

British Airways

FROM PAGE 1
security of the passengers on the flight, who would be facing an uncertain fate with Hasina on board.

As an emotional Hasina was leaving the airport, she told reporters, "I am the daughter of the father of the nation. I will return to the country, for sure."

"Today an arrest warrant has been issued against me. Before that they imposed a ban on my return. I am ready to accept any consequences in the country. I want to be back with my people on my own soil. Whatever be my fate, I will return to Bangladesh," she said.

Asked whether she would stay in London or return to her son and daughter in the United States, Hasina said she will remain in London for now but mul her future soon.

The AL chief entered London's Heathrow airport at 7:15pm and was accompanied by British Labour Party MP Emily Thornberry, who later said that there must be some miscommunication that resulted in Hasina being barred from returning home.

Thornberry, who also engaged in negotiations with the BA authorities, told reporters that she would raise the issue with British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett and also in British parliament.

Pasha also told The Daily Star that Hasina was accompanied by her younger sister Sheikh Rehana, other family members, and a number of UK-AL leaders and activists.

ARREST WARRANT AGAINST HASINA

A Dhaka court yesterday issued arrest warrants against Awami League (AL) chief and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and nine others for killing a Workers Party activist Rasel Ahmed Khan.

Nine others are former minister and Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid, Senior Secretary General of Jamaat Quamaruzzaman, Central Nayeb-e-Amin Mokbul Ahmed, Assistant Secretary General ATM Ahsanul Islam, Dhaka City Unit Amir of Jamaat Rafiqul Islam, Paltan Unit Amir ATM Sirajul Islam, Islami Chhatra Shibir President Shafikul Islam Masud and its General Secretary Zahid Hossain, and President of Dhaka University Unit of Chhatra Shibir Shishir Monir.

On October 28 last year, activists of Jamaat and its student front Chhatra Shibir gathered in front of the north gate of Baitul Mukarram mosque and launched an attack on the AL-led 14-party coalition activists when they were passing through the area, the prosecution said.

The attack sparked a fierce battle between the rival political activists. During the battle, Shibir activists were found shooting with firearms.

Their rivals also reportedly launched a counter attack with bows and sticks.

tioned that on directives from AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon and JSD President Hasanul Haque Inu, the other accused killed five Jamaat activists and injured several others.

In the first information report the complainant had not named Hasina as an accused but the charge sheet had the AL chief as an accused.

The IO put Hasina's name at number 31 on the list of 46 accused as he claimed that the AL chief had been found to be involved in the incident.

CASE AGAINST JAMAAT

The same court yesterday accepted the charge sheet submitted against Matur Rahman Nizami and nine others in connection with the killing of a Workers Party activist on October 28 last year.

The court also sent it to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court for taking next steps, as the case was ready for trial.

The IO of the case, AKM Idris Hossain, sub-inspector of the Detective Branch of police, pressed charges against 10 leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir for the killing of a Workers Party activist Rasel Ahmed Khan.

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39 killed in Nigeria poll violence

AFP, Abuja

At least 39 people have been killed in election violence in two rounds of successive weekend elections in Nigeria, officials said.

In the latest recorded electoral violence, police said Sunday that four people were killed and 12 injured Saturday in the northern Nigerian state of Katsina.

Federal police spokesman Haz Iwendi told AFP that Sunday's casualties occurred in three separate clashes with police over delayed polls or missing ballot papers.

Two prominent presidential candidates come from Katsina, the ruling People's Democratic Party's Umar Yar'Adua and one of his strongest challengers Muhammed Buhari, of the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP).

Iwendi said police were still compiling nationwide casualty figures at midday Sunday.

On Friday, eve of this weekend's presidential and legislative polls, seven police officers being deployed for election duty were killed in an ambush in the state of Nassarawa in central Nigeria.

Another seven officers were shot dead by unknown assailants on 14 April - when gubernatorial elections were held - who attacked two police stations in Port Harcourt in oil-rich southern Nigeria.

Police said that at least another 21 people were also killed during the April polls.

