



Khaleda sets out for exile any moment

Dozen others to accompany the ex-premier; Khaleda meets Tarique at secret location

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

With around a dozen members of her family, former prime minister Khaleda Zia was all set to leave the country for Saudi Arabia.

That she was going into exile anytime showed through from early in the morning when she met her detained elder son Tarique at an unspecified place inside Dhaka Cantonment.

Her younger son Arafat Rahman, his wife and children, Tarique's wife, daughter and mother-in-law, and at least three domestic helpers will accompany the BNP chairperson.

Four names - Khaleda Zia, Arafat and his wife Sharmila

Rahman, and Tarique's wife Dr Zobaida Rahman - kept cropping up throughout the negotiations between Khaleda and the military-backed government.

Of them, Zobaida had all along been refusing to go abroad. She argued that her husband would still be here and so would her mother and family members. And that's why she should be allowed to stay back.

But the government side did not accept her arguments and pressure kept mounting on her. Eventually, she gave in but it all left her reeling with sheer emotional turmoil, said sources following the developments from close quarters.

Worried over her daughter's

condition, Iqbal Mand Banu has decided to go with her and all necessary travel documents were



prepared by yesterday.

Saiful Islam Duke, an ex-naval officer and private secretary (PS) to prime minister, might also be travelling with her.

When contacted by The Daily Star last night, he declined to confirm whether he too was going.

Duke had remained out of the scene after the present caretaker government took over on January 11. But after the anti-graft crackdown began, the Khaleda family raised questions about his role in the five years of alliance rule, a family source observed.

"Though it was not explicit, he was not welcome at the Zia residence after January 11," it added.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Two others are former home minister Mohammad Nasim and another AL activist Kiron alias Abdul Malek. They have been shown absconding in the charge sheet, even though Nasim is now in jail custody.

The investigation officer (IO) prayed to the court for issuance of arrest warrants against the accused 'fugitives' and confiscating their properties.

After scrutinising the case docket and other relevant documents of the case, Metropolitan Magistrate Mir Ali Reza will decide the matter today.

Earlier on April 11, police pressed charges against Hasina, AL

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Meanwhile, BNP sources said intra-party feud over controlling the leadership after Khaleda's departure has taken a serious turn as she may leave the country at any time without giving any formal direction to her leaders and workers.

He also said Khaleda told him that she is unwilling to leave the country. "Why will I leave the country?...I am ready to face the trial if I have done anything wrong," Hannan quoted Khaleda in the TV interview.

Hannan Shah, former jute minister and adviser to the BNP chairperson, told a private television channel on Friday that the BNP chairperson would overhaul the party and remove its secretary general.

A few former ministers and leaders are waiting for the appropriate moment to vie for party leadership, dropping Mannan Bhuiyan and his followers in the way to reorganising the party, the sources added.

Claiming to have visited Khaleda that afternoon, he said she had planned to clean up the party and its front organisations and equip them with honest and efficient leaders.

"If necessary, the BNP secretary general might be changed," Hannan said, adding, "The secretary general's activities since the state of emergency was imposed are not in favour of the party."

Mannan Bhuiyan urged the leaders, activists and supporters of the party to stay united and not to be confused over such kind of

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Advisers okay direct road link with Myanmar

UNB, Dhaka

A meeting of the Council of Advisors yesterday approved a proposal for signing an agreement on Bangladesh-Myanmar direct road link to promote trade and commerce between the two countries.

The foreign adviser is likely sign the road-link deal during his visit to

Myanmar next month.

An initiative was taken in 2003 for building the road and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed to this effect during the visit of Myanmar prime minister to Dhaka in 2004.

Later, a technical and finance taskforce was formed to expedite the process.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Mayor Minu sued for extortion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

An extortion case was filed yesterday against former BNP lawmaker and Rajshahi city mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu with Rajpara Police Station.

Earlier on April 8, another case was filed against Minu with the same police station for aiding and abetting Islamist militants of Jama'atul Mujahideen, Bangladesh.

