsellor Barrister Tanjib-ul Alam told The Daily Star yesterday.

Bidisha was freed Monday evening from prison cell 23 days into her arrest and has been undergoing treatment at Sikder Medical College and Hospital at Gulshan since then.

The family, however, did not let journalists meet her on advice of her counsellors.

Uttara police, however, took one and half an hours to record the GD as the duty officer could not decide about whether to take it.

Trisha along with her father Abubakar Siddique went to the police station at 2:30pm when the officer-in-charge (OC) was not present. The duty-officer called up the OC and his superiors for further instructions and at one point he left the office for a phone-fax shop and faxed the GD copy to some unknown person.

Later OC Akhtaruzzaman came to his office at 3:20pm and told Bidisha's family that he would record the GD.

In the complaint Trisha said former military dictator Ershad along with his hired gunmen went to her Uttara residence at 8:00 Monday night after Bidisha's release from the prison cell.

Ershad took his party men including Reza and Mashfi and some

goons with him in five vehicles and asked their residential guard Raju to open the gate, she said.

As the guard refused, they first tried to bribe him, then yelled at and finally threatened him.

She came down hearing the uproar, the FIR said. Ershad along with his men then shouted at her that they better not allow Bidisha in the house. "If Bidisha stays here, we will kill you and your family and abduct your child Nihan," she quoted them as telling her.

Trisha also mentioned in the complaint that she is scared as the gunmen have been hanging around her residence since then.

"The incident indicates that Ershad's men may harm me, my sisters Bidisha and Manisha, my father and my child at any moment," she said, urging for necessary steps after investigating the matter.

Bidisha's father also told reporters that he is scared of the safety of his daughter and his family.

Ershad told The Daily Star that he has closed the "Bidisha chapter", adding that he was at home throughout Monday. "Besides, I move with police protection and the police would have known had I gone there."

"Why should I go there? Where should I go? Who is Bidisha to me, (she is no one) but just one of millions of women in the country?"

"She may file a case or a GD or whatever she wants. What harm can she do to me?" he said adding, "I don't give a damn about her and her family anymore," the former president said.

Tengrtila

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Anwarul Azim visited the gas field area yesterday.

They talked to officials of Niko and Bapex and others including local people.

The committee will sit with Niko officials in Sylhet today, said an official of Sunamganj district administration.

An official of the Canadian company, Niko, claimed US company Century have agreed to provide a rig for the proposed relief well at Tengrtila. But shifting of the rig from Unocal's Moulvibazar gas field will begin at least after two to three weeks because it is engaged in drilling of Well-6 there, he mentioned.

"Although we now have to wait for a stable situation at Tengrtila, it will take less time to start drilling of the proposed relief well as we have a ready pad to be used for the purpose," he said.

Asked about compensation for inhabitants of the adjacent villages, the Niko official said the company had shifted 76 families after the 7 January blowout and fire. Since they were yet to return to their houses on safety grounds, the company would continue to provide them assistance, he added.

He declined to say anything on the losses caused by the blowout and fire this time. "We will just have to wait for the report of the government-formed probe committee," he said.

Some of the villagers who had moved to safer places leaving their houses after Friday's explosion and fire were found coming back yesterday. But no female members of the families returned.

NBR may revise

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his budget speech, had repeatedly said that it is unethical to allow whitening black money and such moves discourage genuine taxpayers. BNP kept such provisions since it came to power in 2001.

As the finance minister surprisingly changed his stance and proposed for continuing the provision in his budget speech, it triggered criticism even from the ruling party lawmakers—including the finance minister's son Naser Rahman.

"The government is now considering an end to such option. The finance minister is likely to announce that this is the last chance to whiten black money," said an NBR source.

Regarding the SIM card issue, which generated much controversy as the government has imposed an unusual tax of Tk 1,200 per card, the NBR is now considering lowering the VAT and supplementary duty to Tk 750.

A recent writ petition filed in the High Court on this issue shows that even Tk 750 per SIM card is much higher than what the total VAT and supplementary duty would actually be, if the NBR uses its present formula.

