

Tarique remanded in extortion case

Mosharraf, Mohiuddin Chy, MAH Salim, Tahir, Atikullah Khan sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Clad in a black bullet proof jacket inscribed with 'RAB' in yellow and a helmet, arrested Tarique Rahman, son of former prime minister Khaleda Zia, was yesterday brought to a Dhaka court under heavy security and remanded for four days.

Tarique has been charged with extortion of Tk 1 crore from a construction firm, Al-Amin Construction, a concern of Amin Mohammad Foundation.

Owner of the construction firm, Amin Ahmed, who got ticket as a BNP candidate from a Noakhali constituency for the cancelled January 22 election, filed the case against Tarique with Gulshan Police Station yesterday.

At 11 at night, a white microbus carted Tarique to the court under strict security. Flanked by Rab and police personnel, the man who is believed to have virtually ruled the country for the last five years from

the Hawa Bhaban, could hardly be recognised under the armour of his protective gear that reminded people present in the court of the security given to top militants like

Bangla Bhai. He walked to the court as a heavy crowd pushed and shoved to get a view of the joint forces' top catch.

"I am a victim of domestic and

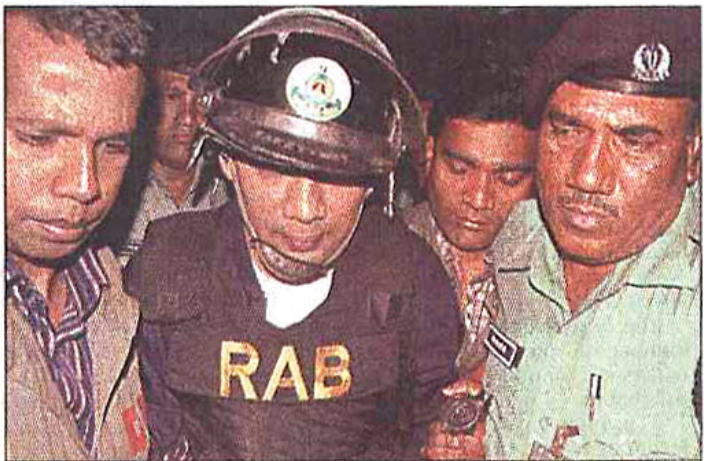


PHOTO: STAR

BNP's Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman clad in bullet proof vest and helmet being taken to a Dhaka court yesterday.

international conspiracies," Tarique mumbled as journalists asked for his remarks about his fate.

Profusely sweating, Tarique showed signs of fatigue and tension. The man, who was known for his habitual light-heartedness and off-the-cuff remarks often bordering on insolence, looked a shade of his former self.

As Tarique walked to the dock, his lawyers pleaded that his jacket and helmet be removed as he spent a sleepless night. But the court only permitted removal of his helmet.

A bewildered Tarique gave a vacant look around and then muttered for a glass of water. A mineral water bottle was passed to him by his lawyer. Tarique gulped down a few sips and then returned the bottle.

His lawyers pleaded for a chair for him to sit on as they said Tarique felt unwell, a request entertained by the court.

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AL terms raid on Sudha Sadan 'unfortunate'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the midnight search at Awami League (AL) President Shiekh Hasina's Sudha Sadan residence 'unfortunate and undesirable', AL leaders yesterday said the government should bring the real criminals, their godfathers and the so-called 'balance policy'.

Members of the joint forces entered the Sudha Sadan without any search warrant twice on Wednesday night and the information provided by the Sudha Sadan

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Many people happy at arrest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the arrest of Tarique Rahman, BNP's senior joint secretary general, an expected action, a cross section of people yesterday urged the government to ensure exemplary punishment of the corrupt regardless of their political and family identity.

They said the authorities should immediately make public specific and detailed corruption charges

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EC wants power like HC to punish for contempt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) has made a move for reviving the power to punish any person for contempt of the EC similar to that the High Court Division enjoys.

In 2001, the EC was given the power for a few days, but the then president Justice Shahabuddin Ahmad repealed the provisions by promulgating another ordinance in the face of severe criticism.

The reconstituted EC, which is moving for massive electoral reforms, is now planning to revive the provision, according to which the commission shall have the same power as the High Court Division has to punish any person for its contempt as if it were the High Court Division, sources said.

The EC is also in favour of reviving another provision barring any appeal against the EC decision to punish a person for its contempt.

