



# The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

Plus 8-page Rising Stars



REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XVII NO. 100

DHAKA THURSDAY APRIL 26, 2007

People's Right to Know

www.thedailystar.net

BAISHAKHI 13, 1414 BS

RABIUS SANI 8, 1428 HURI

24 PAGES PLUS RISING STARS PRICE: Tk 10.00

## GOVT ISSUES PRESS NOTES

# Ban on Hasina's return lifted; no bar on Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a dramatic reversal, the military backed interim government yesterday withdrew the bar on Awami League President Sheikh Hasina's return to the country and also said it never put any pressure on BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia for leaving the country.

The decision ends weeks of intense speculation and drama regarding the future of the chiefs of the two major political parties in the country, who the government reportedly wanted to send into exiles as part of its political reforms.

The decision, welcomed by both political parties, was taken by the caretaker government after two days of emergency cabinet meetings chaired by Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, following

mounting international and local demands for the rollback.

A home ministry press note last night said, "The government issued a press note as a special security measure and in the people's interest on April 18, 2007 in

light of recent comments and activities of Awami League President Sheikh Hasina and her concerns for personal safety."

"It was clearly stated in the mentioned home ministry press note that the measure was tempo-

rary. But, in light of opinions expressed in the media and in different quarters on the matter, the government has decided to withdraw the measure," the new press note stated.

Hasina yesterday told a private television channel that she will be returning home as soon as possible.

In a separate home ministry press note on Khaleda, the government yesterday said, "It has come to the government's attention that a number of news mediums recently have been publishing speculative news and opinions regarding BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia going overseas and her freedom of movement."

"The government's clear statement in this regard is that the government has never pressured and



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## AL, BNP hail govt decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Both the Awami League (AL) and BNP last night hailed the caretaker government's decision to withdraw restrictions on Sheikh Hasina's homecoming and declaration that there is no pressure on Khaleda Zia to leave the country.

In a press note, the military backed interim government last night said it decided to withdraw the restrictions imposed on April 18 on AL President Sheikh Hasina's homecoming. The press note also said there is neither any pressure on BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia to leave the country nor any restriction on her movement.

In an immediate reaction to The Daily Star, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil termed the government's decision a victory of the people's sentiment.

"It is a victory for justice and the constitution," an elated Jalil said, adding that it has been proved that the people's democratic and

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## LAND GRABBING, SWINDLING Charges pressed against Aminul, Nadim Mostafa

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police yesterday pressed charges against former post and telecommunications minister barrister Aminul Haque for land grabbing and former BNP lawmaker Nadim Mostafa for swindling.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Abdur Razzak submitted charge sheet accusing Aminul and nine other people in connection with the land grabbing case filed with Godagari Police Station on April 3.

The nine other accused in the case are the former minister's maternal uncle and Godagari BNP

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# Account details of top two leaders sought

BB verbally asks all banks; NBR seeks account info of 83 others including Tarique

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON

The central bank and National Board of Revenue (NBR) yesterday separately asked commercial banks for all banking information of former prime ministers Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina, and 83 other people including politicians, bureaucrats and former ministers.

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) yesterday verbally asked the commercial banks for all banking information of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, and their relatives.

The central bank called the commercial banks early yesterday morning and asked them to provide all banking information of Khaleda Zia by mid-day yesterday. Then it again called the banks in the afternoon to ask for Sheikh Hasina's banking information and asked them to provide it by 11:00am today.

Sources said the National Coordination Committee on Combating Corruption and Crime sought the information via the central bank.

The information is being sought to substantiate the existing case

against Sheikh Hasina, and to look for incriminating activities in Khaleda Zia's bank accounts in a bid to find out if a case could be brought against her, as the government's plan to send the two leaders into exiles hit snags in the past few days, sources said.

NBR sent a list of 83 individuals including BNP Senior Joint Secretary General and Khaleda Zia's son Tarique Rahman, former ministers Shahjahan Shiraj, Barrister Aminul Haque, BNP adviser Barkatullah Bulu, and a businessman and editor of the

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## REFORM PROPOSALS

# EC opens talks with civil society today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) opens a series of dialogue today by holding talks with eminent personalities to seek their opinion on draft proposals for electoral law reforms.

The EC has already invited as many as 60 individuals including former military and civil bureaucrats, former chief election commissioners, educationalists and NGO personalities to attend the talks to be held at the conference room of National Economic Council, sources said.

The EC had planned to hold talks with the political parties first, but it could not proceed with the plan as the government has yet to withdraw embargo on indoor politics.

The chief election commissioner (CEC) at a meeting with the law adviser on April 4 asked the government to withdraw the embargo on indoor politics allowing the EC to hold talks with the political parties.

On several occasions, the CEC and two other election commissioners have said that the EC would

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## 10 satellite TV channels banned

UNB, Dhaka

The government has banned 10 television channels in Bangladesh, as their operations are contrary to the Cable TV Network Operation Act 2006.

The banned channels are Channel V, Zoom, Ren TV, Fashion TV, AXN, Z Cafe, Music India, Cine Max, The Music and Trendz.

In a notification yesterday, the information ministry banned the downlinks of the 10 satellite TV channels, as their operations are contrary to clause 19 of the Cable TV Network Operation Act 2006.