The price of each SIM card is only \$2 to \$4 [Tk 120 to Tk 240] depending on the quality. But the NBR put its price at over Tk 2,100 to justify its VAT and tax of Tk 1,200.

The NBR also proposed an increase of corporate tax for non-listed companies to 40 percent from the current 37.5 percent. But as this has been criticised as a non-incentive for small businesses and industries, the NBR is planning to keep it at 37.5 percent.

Sitara's body

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The body will be brought to the journalism department at 11:00am and from there to the foot of Aparajevo Bangla at 12 noon for the students and colleagues to bid her farewell.

Her namaz-e-janaza will be held at the DU Central Mosque after Jor prayers, and she will be laid to rest at Banani graveyard in the afternoon.

Sitara's mother, younger sister, and brother in law, who were abroad, returned to Bangladesh yesterday.

The qulshwani of Sitara, 52, will be held on July 1 after Asr prayers at her father's residence on road No-124, house no-14, Gulshan-1, Dhaka.

WHO alarmed

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be winding down, said a member of a WHO team that visited the remote region last week with Chinese health officials.

Chinese authorities haven't killed any birds to prevent the spread of the disease because they are rare, protected species, said Dr Julie Hall, WHO's China-based coordinator for communicable diseases, surveillance and response.

The 5,000 dead birds came from five species and included gulls, geese, shelduck and cormorant, according to the World Organization for Animal Health Web site.

Hall urged the Chinese government to carry out more testing for the deadly H5N1 flu virus, saying only 12 dead birds and two people have been tested, with the people coming up negative.

"What we want to see is more testing going on," she said at a news conference.

China reported in May that 178 geese had been found dead in Qinghai Lake, a vast saltwater lake in Qinghai that is a major transit point for migratory birds. Authorities later raised that to 519 and then to about 1,000 in late May. The official toll hasn't changed since then.

The government's early reluctance to release information about the outbreak fueled concern about a possible cover-up and rumors on Web sites that as many as 120 people had died of the flu. Chinese authorities deny that any people have been infected.

Jute ministry wants

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state-run jute mills close down, it would make 25,000 workers jobless and eventually the country will lose its jute export market to competitor India.

After weeks of discussions with mainstream opposition political parties including the Awami League, the representatives of the jute mill staff yesterday called a 12-hour general strike across the country and a 24-hour industrial strike on July 16.

The Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) on Sunday put forward a proposal to the jute ministry to allow it to borrow from commercial banks for purchase of jute during July-September so that its 22 jute mills remain operational.

"Experience shows the government breaches its commitment to the donors considering the political cost of aggravating thousands of jute workers, specially when the elections are round the corner," said an industry insider. "But if the government disburses fund, as it did last year, after the peak jute procurement season, the BJMC would again be forced to buy jute from middlemen instead of growers at an inflated price. If this happens this year too, the jute sector will further dip into the red."

Textile and Jute Minister Shahjahan Siraj appealed to the prime minister and finance minister in the Jatiya Sangsad last week to salvage the plunging jute sector.

Siraj partly blamed the government's delayed and paltry fund allocation (Tk 30 crore) in fiscal 2004-05 for closure of 15 out of the 22 BJMC-run jute mills. BJMC Chairman AFM Solaiman Chowdhury told The Daily Star recently that in 2004-5, the BJMC had to borrow Tk 30 crore from

banks as the government released only Tk 30 crore, that too belatedly, against the requirement of Tk 200 crore for jute purchase.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday Textile and Jute Secretary Md Abdur Rashid Sarker said as the finance ministry declined to release any funds for raw jute procurement in the next fiscal year and as jute mills are being shut down due to jute scarcity, his ministry would now pursue the finance ministry to allow the state-run jute mills to borrow Tk 200 crore from banks.

Asked why the banks would finance the loss-making mills, the jute secretary said, "Seven relatively better mills had borrowed from banks in 2004-05 and they are doing well. Besides, jute and quality jute products are gaining international market in recent years after the world has become more environment conscious."

"So I think if the mills commit to perform better and minimise irregularities there should not be any reason for banks not to finance the mills," the secretary hoped.

On June 22, an inter-ministerial meeting of the jute advisory committee blamed delayed release of funds by the government for the closure of the state-run jute mills and formed two subcommittees to come up with immediate bailout measures.

