

# Rebellion sees change

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taken to the Prime Minister's Office in the afternoon where he met the PM and other leaders. Later, the party announced the change in the nomination, replacing Sirajul with Zafar without a parliamentary board meeting.

Sources said the BNP chairperson, Standing Committee Member KM Obaidur Rahman, PM's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury and district BNP leaders talked to both Zafar and Sirajul before picking Zafar for the by-polls, cancelling Sirajul's ticket.

The prime minister and BNP chairperson asked Sirajul to withdraw his candidature from the race for the greater interest of the party. The last date for withdrawal of the nomination is August 14 while voting is slated for August 30.

Sources said after meeting the prime minister, KM Obaid held a meeting with Sirajul and Zafar at his (Obaid) residence in the capital. After the hour-long meeting, Sirajul and Zafar shook hands in front of journalists and posed for photographs.

"Kazi Sirajul Islam has accepted the party decision and he will remain loyal to BNP," KM Obaid told reporters. "For the last few days, we were trying to resolve the conflict and finally we have succeeded to keep unity in the party," he said.

Giving his reaction, Sirajul, who had been picked by BNP Parliamentary Board last week, said, "I have agreed to withdraw the nomination paper for greater interest of the party... Nobody will win if both of us contest the polls and it would be a defeat for BNP."

Sources said the prime minister had told Sirajul that it would be very difficult for him to win the election against Zafar who has a huge number of supporters.

The Faridpur-1 parliamentary seat fell vacant on June 4 as per article 70 of the Constitution after Sirajul, who was an Awami League

# Aklima finally released on bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Aklima Akter, a 12-year-old maid who was accused of theft and confined along with adult prisoners, was released on bail from the Dhaka Central Jail on Tuesday.

She was sent to jail following a criminal case filed by her employer on July 14.

Barrister Rehan Husain and his associates took up the case of Aklima following a report published in The Daily Star on August 3, stating that the minor girl was tortured by her employer and then sent to jail in a theft case.

Shafiqul Islam, first class magistrate of Dhaka, on Monday granted the bail petition filed by the lawyers. She was released from jail at about 12:30pm the following day, says a press release signed by Barrister Rehan Husain yesterday.

Aklima came from a poor family of Mymensingh to work as maid at a businessman's house in West Dhanmondi in the capital a few months back.

When the employers found some documents, cash and a mobile set missing on July 13, they tortured Aklima. As she denied, the employers forced her to confess the crime. Finally, they handed her over to the Mohammodpur police and lodged a criminal case, the press release says.

Barrister Rehan Husain was assisted by advocates Ashraful Islam and Shafiqul Islam, barristers Hassan, Moshir Rahman and Romel.

# Huda's showdown

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This month to strengthen the JAF committee.

Claiming that there is no internal feud among the JAF members, Nazmul Huda, who addressed the meeting as chief guest, said, "A group is creating conflict in the Forum to destroy it." He asked the JAF members to be united to foil a conspiracy against the Forum and drive out those involved in the conspiracy.

Without mentioning the name of Khondker Mahbuddin Ahmed MP, a leader of the other faction, Huda asked all to be aware of him as he blocked the way of JAF's victory in the Bar Council election in the past by describing half of its 25,000 lawyer voters as illiterate one day before the election.

He reminded the rally that one such leader hailed from Gopalganj but has never taken any stand against a leader from Gopalganj (assumed to be Sheikh Hasina) or competed against her in any election.

He also asked the JAF members to work in a body to make successful the JAF convention scheduled for October 31.

Expressing support for the High Court order that banned agitation on the SC premises, Huda said, "We've gathered here today to ensure our stance against those who are violating the order, no matter which party they belong to."

"We will resist the violators of the order and file a contempt of court case if necessary," he said, adding that the members of Sammilito Ainijibi Samannoy Parishad set fire to a copy of the court order at a grand rally, which accounts to be contempt of court."

The court was pondering to take "contempt of court action" for this, he said. "But at the same time, the pro-government lawyers' organisation, JAF, violated the court order in the same manner by holding a grand rally on the SC premises on August 5."

MP from the constituency, joined BNP by crossing floor.

On August 4, the BNP Parliamentary Board nominated Sirajul as the four-party alliance candidate after interviewing six aspirants including Zafar.

The decision sparked resentment among party activists as the supporters of Zafar, who fought the last general election as the alliance candidate, vowed to resist Sirajul. Workers of opposition AL which is boycotting the polls, also started campaign against Sirajul.