In violence apparently unrelated to the elections, 38 people died following an attack by Islamists against a police station in the northern state of Kano last Tuesday. Of those killed, 12 were policemen, one civilian and 25 Islamist suspects shot dead by soldiers the next day.

Homecoming

FROM PAGE 1

It was compelled to declare a state of emergency due to the continuous agitation and movement led by the AL, as it undermined "public order and threatened people's security".

"The reasons why the state of emergency was declared were clearly outlined by the president's address to the nation in January," Zillur said.

He said Hasina led the democratic forces in the country to protect the people's right to vote and save the country from a farcical election that was to be held with a faulty voter list.

Zillur also said it is "extremely disappointing" that Hasina is being prevented from returning home, adding, "All citizens of this country have a right to live here. This is her birthright, constitutional and fundamental right."

He said cases were filed against Hasina while she was overseas and she was made the main accused in the charge sheet when she was not even named in the original case.

"The people expect this government to be proactive in establishing the rule of law," Zillur said, adding, "These sorts of political harassment cases may subsume all the current government's good intentions."

The acting chief said, "Sheikh Hasina and Bangladesh Awami League are resolute in establishing the rule of law in Bangladesh. That is why Hasina has said that she will prove her innocence through legal avenues."

"We (AL) hope that the government will let Sheikh Hasina return to the country and let the law take its own course," stated Zillur.

Adviser stresses

FROM PAGE 1

the first half of 2006, but the government is yet to approve the plan.

Communications experts Prof Zamirul Reza Chowdhury, Dr Rahmatullah and high officials of the ministry of communications were present at the presentation, made by Dr Salauddin of DTCB.

Briefing the journalists on the presentation, Prof Zamirul said that three important recommendations were made in the STP, which are -- widening of the existing city roads, introducing an express bus service with dedicated roads and setting up metro rail system. The metro rail should run both underground and on the surface as per the suitability of the city areas concerned, he added.

Dr Rahmatullah noted that the government should put emphasis on public transport system, as the land in the capital is very limited. He suggested introducing franchise bus system in the city for bringing discipline into the existing road transport system.

Dr Salauddin told the meeting that the DTCB prepared detailed report on the transport system of the capital keeping in mind the necessity and demand of the people till the year 2024.

He urged the government to approve the plan immediately and start implementing the recommendations.

UK to up aid

FROM PAGE 16

Besides, he received assurances of British cooperation in development of human resources in information and communication technology, expansion of learning the English language, non-formal and primary education, women empowerment and socioeconomic development.

The adviser said the British authorities also assured assistance for supplying election materials.

About his meeting with leaders of the Bangladeshi community, he said the expatriate Bangladeshis are willing to invest back at home and they discussed setting up special economic zones in the country.

Ex-Jamaat MP

FROM PAGE 1

Local Jamaat leaders including the former Jamaat lawmaker with the same police station for their alleged involvement in extorting Tk 50,000 from SM Abdur Rashid of Chakbara village in Shyamnagar upazila.

Gazi Nazrul Islam has already been detained by joint forces. His name was included in the second list of graft suspects published by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) on March 9.

Khaja Nazim Uddin, a shrimp cultivator from Gumantali village of the same upazila, lodged the extortion case accusing the three of demanding Tk 3 lakh from him in return for the possession of his shrimp enclosure that had been forcefully occupied by Mahfuzur Rahman and his Jamaat loyalist.

In his case statement, Khaja alleged that on April 22, 2006, a gang of criminals led by Mahfuzur Rahman raided and assaulted the staff members of his shrimp farm at Nidaya village in Shyamnagar upazila. The assailants drove everyone out and took over the farm.

The next day, on April 23, then Jamaat lawmaker Gazi Nazrul Islam from his PA Gausul Azam demanded Tk 3 lakh from him if he wanted the shrimp farm back.

On April 24, 2006, being desperate to recover his farm, Khaja Nazim went to the former lawmaker's house at Islampur in Shyamnagar upazila and paid him Tk 2 lakh, Khaja said in the statement.

Officer in Charge Nawsher Ali of Shyamnagar Police Station confirmed the incident.

Gazi Nazrul Islam, central Majlis-e-Shura member of Jamaat-e-Islami, was elected member of parliament from Sathkira 5 (Shyamnagar) in 2001 with BNP-led 4-party alliance ticket.