But industry insiders pointed out that corruption at the BJMC makes it difficult to make the mills profitable.

Meanwhile, agitating jute workers, who did not get their salaries for the last eight months, yesterday demanded that the government release Tk 500 crore immediately to pay the arrears.

OIC wants permanent

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"The Islamic world, which represents one fifth of total mankind, cannot remain excluded from the activities of the Security Council which assumes a fundamental role in keeping security and peace in the world," he said.

Ihsanoglu had announced on Monday that ministers would discuss proposals for the representation of the 57-member Islamic body on the Security Council during their three-day conference in the Yemeni capital.

Calls for increasing the number of permanent members have been resonating since Germany, Japan, India and Brazil announced their wish to have veto-wielding positions like the current big five of Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States.

Ihsanoglu told the conference that his ambitious plans also provided for the introduction of "real reform" in the Islamic bloc's internal affairs.

"I want to push for real reform in the organisation, not just a superficial one ... to enhance capabilities and improve performance," he said at the opening which was held amid tight security measures and away from the press.

Ihsanoglu became head of the OIC at the start of the year after his election to the top job in June 2004, becoming the first secretary general in the organisation's 36-year history to be chosen through secret ballot.

The Turkish secretary general also proposed finding a new name for the organisation that would reflect "its reality".

OIC was given its current name when it was first established at a meeting of Islamic leaders convened in Morocco following an attempt by Jewish hardliners to burn down Islam's third holiest site -- Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque -- which is also revered in Judaism.

The Red Sea city of Jeddah in Saudi Arabia hosts the headquarters of the OIC, "pending the liberation of Jerusalem, which would be the permanent headquarters," according to the OIC website.

The OIC was entrusted "in absolute priority, with liberating Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa from Zionist occupation," it added.

But Ihsanoglu wanted to "revisit the OIC's convention and rewrite it in a way that would serve the interests of the (Islamic) nation."

He also wanted to reform the OIC in order to "guarantee that its political decisions do not remain wishes".

"The Islamic world is in need of a renaissance ... Development and reform are the real guarantees for the continuity of our nation, and to bridge the gap between us and the advanced world," he said.

Proposed reforms also include "Islamic solidarity," especially in facing natural disasters after last December's tsunami disaster exposed the lack of an OIC mechanism to cope with such catastrophes.

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SC Bar

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his constitutional power in a way so that the High Court judges face no interference in the administration of justice and no question is raised about their independence, the meeting in its resolution said.

The chief justice has the constitutional power to constitute or reconstitute the benches, but the manner in which he has done this in some cases points only to his misusing this power, the Bar observed.

It noted the last such incident happened on June 18 involving the bench of justices Shah Abu Nayeem Mominur Rahman and Moinul Islam Chowdhury after they had issued a rule with regard to a public interest litigation. The chief justice withdrew the bench's jurisdiction over all types of writ motion the same day.

The SCBA resolution did not specify the case, however, the bench on that day had issued a rule following a writ petition against the new Chief Election Commissioner Justice MA Aziz.

This power has nothing to do with judicial business, rather it is an administrative matter. The chief justice is supposed to set aside his personal liking and disliking in this task and not use this power arbitrarily, unreasonably and for collateral purpose, the resolution maintained.

Such moves have upset the lawyers, the SCBA contended and urged the chief justice to immediately address the issue.

The SCBA felt the need for having a clear rule on the formation and re-formation of benches in the light of the constitution, which should be done on the basis of discussion with the Bar and the benches. It also demanded that such discussion take place immediately.

The SCBA meeting delegated powers to its executive committee to take necessary legal and other actions to settle the issue.

The meeting was addressed, among others, by Mohammad Abdul Halim, ABM Nurul Islam, Rafiqul Islam Miah, Abdul Baset Majumder, Shafiq Ahmed, M Amirul Islam, Rokah Uddin Mahmud and SCBA Secretary Enayetur Rahim.

Bangla Bhai

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Janakantha, while he was going to the local press club at around 6:00pm.

Shafiqul received critical injuries including a stab injury below his left eye before local people rescued him hearing his cry.

