

Govt's 'minus two' plan faces crucial tests in next few days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The next few days will be crucial for Bangladesh and are expected to be full of suspense, as the military backed interim government's new 'minus two' formula of politics will be tested through its success or failure in keeping and sending the two most prominent political leaders into exile.

The tripartite battle reached a new level as Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina on Wednesday expressed her ambivalence about returning home on Monday while BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's exile to Saudi Arabia still seems imminent despite filing of a petition with the

High Court against the government's move.

The caretaker government is determined to block Hasina's return while the authorities concerned are busy with negotiating as well as completing the formalities to send Khaleda to Saudi Arabia.

Sheikh Hasina, who flew to London yesterday from the USA, announced her plan to arrive in Dhaka on April 23 defying the government's multi-faceted manoeuvring to keep her in exile. But she runs the risk of getting arrested on arrival on charges of taking a bribe in connection with a private power plant deal nine years ago while she was the prime minister. She also faces murder charges

in connection with the deaths of six people in political street violence on October 28 last year.

Meanwhile, Khaleda Zia is expected to fly to Jeddah before Sunday along with most of her family members following a deal she made with the government soon after her younger son Arafat Rahman had been detained by the army-led joint forces at midnight on April 15, to be released later on his mother's acquiescence to going into exile.

Her elder son and BNP's Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, who is currently in prison, is expected to join the family in Jeddah later.

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Blow-out expert examines Titas well-3

OUR CORRESPONDENT, P'baria

Foreign consultant Robert Din Bob Grace, a gas well blow-out prevention expert, arrived at the troubled Titas Gas Field's well-3 in Brahmanbaria yesterday.

A closed-door meeting was held between Grace and officials of Bangladesh Gas Field Company Limited (BGFCL) and Bapex at the BGFCL conference room in Brahmanbaria yesterday.

Shahidul Abedin, managing director (MD) of BGFCL, Jamal Uddin, MD of Bapex, MA Baki, general manager (geologist) of Bapex, Nurul Islam, general manager (production) of Bapex and Yousuf Ali, of the well service

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Matin Mehdi, 3 others on 5-day remand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

The four militants of outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), arrested in Kurigram early Thursday, were placed on a five-day remand yesterday.

They are Matin Mehdi, 46, said to be the chief of "Allaher Dal", Biplab, 26, Anwar, 24, and Zubaer, 17.

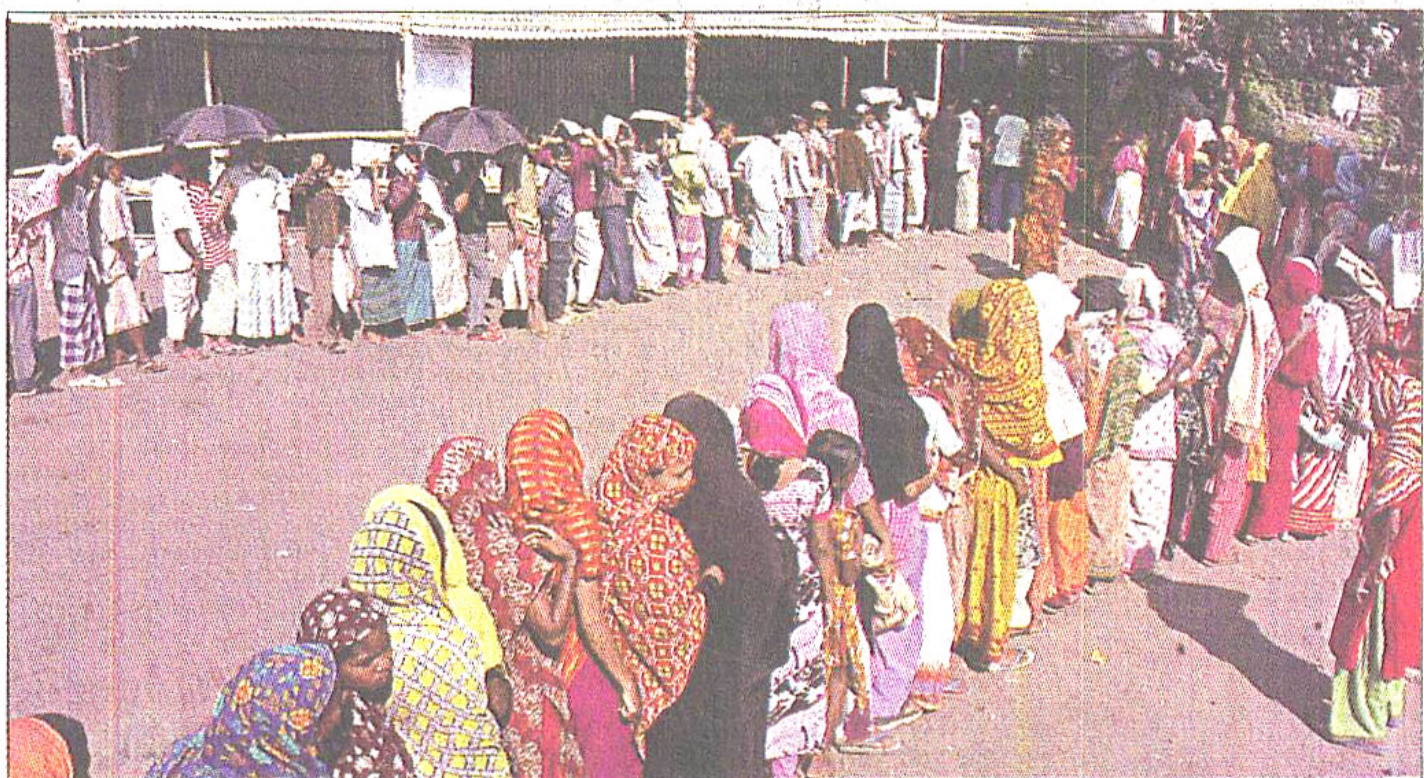
Police produced them in the court of First Class Magistrate ASM Monirul Islam at around 3:00pm, seeking seven days' remand. The court granted a five-day remand for the militants.