"The BNP high-command took the right decision by giving me the party ticket," Zafar told reporters after the meeting. "I am determined to win the election."

A correspondent from Faridpur reports: The supporters of Zafar were in a jubilant mood in the constituency (Boalmari-Alfadanga) as they came to know that Zafar has got the nomination. They brought out processions and chanted slogans against Sirajul.

On the other hand, the supporters of Sirajul left the area.

Seven candidates including Zafar and Sirajul submitted their nomination papers for the by-elections.

Sirajul as a candidate of Awami League won the 2001 election securing 126,858 votes while his nearest contestant Zafar, the candidate of BNP-led alliance, got 119,912 votes.

Since joining BNP, Sirajul faced stiff resistance from Awami League leaders and workers in Boalmari and Alfadanga. His motorcade came under attack last month when he was going to Faridpur for the first time after changing party.

# 70 vessels fined at Ctg port

CU CORRESPONDENT

A magistrate seized 70 vessels in the Chittagong Port and its outer anchorage in the last nine days and fined them Tk 7 lakh on various charges including tax evasion, illegal operations and environment pollution.

The ships included three foreign vessels -- MV Jin Shan and MV Saloos of Panama and MV Blue Sea of South Korea.

Chittagong Port Magistrate M Munir Chowdhury led the drive with the help of police and held the vessels for tax evasion, carrying goods beyond their capacity, environmental pollution and violation of maritime rules.

# Members

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the 300, Haq said, "As members of the finance committee, we've worked closely with the finance minister for a long time. That's why we've requested him for this special allocation."

Talking to the press Saifur said he directed the planning ministry officials present at the meeting to take note of the demands the MPs made, adding if the projects are found viable they would approve them.

Explaining the PIC idea, Mushfiqur Rahman said 50 percent of the development projects, like road construction or irrigation facilities, implemented through tenders are not done properly. But, if they are done through the PIC, the funds would be properly used and corruption would be less.

"The finance minister has agreed to our proposal," he claimed.

RAJSHAHI HEALTH INSTT

# No action taken for violence by JCD-Shibir

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The Institute of Health Technology (IHT) authorities are yet to take any action for Tuesday's clash between Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) activists that left some 50 students injured and forced the closure of the institute.

They did not form any committee to investigate the incident, nor did they attempt to find out the persons responsible for the violence. The police are yet to arrest any one.

"The administration is not eager to take the case seriously as both the feuding groups belong to the ruling alliance. We are waiting if they reach a consensus," said a senior teacher of the institute, seeking not to be named.

When contacted, IHT Principal Dr Abdur Rahman denied the allegations and said they would form a probe committee within two weeks and the authorities would consider any legal action after receiving the probe report.

Rahman visited the injured students at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital after he returned from Dhaka in early hours yesterday.

Meanwhile, JCD and ICS filed two separate cases against each other.

JCD's IHT Unit President Shahidul Islam filed a case accusing 20 people including five ICS leaders in his case. He alleged that ICS men Mehdi Hasan and Monimul Islam were forcibly staying at room 312 and they hired outsiders to beat up students.

Injured ICS member Rezaul Karim claimed in his case that the seat belonged to them and JCD men beat them up as they protested disturbance at the hostel.

Around 20 rooms belonging to both the groups were vandalised during the clash. The institute was declared closed for an indefinite period and the students were asked to leave the hostels.

# Fake lawyer of 15yr held

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A fake advocate was arrested yesterday after practicing as a lawyer at the District Judge's Court, Dhaka for 15 years.

Mohammad Abdur Rashid, son of Kazimuddin of Srirampur in Dhamrai in Dhaka, was picked up by the Brokers' Eviction Committee of Dhaka Bar Association (DBA).

The committee, led by Assistant General Secretary Shamima Akhter Shammee, challenged Rashid when he was making submissions on a criminal case in an advocate's robe.

But Rashid failed to give satisfactory answers or show his identity card, which all advocates are required to carry.

Committee members immediately took him into their custody and turned him in to police. They also filed a cheating case against him.

Rashid told reporters he had been practicing since 1990 without having the required degree by using another lawyer's membership number.

# Cop sent to jail for Tk 6cr seized drugs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A policeman was arrested yesterday on charges of embezzling seized drugs and other evidence worth about Tk 6 crore.

The Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Rajshahi sent Mahbubur Rahman, a messenger of the metropolitan court police, to jail. The court also issued a warrant of arrest against prime accused Sub-inspector Manik Uddin Talukder.

