

## SC dumps

**FROM PAGE 1** assets and liabilities, and criminal records, if any.

The rule was strictly abided by during the by-elections and election to 50 reserved seats for women in parliament. But after 19 months, Abu Safa, not known in politics, secured a stay order against the ruling from a vacation chamber judge of the SC, a day before the last day of filing nomination papers for the January 22 stalled election.

The stay order had raised many eyebrows as it was granted without hearing the Election Commission or the writ petitioners. The story did not end there. Abu Safa surreptitiously got leave-to-appeal to overturn the HC ruling.

Finally, the SC yesterday morning set aside the ruling.

In the meantime, Dr Kamal had filed two petitions seeking to ascertain the locus standi of Abu Safa and draw criminal proceedings against him and his lawyers 'acting fraud upon the highest judiciary' by making false statements.

What happened yesterday is that before disposing of Dr Kamal's petitions, the four-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by the chief justice pronounced its verdict annulling the HC ruling triggering the row in the courtroom.

Many lawyers were heard shouting "shame... shame... fraudulent judgment," to the discomfort of the judges.

Soon the security in and around the court of the chief justice was beefed up. Scores of additional armed police cordoned off the courtroom while entry of public was restricted.

Sources said finding the situation volatile, Attorney General Barrister Fida M Kamal rushed to

the chief justice's chamber and communicated to him the sentiment of the Bar.

Apparently the chief justice had a second thought. He resumed the court at 12:45pm along with three other judges. He meekly recalled his earlier order saying: "Our unsigned [earlier] order is recalled."

Earlier, sharply reacting to the verdict, Dr Kamal said, "No, my lord, you cannot pronounce such an order without going into the merit of the case."

"This will be unprecedented in the history of the highest judiciary in dispensation of even-handed justice," said Kamal.

"Granting leave-to-appeal filed by a 'fake' person, should be revoked first, as he had no locus standi to seek remedy against the HC ruling," he contended.

Somehow some fraudulent acts had been committed in the process of dispensation of justice, Dr Kamal told the court. "We cannot destroy the dignity and image of the highest court."

The court interrupted him that evoked a brief altercation. "Unless I am heard, I will not leave the courtroom. If you can, draw contempt proceedings against me and call police to arrest me. I will not leave the place until I die. And you will not attend my namaz-e-janaza," said Dr Kamal.

"I will tear off my gown if I am not allowed to complete my submission."

Finding the atmosphere unpleasant the judges hurriedly withdrew from the ejlsh. But a grim faced Dr Kamal remained seated in the court.

## Rejoinder

**FROM PAGE 1** Monday, February 19, 2007 issue published a long interview as a lead news with the sole intention of maligning before the nation the former prime minister and chairperson of BNP Begum Khaleda Zia, members of her family and some other former ministers and government officials.

The title of the interview was, "Khaleda Zia became reckless in her second term." The interview was given by Mr AHM Nurul Islam, who worked initially as private secretary (PS) to the then prime minister and subsequently as secretary in-charge at the prime minister's office (PMO) during the four-party alliance government.

Mr Hanif Mohammad took the interview. Before publishing such an interview, a daily newspaper such as Prothom Alo or the interviewer did not feel it at all necessary to contact Begum Zia or anyone else figuring in the interview on any issue discussed in the interview. This is undoubtedly repugnant to universally accepted norms of journalism. We have been surprised to see that such a report could be published by a daily of Prothom Alo's stature.

On every point mentioned in the interview, Mr AHM Nurul Islam's views are totally baseless, ill-motivated and are full of distortion of facts. In every matter, Mr Islam has tried with ill motive to assassinate the character of the honourable former prime minister, her family and the concerned respectable persons. As a result, on the one hand, the image of Begum Zia and others has been tarnished and their reputation tainted, and on the other, the whole nation has been misled with false and fabricated facts.