Sources said the JMB militants will be quizzed in an interrogation cell, headed by the additional police superintendent, Kurigram.

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Announcement

Today's issue of *The Daily Star* includes a four-page special supplement on Bangladesh Business Awards-2006.



People queue up at a BDR-run fair price sales centre at BRTC bus depot at Shyamoli in the capital yesterday. The centre that starts selling rice at 8:00am daily often sees buyers arriving from 6:00am.

PHOTO: STAR

SQ Chy taken to NICVD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Salaudin Quader Chowdhury, former prime minister Khaleda Zia's parliamentary affairs adviser, was taken to the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) from Dhaka Central Jail yesterday with cardiac ailments.

He is undergoing treatment at the Coronary Care Unit of the NICVD where an eight-member medical board has been formed for his treatment, NICVD sources said. Some diagnostic tests were conducted following his admission.

Salaudin was feeling better in the evening and his relatives were allowed to talk to him, the sources

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Trader sues Tarique for drowned cattle

Fresh cases against Mamun, Bashundhara Group chief

STAR REPORT

A trader filed a compensation case against Tarique Rahman yesterday for 31 cattle that drowned as the boat carrying those capsized in midstream after Coco-3 launch crashed into it four years ago.

The same day an extortion case was filed against Tarique's friend and business partner Giasuddin Al Mamun and six others while Bashundhara Group Chairman

Ahmed Akbar Sobhan (Shah Alam) was sued for land grabbing.

Tarique, elder son of former prime minister Khaleda Zia, and Mamun are behind bars while Akbar Sobhan, who is on the Anti-Corruption Commission's list of 50 graft suspects, is on the run.

Our Narayanganj correspondent reports: Adam Ali, a cattle trader from Shahzadpur upazila of Sirajganj lodged the case against

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Some BNP leaders plan to take control of top posts

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

A few BNP leaders are planning to take control of party leadership in case of departure of Chairperson Khaleda Zia but they do not want to disclose their programme until the withdrawal of the ban on indoor politics.

Party sources said there are at least three groups of BNP leaders who separately held secret meetings to review the crisis the party has been facing for the last few weeks. These leaders are observing the situation, especially the gov-

ernment moves regarding Khaleda's family.

Meanwhile, strong rumours ran yesterday that Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan will be replaced by former minister Brigadier (ret'd) Hannan Shah as the party secretary general and that Khaleda changed her mind not to leave the country.

According to the sources, a former state minister is trying to organise a group of BNP leaders who have come from the armed forces and a few young leaders who were lawmakers in the last five years to settle a strategy in the

changed situation.