The repealed provision said no appeal shall lie from any decision

of the commission, but the commission may, either suo moto or on application by the aggrieved person, review any such decision.

At a news conference EC Secretary Humayun Kabir yesterday said the EC is examining the provision for having the power to punish any person for its contempt.

Legal experts, however, said the EC cannot be provided with such power as it is not a court of law.

"The Election Commission will become autocratic if it is given the power and people's right to criticise its activities will be curtailed," Ghulam Rabbani, former judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The EC is an administrative body and anyone can criticise its activities, he said.

The EC has also planned for revival of another provision for cancellation of candidatures in parliamentary elections on

grounds of gross irregularities and violation of election laws. Shahabuddin repealed this provision too in 2001.

Sources said the EC thinks that the powers are required for strengthening the commission and it will include the proposals in its draft to be sent soon to the law ministry for vetting.

Asked about the plan for cancellation of disputed election, the EC secretary said the commission is examining if any such proposal can be made.

The EC is also examining the existing laws for registration of political parties, the EC secretary said, adding that the political parties' registration with the EC will be made mandatory with some preconditions.

"The EC is examining ways to ensure democratic practices within the political parties and accountability in their income and expenditures," he said.

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Taskforces handed enormous power

Empowered to detain without warrant, freeze or confiscate property of the accused, recover money and wealth illegally transferred abroad

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

The government plans to hand the still-unofficial taskforces enormous authority to crack down on corrupt people and culprits.

Under the supervision of a National Co-ordination Committee headed by Communication Adviser Major

General (ret'd) MA Matin, the taskforces will be authorised to conduct search or confiscate properties of people linked with any types of crime.

General Officer Commanding (GOC) of Nine Infantry Division Major General Masud Uddin Chowdhury will act as chief coordinator of the national committee,

which will evaluate list of culprits put forward by different auxiliary agencies.

The central committee of the coordination body, which drafts in all seven GOCs as members, will then recommend taking legal actions against listed culprits.

Once in action officially, these

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GOVT ISSUES PRESS NOTE Complete ban on all sorts of political activities

UNB, Dhaka

The caretaker government has slapped a complete ban on all sorts of political activities, including indoor politics, processions and meetings, across the country until further order.

"Stern legal actions will be taken against the violators of the order," said a press note issued last night by the home ministry.

The press note said it is for all concerned that despite a ban on the

political activities under the State of Emergency Rules 2007, different political parties conducted their political activities and the government took a lenient view thereof.

"But, it was noticed that different political parties were misusing the government's liberal attitude," said the press note.

The embargo came in the wake of a drive against bigwig politicians, businessmen and bureaucrats on charges of corruption and crime.

Commentary

How could BNP come to this stage?

MAHFUZ ANAM

Nobody represents the rot that ate away into the very vitals of BNP more dramatically than Tarique Rahman. President Ziaur Rahman for all his constructive (Saarc) and shameful (Indemnity Act) actions was universally respected for his financial honesty. Tarique, as his elder son, on the contrary, appeared hell bent on destroying that core image. Leave alone being concerned, he seemed to bask in

his reputation of corruption and never for a moment gave the slightest impression that he was either bothered by it or would ever do anything against it. He considered himself as the product of destiny and took the leadership of BNP to be his proprietorial right.

It was his nonchalance about the rule of law that perhaps represented his most fearful side. Rules just did not matter, only his personal interest did. In a vulgar display of his arrogance he used to

publicly denigrate older leadership of his own party. Not that any of them deserved any better (recall the photographs of senior party leaders, including Saifur Rahman, Khandakar Mosharraf and others, desperately trying to squeeze themselves into photo frames with Tarique at Zia's mazar or some similar occasion) yet his attitude towards them was geared to remind all every minute of the day as to who was the boss.