In actuality, Mr AHM Nurul Islam was retired compulsorily from service on some proven specific and serious charges during his terms first as PS to prime minister and then as secretary in-charge in the PMO, both the posts being very important and extremely sensitive.

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption also filed a case against him. He then filed a writ petition in the High Court which is still pending for disposal. The then government allowed the case to proceed and the law to take its own course. But now it appears that at the end of the term of the alliance government, Mr Islam has launched with vengeance, an ill-motivated effort to destroy the image and honour of the former prime minister and chairperson of BNP. His statements are absolutely out of grudge, and are baseless and false. He has thereby tried to confuse the people.

We hereby lodge a strong protest to this interview given with an ill motive and also to its publication in Prothom Alo.

## Corrupt policemen

**FROM PAGE 16** Deputy Managing Director Abu Sadek Mohammad Sohel were present.

Taher said an SIBL official and a sub-inspector from Tejgaon Police Station went to the house of Serajul Hossain, proprietor of Liberty Accessories Ltd, with an arrest warrant to arrest him last June. Serajul had defaulted a loan of Tk 9 crore with SIBL.

"The police officer sat our official in a room and went to talk to Serajul," Taher said. "As it was getting late, our official went looking for them and found that the SI and Serajul were having meal together and chatting.

"The SI told our officer that the defaulter agreed to repay the loan within a couple of days and that he would contact the bank," Taher said.

"But Serajul did not come to the bank. Our officer again pressurised the police to arrest the defaulter but this time the house was found under lock and key," he added.

Another SIBL official said, "We suspect that the SI took bribe from the defaulter and helped him go into hiding."

Another bank official said they apprehend that the Khilgaon police had informed another defaulter of the bank, Sakhawat Hossain Sohag, in advance about an early morning raid.

"The court had issued a warrant of arrest against Sohag of Abish Carton and Accessories Ltd for a total of Tk 95 lakh defaulted loans," Taher said, adding that Sohag was not at home during the raid.

Sources said the volume of classified loans has been increasing gradually despite a number of government measures in recent years that included enactment of the Money Loan Court Act (Amendment) 2003.

BB sources said the volume of defaulted loans in the banking system was Tk 20,098 crore in December 2006 while the total classified loan is about Tk 31,000 crore with different banks having written off around Tk 11,000 crore in the last few years.

The total number of cases involving Tk 22,954 crore filed with the Money Loan Court was 97,288 as of June 30, 2006.

## Only two submit

**FROMPAGE 1** wealth statement via a representative. The ACC did not receive the statement and asked the representative to tell Ibrahim to submit it himself.

Besides, 26 of the remaining suspects sent their representatives to learn about further details on how to submit their wealth statements. Some of them represented the detained suspects and some represented the free ones.

The wealth statement of Ibrahim makes some startling claims. For instance, Ibrahim claimed that he owns furniture worth Tk 10,000 and 12 bhoori of gold worth Tk 12,000. His wife owns 30 bhoori of gold worth Tk 20,000. He also claimed that his wife owns 14 katha of land in Tejgaon worth Tk 26 lakh when in reality each katha of Tejgaon land is worth Tk 50 lakh.

Jamaat's Shahjahan Chowdhury's statement portrays a picture of a man whose sole source of income during 2001-06 was the honorarium for being a member of parliament (MP). But the claim is in sharp contrast to his submission that he imported a car worth Tk 49 lakh duty free, which he has not yet released from the importer.

The ACC meanwhile decided to ask the government to clarify the status of corruption suspect Giasuddin Al Mamun who was reportedly arrested by the joint forces, but officially he has not been declared as such. Mamun is one of the 50 suspects. Although the notice has been served at his residence and office, his 'unofficial arrest' has made it difficult for the ACC to expect that Mamun will get a fair chance to submit his wealth statement.

"Since questions have been raised about him, we will at first get confirmation about his status and then decide on his case," said Delwar Hossain, secretary to the ACC.