Khaleda's family is also unclear

HC to consider

FROM PAGE 1

According to the amended law, an accused in such a case has been stripped of right to file bail petition during the investigation or trial of the case.

Additionally, they cannot seek redress from 'any higher courts against any order given by any court or tribunal before or during the trial' until the delivery of the final verdict.

Harris, Mamun

FROM PAGE 1

Earlier on April 16, the same court asked Harris to surrender before the court within three days. The court said it would start the trial of the case in his absence if he failed to surrender before the court.

CASE AGAINST MAMUN

Mamun's lawyers yesterday submitted a discharge petition and made submissions on the issue for clearing their client from the charges brought against him in the case.

However, the prosecution sought time for adjournment of the hearing saying they were yet to receive some necessary documents in support of the framing of charges against the accused.

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Drama continues

FROM PAGE 1

Saeed Iskandar, who has been unofficially negotiating the terms of her exile, was present at her residence in Dhaka cantonment all through Saturday night. Although Iskandar officially denies being a part of the negotiation, sources said he played the key role in convincing her to leave Bangladesh.

Khaleda's residence was also visited by a number of her relatives on Saturday night, who came to bid her farewell, the sources said.

Immediate past prime minister Khaleda Zia could not fly to an exile on Saturday due to some glitches in logistics including an uncertainty about which aircraft would carry her and her entourage, a delay in issuing visas for them, and a number of other issues regarding their accommodations in Saudi Arabia.

Due to a lack of clear information from the authorities Khaleda and her family could not foresee the problems.

The authorities wanted Khaleda to leave on a special chartered plane, while she wanted to fly on board a standard passenger aircraft. Amid the disagreement, Saeed Iskandar reportedly opined that a chartered aircraft was good enough. The authorities accordingly arranged such a plane from Dubai on Saturday, which however was yet to reach Dhaka till last night.

Sources said payment to the company providing the chartered aircraft was not made on Saturday which had demanded an advance payment. An aviation sector source however confirmed yesterday that the payment was made and the aircraft was expected to land early last night.

The court then told him that the petitioner alleged that Khaleda was not allowed to receive visitors and her telephone connections were cut off. She was not allowed to visit the national mausoleum on March 26 and participate in the kulkhwani of BNP standing committee member Obaidur Rahman.

The court has the jurisdiction to examine if such allegations are brought to its notice, the court said. At that time the court wanted to know the government's statement on the matter from the additional attorney general.

The court also asked Salauddin whether he could say taking an oath that the former prime minister is allowed to move freely and no pressure is being created on her to leave the country. In reply, Salauddin said he would inform the court of the matter after inquiring into it.

Another source however confirmed that the visas were issued without any problem. "It does not matter if they have visas for a short term, because they can always extend the visas while in Saudi Arabia," said a defence forces source.

Khaleda's family is also unclear

6 killed

FROM PAGE 16

on Dhaka-Chittagong Highway at Matua at noon.

Police said that the driver lost control after a front tire of the bus blew off. Of the injured, Abdus Sattar and Shafiqul Islam were taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), while three others were admitted to local clinics.

The identities of the deceased could not be known immediately. Police seized the bus but failed to capture the driver.

In another accident in Jatrabari, an unidentified man of about 55 died on the spot when a bus ran over him at Kolapotti at about 12:15am, while a speeding truck crushed an unidentified man of about 35 to death near the Banani over-bridge at around 5:00am.

Besides, Prokash Moira, 38, a day labourer, died as he fell from a speeding truck in front of Shaheed Suhrawardy Hospital on Mirpur Road at around 4:30 in the morning.

The bodies were sent to the morgues of Dhaka Medical College (DMC) and Sir Salimullah Medical College for autopsy.

The repair work at the third well would start soon after Grace returns to Bangladesh.

According to BGFL sources, gas pressure in the well is gradually dropping and it might be brought to normal within the next three to four days, the sources added.

The blowout expert is expected to fly to Canada shortly and send necessary equipment to the gas field in Brahmanbaria for the repair work.

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