Earlier, the current SI of the court, Tamij Uddin Tamij, had filed a case with Rajpara Police Station against Manik and Mahbubur after a primary investigation into the matter.

They embezzled evidence including heroin, phensidyl and other seized items from 40 cases in the last one year, Tamij said.

The stolen items were stored at the court police storehouse between May 15 and October 20 last year, he added.

# Nafees dropped

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who will join the Test squad after the one-day series.

Experienced right-arm paceman Tapash Baisya has also been excluded from the one-day side on fitness ground. The Sylhet seamer, who had been complained of an on-off pain on his right heel during Bangladesh's tour in England, is yet to fully recover. The selectors however kept him in the Test squad subject to his fitness.

The Board, as it has always been the case, included a fresh face in the 15-man team. The new entrant this time is left-arm paceman Syed Russel, who is now touring with Bangladesh A team in England. Besides, the selectors recalled left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak, who had his action under scrutiny by the ICC on his debut in the Asia Cup in Sri Lanka last year.

# 3 feuding Sylhet MPs

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that line, he added. "They have met me and admitted their mistakes. As a senior minister I have accepted their apology," the finance minister said in a lenient tone.

"The feud had created a gap among the BNP leadership in Sylhet and we will have to sit again to remove this gap," he observed. Members of the Standing Committee on the Finance Ministry, who met the finance minister yesterday, also expressed concerns over the feud.

"Saifur Rahman is not just an MP of Sylhet, he is the finance minister of the country and well known in the international arena. This feud has not only damaged BNP's image but also that of the country," they observed.

The trouble erupted after Syed Mokbul Hossain MP uttered some comments hitting the finance minister and his son Nasser Rahman MP at a rally in Beanibazar upazila on July 24 this year.

Comments from district BNP Convener M Ilias Ali MP against city BNP President Ariful Haque Chowdhury, who is believed to be the most trusted man to the finance minister also attributed much to make a different atmosphere in the region's politics.

Besides, the allegations that ruling party lawmaker Shafi Ahmed Chowdhury made in the parliament against the finance minister's APS Abdul Quaiyum Chowdhury, who is also the central Jubo Dal vice-president, added to the uneasy situation.

In a bid to quell the volatile situation, the finance minister intervened that led to the suspension of the activities of the BNP's Sylhet district

# Regional Maoists

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11-day long 4th meeting of CCOMPOSA somewhere along the Bangladesh frontier with India by December this year. Some 50 delegates around South Asia are likely to attend, shaping future strategies.

The 17-day long third meeting was held somewhere in Jharkhand in India last year.

The CCOMPOSA is a combine of left-wing extremist organisations in four South Asian countries - Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

The PBCP has been reorganizing in the northwestern region for what they termed, 'avenging state-sponsored atrocities on people so far' by law enforcing agencies and Bangla Bhai's Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh.

As part of this, they recently trained 35 cadres from Bhutan in bomb techniques and guerrilla warfare using sophisticated arms, including AK-47s. Indian separatist rebels ULFA and KLO imparted the week-long training to over 150 operatives around South Asia.

Their recent posters, put up on the occasion of the 33rd death anniversary of Naxalite movement founder Charu Majumdar, called for an 'Extension of the existing drive of

committee on July 27.

In late last year BNP Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman formed the convening committee of the Sylhet district unit with Ilias Ali MP as the convener.

But that committee met serious opposition from the pro-Saifur local leaders.

BNP sources now hint that a fresh committee of Sylhet BNP may be formed soon through a compromise formula with Ilias remaining the head while a pro-Saifur man as the secretary.

# OC beats up

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two rival Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) groups at the station premises.

The OC, in a bid to control the situation, chased the feuding BCL groups and forcibly picked some of them on a police van. At one stage, he pushed Jewel on the ground and later slapped him.

When Jewel gave his identity and asked why the OC attacked him, the OC became more enraged and said, "He (Jewel) would have been treated more rudely if his identity could have been known beforehand."

Witnesses said the OC was drunk at the time.

When contacted over the phone in the evening, OC Mahfuz said it was an accident out of misunderstanding and denied misbehaving with Jewel after knowing his identity.

"Rather, I hugged him (Jewel) and regretted my mistake," the OC said.

The CUJA protest programmes also include the submission of memorandum to the Vice Chancellor on Saturday and to the District Police Super (SP) on Sunday.

# Assam rebels blow up rail track

AFF, Guwahati

Separatist rebels blew up a railway track in restive Assam state yesterday, cutting rail links between the remote northeastern region and the rest of India, police said.