Other than Jamaat leader Shahjahan Chowdhury, ex-BNP MP Rashiduzzaman Millat submitted his wealth statement to the ACC.

Shahjahan was accompanied by a large number of bodyguards and party men as he arrived at the ACC in a blue taxi at 2:50pm to leave at 3:15pm.

Millat was accompanied by his family members and office assistants and he appeared calm throughout his stay there between 3:45pm and 4:15pm.

Both of the ex-MPs claimed themselves as honest persons.

Shahjahan Chowdhury claimed that he was vocal against corruption and terrorism while he was a member of the last parliament.

Millat on the other hand claimed that the ACC wrongly included him on the list of corruption suspects, probably because the ACC inquiry was flawed. "I would like to say that they did not put my name on the basis of a real inquiry. I was very close to Hawa Bhaban. But I don't know what corruption has taken place in Hawa Bhaban," he said.

The journalists asked Millat whether he believed the allegations of corruption against the other suspects, especially against those who have been arrested. He said, "Those should be investigated first. If the investigation finds them guilty, they should be punished."

Meanwhile, ACC Secretary Delwar Hossain responded to the suspects' claims of honesty saying, "Our primary investigation indicates that they have acquired wealth through illegal means. We will now crosscheck their statements with our findings. If there are anomalies and if we find gross inconsistencies with their declared earnings, then we will file first information reports [FIR] against them."

After Shahjahan Chowdhury had submitted his statement to a director of the ACC, a group of journalists met him at the building's terrace. Amid a shower of questions he said

he received the ACC notice at his Chittagong residence where he lives with his joint family.

When the journalists asked him what kind of assets he owns, Chowdhury's bodyguards pushed them aside and promptly ran out through the main entrance of the compound. Chowdhury got on a bike driven by one of his bodyguards and zoomed out of the area leaving the journalists baffled.

When the ACC was about to close for the day around 5:00pm, a few men representing Hafiz Ibrahim arrived there. They submitted Ibrahim's wealth statement to an ACC director. The director asked them whether Ibrahim was arrested or not. They replied that he was not arrested. The director then responded that Ibrahim himself should submit the statement. The representatives then argued that nowhere in the notice it was said that one has to submit his or her own statement in person. The director then showed them the notice where it was said so. Then the representatives insisted that the director to receive the statement anyway.

Talking to The Daily Star Ibrahim's representative Barrister AKM Fakhrul Islam said, "He did not come here apprehending he might be arrested. I don't know where he is staying now but I have been told to submit this statement."

When he heard that Millat and Shahjahan had submitted their statements themselves and were not arrested, Islam said, "Then we can ask Hafiz Ibrahim to come in person."

**WEALTH STATEMENTS** Rashiduzzaman Millat submitted a wealth statement of 487 pages. He gave the journalists a one-page brief on his statement.

He said he does not own any land or house in Dhaka. He owns an office in Dhaka and a concrete factory in Rupganj which is mortgaged with a bank. He does not have any notable savings in his bank accounts.

He does not have any properties or money other than those declared in his wealth statement submitted to the ACC. He does not have any money or wealth in any foreign country.

He was not involved in any irregularity during his term as a parliamentarian.

Millat told the journalists that he owns moveable and immovable properties worth about TK 13 crore to Tk 14 crore and he has loans worth Tk 11 crore.

He claimed that his business rather saw a loss after becoming a parliamentarian in 2001. The loss was because he had to spend money for public welfare, he claimed.

Shahjahan Chowdhury's statement on the other hand took two pages.

He said in the statement that he holds Tk 60,000 worth of shares of Prime Salt Industries Ltd, Tk 50,000 worth of shares of As-Shefa Hospital Private Ltd, Chittagong and a share of Tk 1000 of Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd. He has 10 bhoori of gold, and some furniture which he received as a wedding gift.

