



Court suspends arrest warrant against Hasina

She seeks international pressure on CG to let her return home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday suspended the operation of the arrest warrants issued against Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina and two others in connection with the Paltan killings on October 28 last year.

The AL chief, meantime, has appealed to the world leaders and people of Bangladesh to put pressure on the caretaker government to let her return home.

The former prime minister said she would fight any charges of murder and corruption in court, if she is allowed to return to the country.

Hasina yesterday gave separate interviews to Indian television station NDTV, Qatar-based Al Jazeera television channel and BBC Radio (Bangla Service) from London, where she is now residing at her younger sister's house.

Referring to the interim government's support for reforms inside the political parties, she said it is not the job of a caretaker government.

Hasina could not take her scheduled flight from London on Sunday, as the British Airways did not issue boarding pass to her. The AL chief is accused of involvement



in an absolutely false case," she responded about the charges against her.

She labelled the interim government's act as 'double standard' and said, "The government filed a case against me. On the other hand, it is not allowing me to back home to fight the case."

Asked about her future strategy to get back home, Hasina said she was talking to other politicians in Bangladesh as well as in the United Kingdom to tackle the situation politically and legally.

"I am the daughter of father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and a former prime minister. There is no reason why I will not be allowed to return to my own country," she said.

In her interview with the Al Jazeera television channel, Hasina denied any responsibility for the deaths of protesters in October last year allegedly caused by supporters of her party.

"Demanding your constitutional right is not a crime. We were fighting for free and fair elections," she said adding, "When they attacked our people, four to five people were killed. At least 68 people of our party and alliance also were killed, then how can I be

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Sending 2 top leaders outside 'injudicious'

Leading intellectuals observe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leading intellectuals yesterday said that sending two former prime ministers outside the country is 'shortsighted and injudicious' and will not pave the way for establishing democracy.

"Taking away the fundamental rights of political leaders cannot pave the way for establishing democracy," read a statement signed by 14 leading intellectuals of the country.

"Preventing the return of the leader of a party, which is part of the democratic movement, does not show foresight," the statement read.

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Charges pressed against Aminul, Dulu, Nadim for patronising JMB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police last night pressed charges against former post and telecommunications minister Barrister Aminul Haque, ex-deputy minister for land Ruhul Kuddus Talukhdar Dulu, former lawmaker Nadim Mostafa and 54 others for patronising militants of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh.

Sub-inspectors Muktar Hossain and Shakil Hossain submitted the charge sheet with a first

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Khaleda's going abroad delayed for complications in getting visa

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As complications over getting visa for Saudi Arabia still persist, no significant development took place yesterday regarding the ongoing drama over Khaleda Zia's going into exile.

A highly placed source said a powerful lobbyist group comprising mostly BNP sympathiser expatriates and Khaleda's well-wishers in Saudi Arabia reported to the

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EC hopes ban on indoor politics to go by May 8

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hossain yesterday hoped that the ban on indoor politics in the country would be lifted next month.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission (EC) removed six election symbols in a bid to protect voters from being confused by religious-image-based election campaigns.

"We hope the ban on the indoor politics in the country would be lifted by May 8," Sakhawat said while talking to the reporters at his office yesterday.

"The duration of the ban would go beyond three months on May 8, we therefore hope that the government would lift the ban," he said, adding, "It [the lifting of the ban] might be delayed."

Sakhawat made the remarks follow the EC's meeting with the chief adviser on Sunday.

He, however, said, "We will sit with political parties to discuss electoral reforms whenever the government lifts the ban on politics." Replying a query, he said, "We will invite political parties, that are eligible for registration, to discuss the electoral issues."

It may be mentioned, Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda on April 4 made a request in a meeting with Law Adviser Mainul Hossain to lift the ban on indoor politics in the country so that the commission could talk to political parties on electoral reforms issue.

"We will sit with whoever is leading the political party concerned during the discussion," said Election Commissioner Sohul Hossain while talking with the reporters.

"We are taking steps to discourage religious-image-based election campaigns so that voters do not get

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BNP leaders still back Khaleda

Say her presence is a must for party reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP leaders pledged their support for the continued leadership of Khaleda Zia and said the party will remain intact under any circumstances.

Though most of the leaders think reform is necessary within the party to fulfil the demands of the day, they said Khaleda Zia's presence is a must for any effective reforms in the party.

"We are united, so the question of any split in the BNP does not arise at all," Selima Rahman, joint secretary general of the party and also a former state minister, told the journalists after meeting with party Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at his Gulshan residence yesterday.

More than 30 BNP leaders including former ministers and lawmakers met Bhuiyan yesterday to express their support for the present party leadership. Similar

meetings were also held over the last few days at Bhuiyan's residence.

Among those who attended yesterday's meeting were former minister and party vice chairman MK Anwar, former state ministers Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and Rezaul Karim, former whip of parliament Ashraf Hossain, Mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation Mizanur Rahman Minu, former lawmakers GM Siraj and Ziaul Haque Mollah.

The leaders said that only Khaleda Zia can bring changes in the party leadership and they would not accept any direction from anyone else.

Separately, Brig (ret'd) Hannan Shah, who recently came into the spotlight for his interview with a TV channel where he quoted Khaleda Zia as saying she will bring changes in the party leadership, including the post of secretary general, SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Shibir leader Salehi finally surrenders, sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The prime accused in Rajshahi University (RU) professor S Taher Ahmed murder case and RU Islami Chhatra Shibir president Mahbubul Alam Salehi was sent to jail yesterday after he appeared before a court here to seek an interim bail.