Rebels also blew up a gas pipeline and attacked three power facilities overnight, a police spokesman said.

They routinely step up attacks before India's August 15 Independence Day. This year there had been about two dozen attacks since the weekend, officials said, including one which killed four people and wounded nine in a market.

Wednesday's blast at Tihu, about 70km outside Assam's main city of Guwahati, damaged a "vital section of rail track", police said.

This disrupted train services between the rest of India and the northeast, a railway spokesman said.

"Repairs have begun but the complete restoration of the tracks is expected to take at least 24 hours," he said.

On Tuesday two policemen were seriously injured when suspected militants attacked a road patrol outside the Nalbari police station in the west of the state.

Militants also blew up a state-owned Oil India Limited gas pipeline in eastern Tinsukia district and damaged three power transformers in separate attacks, police said.

"There have been about two dozen explosions targeting innocent civilians, vital installations, and security forces since Saturday," Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi said.

Police blame the attacks on the outlawed United Liberation Front of Asom, a rebel group fighting for an independent Assamese homeland since 1979. More than 10,000 people have lost their lives to insurgency in the past two decades.

About two dozen rebel groups in India's oil-rich northeast are fighting for secession and routinely boycott Independence Day, which marks India's independence from Britain, as a "black day".

# PM's DAIS 9 decorators handed over to India

UNB, Comilla

The nine Indians, who were arrested while making the podium for Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's meeting at Laksam Stadium, were yesterday handed over to Indian authorities.

Official sources said the trespassers were sent back to India through Bibirbazar border checkpoint in Comilla Sadar upazila at 10:00am.

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Bibirbazar border outpost Subedar Abdul Hye and OC (Watch) Lutfur Rahman were present from Bangladesh side while Sonamura sub-division (Tripura) SDPO Sanjoy Roy, Deputy Collector and Magistrate Sudhangsu Sarker and the BSF Srimantapur Company Commandant BP Singh from the other side.

The deported Indian nationals are Dulal Sutradhar, 25, Haricharan Deb Nath, 22, Kalipada Saha, 35, Dilip Das, 40, Gautam Bhounick, 35, Anu Dev, 20, Dipen Dey, 22, Mahadev Ghosh, 31, and Khokon Das, 40.

Special Security Force (SSF) personnel held the nine Indians on March 11 this year while they were putting up the stage for the prime minister's scheduled public meeting.

Later, the meeting of the prime minister was cancelled for security concerns. The Indians were reportedly "hired" to make the podium.

Meanwhile, a magistrate court fined the nine Tk 200 each and sentenced them to seven days imprisonment in June for their illegal entry into Bangladesh.

They were handed over to Indian authorities following a home ministry order on expiry of their prison term.

# 75 houses

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knock down the rest of the illegal structures," a BIWTA official said asking not to be named.

The BIWTA team did not face resistance during the drive, but a large number of police was on hand to foil any such move.

Locals alleged they were not given enough time to shift or remove the structures from the bank.

"We were certain that our houses would not be demolished as the drive was supposed to be conducted here on Monday," Rahmat Ali said.

"How we can stop the drive when our ward commissioner Dipjal has failed to save his own market," said Zakir Hossain.

BNP Ward Commissioner and film actor Moniwar Hossain Dipjal had assured them of protecting their houses, he added. "I had nothing to do but witness that a two-storey building of my brother was knocked down," he aggrieved.

Another inhabitant of Sinnirtek claimed at least 2,000 houses and shops have to be demolished if the BIWTA plans to completely clear the area from Sinnirtek to Diabari.

Earlier, the BIWTA demolished over 50 illegal establishments on the first day of the drive on Monday along the Buriganga.

BIWTA sources said they have identified about 400 illegal encroachments that include semi-pucca houses and shops on the banks of the Buriganga and the Turag.

# Desa grilled over graft

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body to submit its report in a month. "We will go for action after receiving the recommendations from the parliamentary body," State Minister for Power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud told reporters after the meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan.

The government decided last July to convert the state-run Desa into a company for making the power-supply system in Dhaka more stable and effective. The decision was taken as part of the ongoing process of reforms in the power sector—a move largely prompted by persuasion of the same donors to the sector who had earlier prescribed the formation of the Desa.

The parliamentary body has been trying to curb corruption in the Desa since the last two years. However, it expressed frustration as a new system called Performance Target Achievement, which was introduced three months ago, also failed to curb the irregularities in the organisation.