He owns a tin-shed shop in Ramu and three acres of land in his village. He earns Tk 1,000 a month as rent from the shop. He purchased 1.5 acres of land worth Tk 1.25 lakh in Satkania in 2006.

His bank accounts have negligible deposits and his source of earnings during 2001-2006 was his honorarium as a parliamentarian.

Interestingly, he submitted that as a parliamentarian he imported a duty free car worth Tk 49 lakh in August 2006, which he intended to show in his tax return for 2007-08 fiscal year. He claimed that his brother, who lives in the US, lent him Tk 20 lakh for purchase of the car which still lies with the importer as he could not pay the full amount.

Hafiz Ibrahim's statement which was not accepted, said he has movable and immovable properties worth Tk 6.82 crore while his wife Mafruz Sultana own properties worth Tk 10.25 crore.

His business capital is Tk 1.48 crore, he also owns an acre of land in Cox's Bazar worth Tk 32 lakh, land in Dhaka's Bhatra area worth Tk 45,000, 7.5 katha land in Dakkhin Khan worth Tk 7.87 lakh, five katha of land worth Tk 56 lakh in Banani, lands and assets in Borhanuddin and Doulatkhan worth Tk 42 lakh, shares in Rupali, Pubali, Islami, and Standard banks worth about Tk 6 lakh, a car worth Tk 45 lakh, 12 bhoori gold worth Tk 12,000 [the present market price of each bhoori of gold is Tk 17,000], furniture worth Tk 10,000 and cash and bank deposits worth Tk 3.43 crore.

His wife owns a newspaper Dainik Khabar Patra and earns Tk 20.88 lakh a year, debit certificates from Rupali Bank worth Tk 12.44 lakh. The statement showed his wife's loan from Janata Bank worth Tk 15.54 lakh, house-building loan worth Tk 20 lakh from Islami Bank on the list of her wealth although loans are not considered as income. The statement said she also have shares of Rupali, Standard and Mutual Trust banks worth Tk 19.80 lakh, 7.5 katha land in Bhatara of Dhaka worth Tk 1.68 lakh, 1.11 acre land in Kashimpur of Gazipur worth Tk 1.35 lakh, 8.25 decimal land in Dakkhinkhan worth Tk 11.25 lakh, 9.75 decimal land and a five-storey house in Barisal worth Tk 57 lakh, 61 decimal land in Borhanuddin worth Tk 17 lakh, 14 katha land in Tejgaon for Khabarpatra valued at Tk 26 lakh [whereas each katha of land in Tejgaon should not be less than Tk 50 lakh], 8 katha land and a three-storey house in Baridhara worth Tk 98 lakh, 30 bhoori of gold worth Tk 20,000, furniture worth Tk 10,000, and cash and bank deposits worth Tk 7.22 crore.

Ibrahim also declared that other than the assets described in the statement, he does not own anything else. His only son is studying abroad, whose expenses are also borne by Ibrahim.

The statement was signed by Fakhrul Islam, his lawyer.

## 2 wounded

**FROM PAGE 16** Department ASP Mizanur Rahman, was being operated on at Apollo Hospitals till filing this report at 6:30pm. The other injured was Kamal Hossain, an employee at a local shop. He was undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Witnesses said at around 10:00am on a road at Sector 9 of Uttara, two youths on a motorbike forced Ashraf to get off the rickshaw he was riding on with a girl.

"As he got off the rickshaw, the youths sprayed several bullets on him. He tried to run away, but by that time at least four bullets had hit him in his chest and back," a police sub-inspector investigating the incident said quoting witnesses.

He said that during the attack one stray bullet hit Kamal, 22, the shop worker in the back while he was preparing tea inside a shop.

Police said the girl accompanying Ashraf was not a relative of Ashraf, who is a candidate for the upcoming Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination from Uttara Maleka Banu High School.

Police suspect rivalry between the youths and Ashraf over the girl may be the motive for the attack.

Police said they would interview the girl.