Shamsul Islam Khan of

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Hasina won't seek asylum if not allowed to return

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former prime minister and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said she will not seek political asylum in any country in case she is not allowed to return to Bangladesh.

"Why would I seek political asylum here?" Sheikh Hasina threw

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

back a question to BBC Bangla Service interviewer in reply to his query on whether she would seek political asylum in the United States of America or United Kingdom in the changed circumstances.

"Tomorrow I will go to the airport and I expect sense would

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

100 hurt as jute mill workers clash with cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

At least a hundred people including 20 law enforcers were injured during sporadic clashes between jute mill workers and police at Khalishpur industrial belt yesterday.

Police lobbed over 300 teargas shells, fired more than 200 rubber bullets and charged batons during the first phase of the clash ended at 2:30pm to bring the situation under control, sources said.

However, the law enforcers failed to control the situation as a second round of clash began at 3:00pm when police prevented the agitating workers from assembling at People's Jute Mills square.

Police picked up 70 people including four students in connection with the clashes, sources said.

A meeting was held at 3:00pm yesterday at the office of the Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) to discuss the situation.

KMP Commissioner Nazmul Haque and officials of the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) and the four jute mills were present at the meeting.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Housing plan in Cox's Bazar hill finally cancelled

RASHIDUL HASAN

The government finally cancelled the housing project at Kolatoli seashore of Cox's Bazar and nullified the allotment of 51 acres of land to the deputy commissioner of Cox's Bazar under the banner of Bangladesh Government Employees' Welfare Board.

Sources said the government is also thinking of taking actions against the persons who were involved in the housing project in Kolatoli.

The Daily Star ran an exposé on April 17 on the serious threat the housing project posed to the ecological balance of the country's key tourist zone.

The government formed a committee headed by the Chittagong divisional commissioner, which will now decide how to use the land of Cox's Bazar.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

BNP high-ups rubbish leadership change claim

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

At least 100 former ministers, lawmakers and leaders of BNP yesterday expressed solidarity with Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and described a group of them as part of a conspiracy and divisive policy.

After a series of informal discussions with party leaders, Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said Brigadier (retired) Hannan Shah's claim that BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was

planning to bring changes in all tiers of the party, including the post of secretary general, is a "misleading propaganda".

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intra-party feud over controlling the leadership after Khaleda's departure has taken a serious turn as she may leave the country at any time without giving any formal direction to her leaders and workers.

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that she is unwilling to leave the country. "Why will I leave the country?...I am ready to face the trial if I have done anything wrong," Hannan quoted Khaleda in the TV interview.

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SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



PHOTO STAR

Several key leaders of BNP meet the party's Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, at his residence in the capital yesterday.

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim



Shazneen Tasnim Rahman

SHAZNEEN'S 9TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY
APRIL 23, 2007

The emptiness caused by the cruel and brutal demise of our beloved Shazneen nine years ago has been filled by prayers to the Almighty and by the love, affection and sympathy bestowed on us by relatives, friends, well-wishers and those unknown to us who prayed for her, being touched by the tragedy that befell one so young and innocent. It is these prayers, support and love that have sustained us through these excruciatingly painful years.

On 23rd April 1998 our 15 year-old loving and lovely Shazneen fell victim to a most heinous and murderous crime taking away forever from our lives our greatest source of joy and happiness.

The perpetrators involved in this brutal crime have been convicted by the Learned Trial Court on 2nd September 2003. The Honourable High Court Division up held the convictions on 10th July 2006.

The case is now awaiting hearing of the appeal before the Honourable Appellate Division of the Bangladesh Supreme Court. We can only hope and pray to Allah for justice.

Just as this day returns every year to haunt us with the memory of the tragedy so also it comes to strengthen us with the knowledge that we were never alone -- so many of you stood by us, shared the pain with us and prayed for justice for Shazneen. For all your generosity we can but offer our heartfelt gratitude and thanks.

Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to join us at a Milad-Mehfil to be held tomorrow, Monday, April 23 after Asr (5:30pm) at House No. NE(J)4, Road No. 83, Gulshan-2, Dhaka.

Latifur Rahman, Shahnaz Rahman and family

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