"A group of leaders may leave the party if they get offer to join a new party," a BNP leader told *The Daily Star*.

Meanwhile, the grassroots level leaders, workers and activists are getting angry with the party's senior leaders because of their "mysterious silence" over the recent developments. They are surprised that the senior leaders have not even made any comment on Khaleda's "house arrest", sources said.

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5 killed as bus falls into ditch

SGFL official dies in another mishap

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Five people died and 50 others were injured, 41 of them seriously, in a road accident on Netrakona-Mymensingh Road in Phulpur upazila yesterday morning.

The dead were identified as Wadud, 7, a schoolboy, Khawaja Yunus, 28, Mia Hossain, 45, Dr Sadequunnahar Monira, 26, and Julekha Begum, 50. Of them, Wadud and Khawaja Yunus died on the spot while the remaining three succumbed to their injuries at Mymensingh Medical College

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PHOTO: STAR

BIWTA has dredged and recovered a part of Turag River from encroachers. The photo was taken near the Aminbazar bridge at Mirpur yesterday.

Turag gets a new lease of life

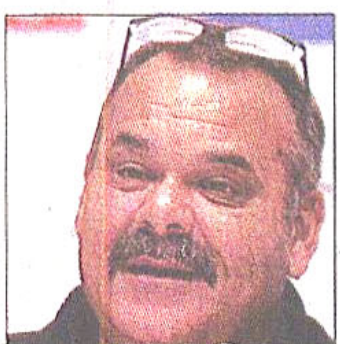
PINAKI ROY

A project taken up by Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) for making the Turag river navigable and wider has been completed, and the contractor for the job is planning to officially conclude its engagement on Sunday, when the chairman of BIWTA is scheduled to visit the site.

BIWTA appointed a dredging company to excavate the river bed and push back the river banks at certain points.

Besides, BIWTA also ordered sand traders to excavate the sand they had dumped on the riverbed, choking the major channel for releasing floodwater from the northern part of the capital.

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Whatmore to quit after India series

SPORTS REPORTER

Coach Dav Whatmore will end his stint with Bangladesh cricket after next month's home series against India, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) confirmed yesterday.

Whatmore has decided not to renew his contract with the BCB but will continue his job to guide the Tigers in the two-match Test

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Lara bids farewell to int'l cricket

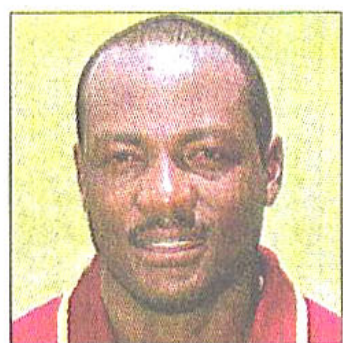
AFP, Bridgetown

West Indies captain Brian Lara will bring the curtain down on his 17-year, record-breaking, international career on Saturday, ending speculation over his future following his team's dismal World Cup campaign.

"I have given this extensive consideration. I just want everybody to know that on Saturday I am bidding farewell to international cricket as a player," Lara said after his team's 99-run win over Bangladesh in a Super Eights game here on Thursday.

"I have already spoken to the board and my players." The announcement means Lara will not be part of the West Indies team for next month's tour of England paving the way for vice-captain Ramnaresh Sarwan to take over the reins.

The 37-year-old Lara, who



made his debut in 1990, played 131 Tests, scoring 11,953 runs with 34 centuries. He holds the world record Test score of 400 not out.

Lara has also played 298 one-day internationals, scoring 10,387 runs.

"I want to be remembered as a batsman who provided entertainment to the fans and in adversity

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Aus set for big score

WORLD CUP 07
STAR SPORTS MONITOR
Australia's Matthew Hayden equalled the record for most individual centuries scored at a single World Cup with his third hundred of the 2007 tournament, against New Zealand, in their Super Eights match at Grenada's National Stadium yesterday.

Hayden scored 103 off 100 balls as the men from Down Under put on 244-4 off 37 overs. It was his third ton after he had scored 101 against South Africa and 158, an Australian World Cup record, against the West Indies.

Mike Hussey (7) and Andrew Symonds (5) were the two unbeaten men at the crease the latter having come to the crease after the fall of Michael Clarke (49).

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