## Bhuiyan

**FROM PAGE 16** chairperson's Adviser Mofazzal Karim addressed the meeting, among others.

Paying tributes to the language martyrs, Bhuiyan urged all to work to enrich Bangla language and save the nation's culture from the aggression of alien culture.

Former law minister Moudud Ahmed said, "Students along with Oli Ahad and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman protested the speech of [Muhammad Ali] Jinnah when he said 'Urdu and Urdu shall be the state language of Pakistan'."

He said democracy should be maintained in the country and "the BNP is more responsible than other parties to uphold democracy".

Khandaker Mosharraf said, "We should vow to set up democracy by strengthening us through self-correction as democracy is the spirit of liberation."

"Ekush [historic February 21] taught us not to bow down and it made us glorious," he said, adding that the struggle for independence began on that day.

"Those among us who have gone astray must pay for it and the people will not support them," Mofazzal Karim said, adding, "But general leaders and workers have not gone astray."

Later, Jatiyatabadi Samajik Sangskritik Sangstha organised a cultural function.

## People won't accept

**FROM PAGE 1** project. "Some vested quarters earlier planned to make profit in the name of preparing voter ID cards. They are still planning to do it," she added.

Hasina demanded that the caretaker government take initiatives for holding the next parliamentary elections as early as possible in order to bring back public confidence.

Praising a number of steps taken by the caretaker government including the Election Commission reconstitution and arrests of corrupt people, the AL president said even if her party was voted to power, her government would not have been able to arrest people like Giasuddin Al Mamun and former BNP lawmaker Mossaddak Ali Fala.

"If I would have arrested Fala, Khaleda would have enforced a seven-day hartal and if I would have arrested Mamun, Tarique would have enforced hartals. So, I really appreciate the caretaker government for arresting the corrupt bigwigs who have amassed hundreds of crore taka during the previous government's rule," she said.

The AL chief urged the caretaker government to arrest all the usurers and people who take bribes, so that nobody could play with the fate of the people.

"We will not allow anyone to exploit the people," she said.

Hasina demanded immediate arrest of 18 Jamaat-e-Islami lawmakers and taking account of their wealth before and after their tenure in parliament.

She said although the caretaker government has arrested a number of "looters and corrupt people", the main "thief" is still at large.

Mentioning that the present caretaker government is the outcome of the AL-led grand alliance's movement, Hasina said a number of names of her party leaders are on the caretaker government's list of corrupt people. She said these leaders were neither involved with the immediate past government's activities nor were they lawmakers.

"Then why have they been arrested? Is it because of a fear of people's movement in future?" she said.

"Veteran leaders of our party who organised demonstrations and were in the streets in the last few years have been included in the corruption list. If there had been any allegations of corruption against them during our rule, the previous BNP-Jamaat coalition government would have taken action," Hasina said, demanding immediate release of the arrested AL leaders.

She said no arrest in the name of "keeping balance" will be allowed. "The people will rather welcome the caretaker government if the real

corrupt people are arrested," Hasina added.

She said, "Even Ayub Khan, Ziaur Rahman and Ershad tried to destroy the Awami League but failed...If one leader is arrested, someone will fill the gap. Awami League cannot be destroyed as it is deeply rooted in the people of the country and all its achievements."

She asked the caretaker government to arrest corrupt people of not only the previous five years but all since the Liberation War of 1971.

She also demanded initiatives to find out those who have amassed hundreds of crores of taka, whitened black money, possess diamonds and other valuable ornaments.

"If necessary, come search my residence—I am ready. But you will have to search others' houses too," she said.

Criticising the previous BNP-Jamaat coalition government, Hasina said their extreme desire to come back to power through stealing votes has led the country to the present situation where people are still in confusion about what will happen.

Recalling the contribution of the language martyrs, she said the people earned their right to speak in mother tongue and achieved the country's independence because of AL's contribution, among others.