Examining the documents provided by the Desa, the parliamentary watchdog yesterday observed that the Desa officials do not charge any bills for at least 40-50 lakh units of electricity each month at its 34 substations. This causes a loss of significant amount of money each month, which the Desa describes as system loss, the meeting sources said.

The members of the parliamentary body discussed the condition of two Desa substations in Narayanganj where officials did not prepare bills for an average 45 lakh units of electricity in the last three months despite introduction of the new system.

The documents disclosed that in Fatullah alone the Desa officials did not charge bills for 5,014,361 kwh (kilowatt hour) electricity in May and 4,952,303 kwh in June this year.

The average value of the lost electricity was Tk 16,296,673 in May and Tk 16,094,984 in June, according to the Desa documents.

The Desa sells each unit of electricity at Tk 2.5 to Tk 4.

The system losses of the Desa

remained almost unchanged—even increased in some areas—while the Dhaka Electricity Supply Company reduced system losses from 46 percent to 14, observed the committee.

A senior official at the Power Development Board (PDB) said the Desa officials doubled their irregularities anticipating the possibility of dissolving the organisation.

Thus the corruption and irregularities in the Desa have eaten up about Tk 2,000 crore in last ten years. At present, the Desa owes Tk 3,229 crore to the PDB while it has unpaid bills of Tk 1319 crore.

"Everyone from the top to bottom in this organisation are corrupt. We should think seriously whether the organisation should exist or turn in to a holding company," committee member and ruling BNP lawmaker Sardar Shakhawat Hossain Bakul told the reporters.

Committee Chairman Shahidul Islam told reporters at his office that the Desa officials earlier assured the committee that they had initiated steps to reduce system losses and realise the long pending bills. But instead of any improvement, the situation is deteriorating, he said.

"We asked the subcommittee to probe the irregularities and identify the officials involved in the malpractice," the committee chairman said. "The subcommittee was also asked to submit its report in a month, otherwise it will be dissolved."

On the ongoing load-shedding across the country, the lawmakers observed that it is not fair to reduce power supply to villages as the villagers regularly pay the electricity bills.

The state minister for power, however, told the committee that the situation is improving.

Awami League lawmaker and committee member Syed Abul Hossain declined to comment on the meeting discussion.

# Baufal newsmen

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According to sources, Baufal Police Station Officer-in-Charge Nur Muhammad joined hands with the ruling party men in intimidating the local journalists. He told their family members that the MP has ordered him to implicate them, the newsmen, in non-bailable cases.

A few of the senior local journalists yesterday morning did brave MP Shahidul's declaration on Tuesday to do away with Baufal Press Club and set up a BNP office there.

They opened the club but could stay only a short while, as BNP men shouted threats and were about to launch an attack. The press club members fled in fright.

The henchmen of Shahidul yesterday noon celebrated what they dubbed a victory over journalists, assembling at the house of Madanpura Union Parishad Chairman Rafiqul Islam, a close ally of the MP. They slaughtered a goat and made a feast.

Shahidul, also the upazila BNP president, yesterday flatly denied Tuesday's incident and claimed he and his party do not and never did believe in the politics of terrorism.

However, he said over cellphone, "It [the belief] does not mean we will tolerate everything done in the name of freedoms of press and speech... [that] journalists will write whatever they wish and practise media-terrorism."

According to reports, on Shahidul's command, a 25-strong BNP cadre group led by one Rafiq Talukdar picked up Monjur from his college campus on Tuesday noon for reporting a looting of some 100 mounds of Hilsa fries called Jatka

reporting a looting of some 100 mounds of Hilsa fries called Jatka

by BNP cadres on Monday.

The abductors took Monjur to the upazila engineer's office at around 1:30pm, where Shahidul Alam beat him up brutally.

Led by Aminul Islam, correspondent of daily Ittefaq and president of Baufal Press Club, local journalists rushed to the upazila office complex to save their colleague. But BNP cadres attacked them too and chased them away.

The newsmen then informed the district police superintendent of the incident, but as of filing of this report last evening no case has been lodged in this connection. Monjur meanwhile remains in hiding with other journalists.

A wide range of professional and human rights organisations had condemned the barbarity and demanded punishment of the persons responsible for it. Barisal Reporters Unity and journalists union yesterday announced a protest programme against the 'repression of journalists by ruling party cadres', which includes a rally this morning.

Locals said MP Shahidul is an infamous godfather of extortionists and musclemen and often uses abusive word against media and media professionals.

In the past, he had assaulted Al-Mamun,