Sources said Shafiqul, also the general secretary of the Bagmara Press Club, yesterday guided three Jugantor reporters who talked to several JMB leaders and local people on the JMB activities.

Before the Jugantor reporters left Bagmara, Peter and his group had quarrelled with them over honking of their bikes.

At one stage, Peter threatened Shafiqul to kill. "What will happen if we kill a journalist like you? Minister Dulu [Deputy Minister for Land Affairs Ruhul Kuddus Talukdar Dulu] is my cousin, he will save me from everything I do," Peter was quoted as saying.

Officer-in-charge of the Bagmara Police Station Motiar Rahman, however, told that the incident resulted from personal feuds between Shafiqul and Peter but the attack might also have connection with the quarrel with the Jugantor reporters.

The incident created panic among the local journalists.

Preparations for filing a case were on till late in the evening.

The Bagmara Press Club and Rajshahi Press Club condemned the attack and will hold protest programmes today.

Arman

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Zambia, adopted the proposal prominently, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday.

Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury led a three-member Bangladesh delegation to the June 25-27 meeting, one of series aimed at forging a common stance to be taken in the next ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organisation.

Trade ministers from 39 WTO member-states representing the least developed, developing and developed countries attended the meeting, commerce ministry officials told the news agency.

They said the LDCs' demands for movement of natural persons (mode-4) and other concerns will emerge more prominently in the next mini-ministerial meetings.

Member countries have decided to hold at least two more mini-ministerial meetings in South Korea and China before going to the WTO ministerial meeting in Hong Kong, they added.

The Livingstone Declaration also adopted a proposal for taking special preferential measures for the LDCs to compensate for the losses likely to be stemming from the planned withdrawal of subsidy on agriculture exports.

It urged developed countries to provide LDCs with enhanced financial and technical support to help them diversify exports as well as demanded of them not to impose safeguard and anti-dumping measures.

"The export competitiveness of the LDCs is gradually shrinking with

Sacked Nepal DPM

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states of emergency imposed after the takeover and released several detained journalists and political prisoners including Nepalese communist party leader Ishwor Pokhrel and a former minister in early June.

But deposed prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba remains under arrest on a corruption charge as well as several top opposition party leaders and journalists held since the king's takeover which he said was needed to curb a Maoist insurgency which has claimed more than 12,000 lives since 1996.

The Nepalese army said Tuesday it killed 30 Maoist rebels in a weekend clash in which six soldiers and six policemen also died.

It said in a statement that security forces dug up 30 buried bodies following the firefight Saturday at Khandaha village in Arghakhanchi district, 335km southwest of Kathmandu.

The army says the Maoists normally remove their dead after battles and bury them.

Meanwhile, the United States has suspended a shipment of M-16 rifles to Nepal to protest at King Gyanendra's takeover in February, a State Department official said Tuesday.

Deputy Assistant Secretary for

Moudud

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House braving the opposition of their party chief," the minister observed.

On transparency in the political parties, Moudud said like many other countries, Bangladesh too has a provision for registration of political parties, but it is not mandatory.

He said there can be a discussion whether to make the registration compulsory.

"Similarly, decision will have to be taken on student politics as well," said the minister adding that the country now does not need the political party-affiliated student politics.

Moudud said election for the 45 reserved seats for women in parliament will be held within six weeks of disposal of an appeal against the new law. He hoped the appellate division of the Supreme Court would dispose of the appeal within a week.

He told the House that his ministry is working to rectify a few clauses of the money-laundering act to check smuggling of currencies. On activities of the Anti-Corruption Commission, Moudud said he hopes that the commission would start acting against corruption shortly.

Health Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain and Industries Minister Matiar Rahman Nizami among others took part in the budget discussion yesterday.

US official stresses

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on how the situation develops."

It is important that the government shelters the people who are weak and understrength, he told reporters.

He said top Bangladesh government officials gave US Under Secretary Nicholas R Burns assurance that they will act to protect the Ahmadiyyas and their rights.

Burns after a visit to Bangladesh left Dhaka yesterday.