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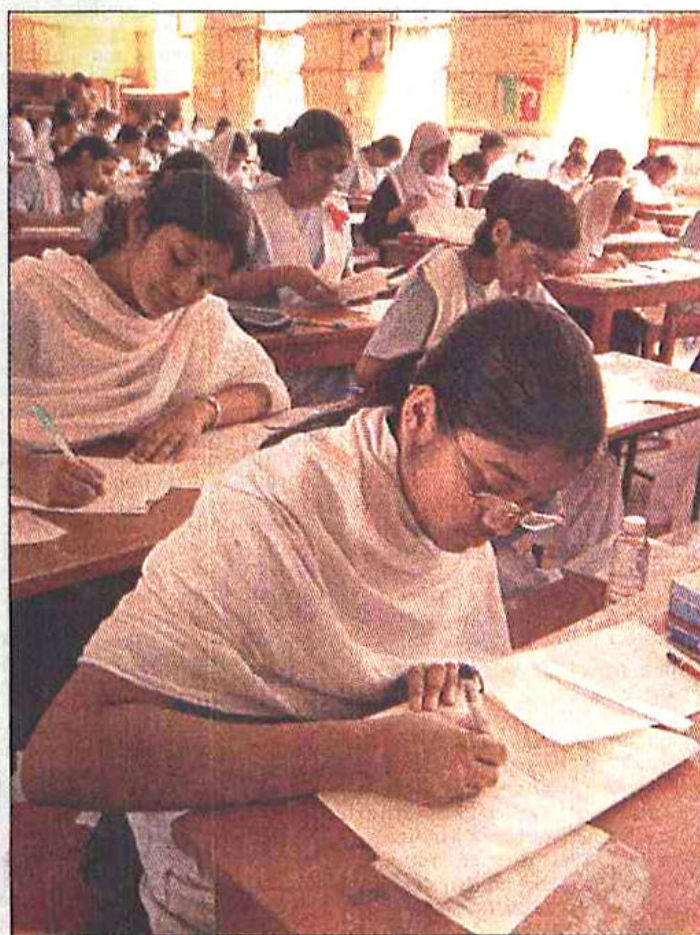


PHOTO: STAR

SSC examinations under all the education boards started yesterday. The photo was taken at Motijheel Central Government High school centre in the capital.

BANANI 'BNP PALLI' Fast completing structures only show the nexus

PINAKI ROY

A vast swath of expensive land in the posh section of Banani in the capital, popularly known as 'BNP Palli' (BNP village), is bristling with under construction multi-storey residential buildings although Rajdhani Unnayan Katrapakkha (Rajuk) claims that it suspended the process of plot allotment there.

Most of the allottees there happen to be former ministers, state ministers and lawmakers of BNP. Mizanur Rahman Minu, mayor of Rajshahi, and Mujibur Rahman Sarwar, mayor of Barisal, are now next-door neighbours. Houses of former BNP state ministers Alamgir Kabir of Naogaon, and Prof Razaul Karim of Narayanganj are

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Left: Photo shows part of Banani lake earth-filled around nine months back. Influential leaders of the immediate-past four-party alliance government received most of the plots there. Right: Plot owners are now rushing to finish construction work on the plots.



PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

BNP demands release of Tarique, others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the arrest of her elder son Tarique Rahman and a number of top ranking party leaders, immediate past prime minister BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia now seems a bit worried about the future of her party.

Party Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in a statement yesterday demanded immediate release of the political leaders including BNP Standing Committee Member Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain and party Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman against whom there are no specific allegations.

Bhuiyan yesterday met Khaleda Zia at her cantonment residence and had discussions with her, especially on Tarique's arrest, sources said.

The BNP chairperson yesterday remained the most conspicuous

absentee at Hawa Bhaban while her programme there with Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal on the International Women's Day was postponed.

BNP and its front organisations' failure to bring any strong protest against Tarique's arrest came as a shocking surprise to Khaleda, sources said.

Many BNP leaders, who hold the chairperson responsible for failure to check widespread corruption and power abuse by her son and his close associates, are now reluctant to meet her.

"Tarique Rahman was our future leader but he destroyed himself in last five years... Some of his associates misguiding him and earned huge illegal money," said a former BNP lawmaker.

A few leaders including former state minister for home affairs Lutfozzaman Babar and former

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The mayor's shenanigans

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Having enjoyed popularity as the Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) mayor for a long time, ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury suddenly became a different person after being elected to the post for the third time in May 2005.

Allegations of nepotism, misconduct with CCC officials and staff, encroaching on government land, and corruption surfaced against him during the past 22 months since the last mayoral election.

Instead of fulfilling his 40-point pledge, Mohiuddin, who has 14 cases filed against him by the Anti-Corruption Commission, began his third tenure consolidating his own interests, sources alleged.

Mohiuddin has been mostly criticised for his ill behaviour with the CCC officials and staffs, who would often come under attack of his abusive words, sources said.

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