Emphasising the importance of mother tongue, she said it is also necessary to learn other international languages to communicate with the international communities.

Hasina said although the UN secretary general laid the foundation stone of a Mother Language Research Centre in Bangladesh, the BNP-led government cancelled the project only because of political jealousy.

Hasina demanded immediate rehabilitation of the poor people who have been made homeless in the last few days, saying problems will not be solved by making the poor homeless.

Referring to the government programmes on February 21, she said the caretaker government should chalk out more elaborate programmes to observe the day in a befitting manner.

Senior AL leaders including Zillur Rahman, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Abdul Jalil, Suranjit Sengupta, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, among others, took part in the discussion conducted by Asaduzzaman Noor.

## Commodity prices

**FROM PAGE 16** pros and cons of it.

He also hinted that activities of the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) will be boosted for direct government intervention in the essential commodity market.

The FBCCI also suggested the ministry to put specific import tariff rates on edible oil, powdered milk and garlic following the example of immediate past government's move to impose a specific tariff rate on sugar.

He said laws on protection of consumers' rights will be enacted within the next two months.

He refused the media allegation of a decline in opening of letters of credit (LC) saying that the situation is stable.

He also said the weekly numbers of opened LCs will be sent to newspapers regularly to provide the media with the real picture.

FBCCI President Mir Nasir said imposition of specific tariff rates on some essential commodities will yield positive result in curbing price escalation.

Nasir opposed government trading in the current open market economy regime saying that the FBCCI supported reactivation of TCB for the shortest period of time.

Representatives from trade bodies, import associations, wholesalers, retailers and officials concerned from different ministries participated in the meeting.

Meanwhile, UNB reported that the government yesterday acknowledged price hike of some essentials including rice, edible oil, onion and ginger in the domestic market.

"The prices went up a little due to short supply for a temporary period," said an official handout, responding to media reports on price hike.

"The government has undertaken measures necessary to improve import and supply of essentials," the hand out said hoping that the move will lead to an improved supply situation and commodity prices will remain at a tolerable level.

Prices of sugar, garlic and chic peas declined to some extent while the prices of flour, lentil, salt and turmeric remained unchanged as the government monitored the price and supply situation, the handout said.

The government reviewed the flow of pipeline imports in terms of opening of LCs and expected that

there will be no possibility of any supply shortage in the domestic market.

LCs opened for importing palm oil, lentil, sugar and powdered milk increased sharply during the July-January period of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of the previous fiscal.

Settlements in terms of payment against the LCs also increased in January.

However, LCs opened and settled in cases of onion and soybean declined.

LCs for rice, wheat, sugar, powdered milk and edible oil were up during the first two weeks of the current month compared to the corresponding period of the previous year.

To control the price situation, the government exchanged views with different stakeholders including trade bodies, importers, wholesalers and retailers, the handout added.

## Pak woman minister

**FROM PAGE 16** pro-US ruler's policy of "enlightened moderation" designed to tackle extremism.

Meanwhile, gunmen attacked the convoy of a Pakistani government minister in the restive southwestern province of Baluchistan on Tuesday but he escaped unhurt.

Minister for States and Frontier Regions Sardar Yar Mohammad Rind came under attack when he was travelling with a police escort near his village in Lando area, 150 km east of the provincial capital, Quetta.

## Islamabad zoo

**FROM PAGE 16** Afzal said test results had confirmed H5N1 in four peacocks and one or two geese.

"We are destroying the affected birds," he said without giving a specific number. He said there were no reports from other parts of the South Asian country about any fresh outbreak of bird flu.

"We have closed the zoo for two to three days as a preventative measure and are busy vaccinating other birds and spraying the compound," zoo director Raja Javed told AFP.

Javed gave a different figure for the number of birds affected, saying five geese and five peacocks had died due to suspected bird flu at the zoo in the past two days and that preliminary tests indicated the deadly H5N1 strain.