Rajshahi District and Sessions Judge Abu Bakar Siddik passed the order.

Pressurised by continued police attempts to catch him, Salehi obtained an interim bail from High Court on July 3 in 2006. On January 1 this year, the HC bail was extended for the third time.

But the bail, granted for no criminal charges against him till then, went useless on March 18 last when police submitted charge sheet accusing Salehi and five

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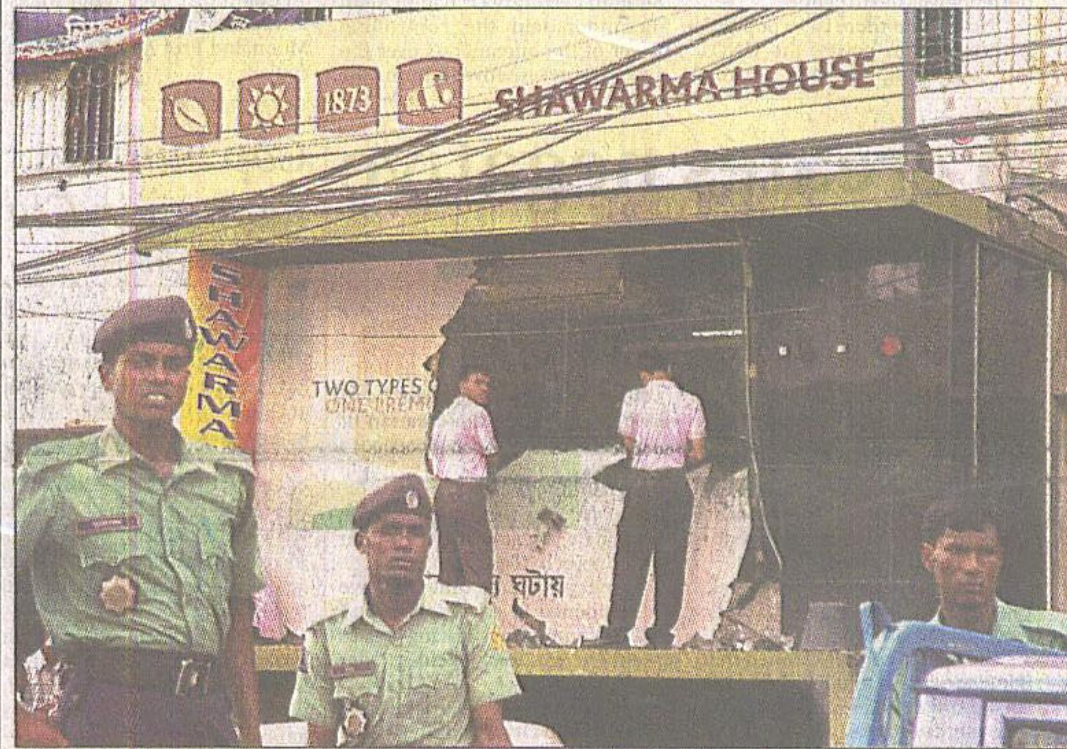


PHOTO: STAR

A mobile court tears down a tobacco company-sponsored signboard at a shop on the capital's Elephant Road yesterday. The court fined the shop Tk 1,000 for tobacco advertisement.

Move on in AL for leadership change

Mid-level leaders term it a conspiracy

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

A number of key Awami League (AL) leaders have reportedly started working towards a change in the party's top leadership against the backdrop of a 'ban' on Sheikh Hasina's return to the country.

Some presidium members, organising secretaries and central leaders, mostly those who claim to have been sidelined in the last five years, are determined to see home the move to curtail the president's 'absolute' control over the organisation, said AL insiders.

Some mid-level leaders said they too have heard about the move. They described it as a conspiracy that would never come off.

"We won't allow the plot to

succeed as we don't want an Awami League without the daughter of Bangabandhu and people will never accept any leadership minus Hasina," said an AL leader preferring anonymity.

A group of leaders who have long felt aggrieved is gaining strength of late by maintaining a close contact with a portion of the interim government. They are out to make the most of the AL being in disarray due to absence of Hasina, party sources said.

In case the plan fails, some of them might even join the much-speculated new political party to be formed with 'relatively clean' leaders of different parties, they added.

Persons close to the leaders

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Mamun confesses Tk 10cr extortion

Tarique shown arrested in extortion case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Detained BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman was shown arrested in a Tk 53 lakh extortion case yesterday while his close friend Giasuddin Al Mamun confessed his involvement in extortion of Tk 10.31 crore from a businessman.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mir Ali Reza passed the order following a petition submitted by the investigation officer (IO) to show Tarique arrested in the case.

In his petition, the IO Sub-Inspector (SI) Kazi Mainul Islam mentioned that Mamun in a con-

fessional statement on April 19 said that he, along with Kamruzzaman, Obaidul and other fugitives, extorted Tk 53 lakh from Mir Zahir Hossain, managing director of Mir Akhter Hossain Ltd, in 2004 under Tarique's shelter.

Of the total, Tarique took Tk 35 lakh. So, he needs to be shown arrested in the case, the IO said.

Mir Zahir filed the case with Dhanmondi Police Station on April 1. According to the plaintiff, Mamun demanded the money identifying himself as a friend of Tarique Rahman while others threatened him to stop his

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