Asked whether the US is satisfied with the government steps taken so far, he said: "We appreciate the government for the steps it has taken. We don't want to be critical at this moment."

When enquired by Gastright about Khatme Nabuwat and the acceptability among the people of its anti-Ahmadiyya campaign, the sect leaders told him that the people of Bangladesh are not fanatics by nature.

"They [people] did not know much about the Khatme Nabuwat movement. It originated in Pakistan and later was imported to our country by the local mollahs. Pakistani lawmaker Monjur Hossain Chiniuli and other leaders had even been to Bangladesh to propagate the anti-Ahmadiyya doctrines," Central Ahmadiyya Missionary Abdul Awal

South Asian Affairs. Donald Camp said the move was aimed at encouraging the king to restore civil liberties and democracy after he sacked the government and assumed total power to tackle an increasingly violent Maoist rebellion.

"As for lethal equipment, the United States has dele we encourage restoration of civil liberties and multi-party democracy," Camp told a press conference at the end of a three-day visit.

"As we have made clear on many occasions, we consider the king's actions of February 1 to have been a big step backward for democracy."

Camp also said the United States viewed the Maoist rebellion as a threat to democracy.

"We cannot forget at any time that the Maoists are the most serious, immediate threat to a peaceful, prosperous and democratic Nepal," he said.

"The ruthless violence and terrorism they sow offers nothing to Nepal but destruction and sorrow."

"We call on them to cease these atrocities, declare a ceasefire, lay down their arms and come to peaceful negotiations," he said.

Shortly after the February takeover, India and Britain suspended military supplies to Nepal, while the United States said it was reviewing military aid. Subsequently, India said it would resume some supplies already promised.

In response, Nepal has sought military supplies from other countries. It advertised recently for items such as bulletproof vests, electronic equipment, armoured personnel carriers and helicopter gunships.

Camp said future military supplies would be considered in line with steps to restore democracy.

"The United States also recognises the difficulties the Royal Nepalese Army faces in countering the campaign of violence," he said.

24 Bangladeshis

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magistrate's court in Barasat under North 24 Parganas and the court placed them on police custody for 10 days.

The Bangladeshis children were brought to India for being trafficked to other countries, sources said.

The identity of the rescued Bangladeshis children and the arrested trafficker could not be known.

Meanwhile, BDR sources expressed ignorance about the matter and said they will take necessary action after getting proper information.

Khan Chowdhury was quoted to be saying at the meeting.

Chowdhury also mentioned in the meeting a Jamaat lawmaker's proposal for enacting blasphemy law in 1993 and a similar attempt by another lawmaker last year.

Among others, Ahmadiyya Jamaat's National Amir Mobasher Rahman and Social Affairs Secretary AK Razaul Karim were present at the meeting.

"By preventing the religious bigots from attacking our headquarters in Dhaka and a mosque in Narayanganj last year, the government have proved that they can stop the extremists, if they want," Abdul Awal told reporters after the meeting.

"We're not demanding any favour from the government, we just want our constitutional rights to be ensured," he added.

Besides, he demanded the government take measures to restore four Ahmadiyya mosques in Brahmanbaria to the Ahmadiyyas. The zealots, who have long been campaigning for the government move declaring the Ahmadiyyas non-Muslim, captured the mosques in 1987.

the reduction of import duties by the developed nations," the declaration noted, urging compensatory measures for them.

The meeting also agreed to support continuation of low-interest bank loans for farmers and reduced power tariffs for irrigation.

Bangladesh participated in the mini-ministerial meeting to uphold the trade interests of the LDCs and mobilise a unified stand in the international trade forum.

It also pressed developed countries for duty-free access of LDC products to their markets.

Rain to continue

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the depression, he added.

A special bulletin of the Met office said squally weather is likely to affect the ports.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised to hoist local cautionary signal no-three while the river ports have been advised to hoist local cautionary signal no-two.

All fishing-boats and trawlers over the North Bay have been advised to "remain close to the coast and proceed with caution."

The weathermen forecast that medium to heavy rainfall with gusty wind and thunderstorm is likely to occur in most parts of the country.

Meanwhile, the Yahoo weather site forecast that thunderstorm and rainfall will continue in the country for next six days.