The notification said no

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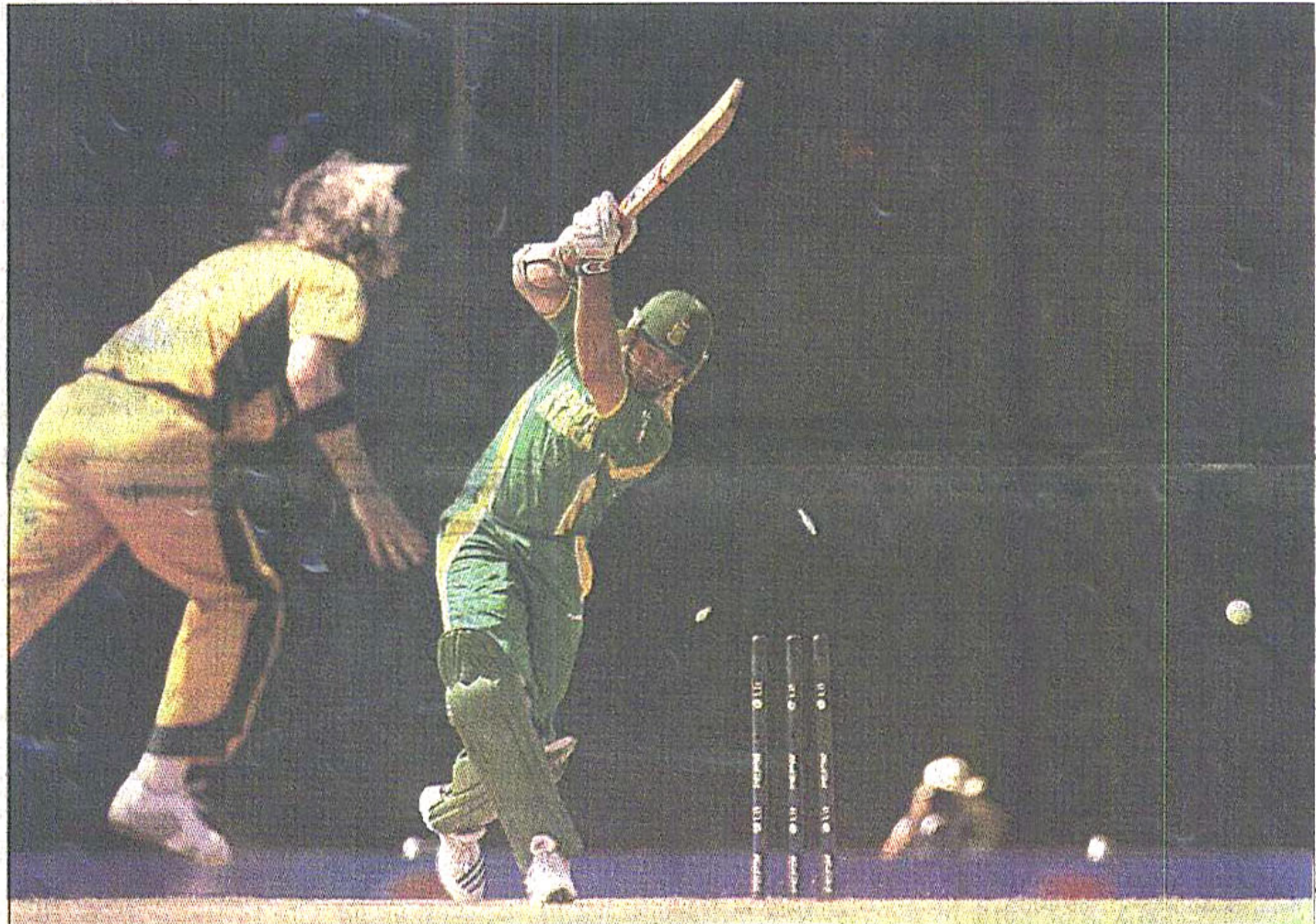


PHOTO: AFP

South Africa captain Graeme Smith loses his castle to Australia swing bowler Nathan Bracken for two in the World Cup semifinal at Beausejour Cricket Ground in Gros Islet on Wednesday.

# Australia closer to final

AFP, Gros Islet

Australia were 85-2 after 18 overs in their World Cup semifinal against South Africa here on Wednesday, chasing only 150 runs to win.

The winners will face Sri Lanka in Saturday's final in at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown.

Matthew Hayden was on 31 off 45 balls with Michael Clarke on 17 off 33 balls.

Adam Gilchrist was first man out bowled by Charl Langeveldt for one in the second over with the total on one.

Skipper Ricky Ponting was next man out for 22 off 25 balls, bowled by Andre Nel, hitting across the line, with the total on 44 in the ninth over.

Earlier, Glenn McGrath led a sharp and disciplined Australian pace attack with three wickets as

South Africa crashed to 149 all out.

Australia piled on the pressure from the first over, with McGrath, fast-improving Shaun Tait (4-39) and Nathan Bracken testing the batsmen with a probing line and length during their near-flawless opening spells.

At one stage, South Africa, who won the toss and chose to bat, were

**Australia march into final**  
Australia (153-3 in 31.3 overs; Clarke 60\*, Hayden 41, Nel 1-31) beat South Africa (149 all out in 43.5 overs; Kemp 49\*, Gibbs 39, Tait 4-39, McGrath 3-18) by seven wickets.

**Man-of-the-match:** Glenn McGrath (Australia).

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## US for quick move towards election

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US yesterday urged the caretaker government to expedite its move towards elections so that the Bangladeshi people can exercise their rights to vote.

"We have urged the caretaker government to move as expeditiously as possible to elections so that the Bangladeshis can exercise their rights to vote and choose who is going to lead them in the future," US State Department Spokesman Sean McCormack said during a press briefing in Washington.

McCormack was responding to questions on Bangladesh situation and US stance on restriction on Sheikh Hasina's return home and

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## ANTI-GRAFT DRIVE Bank clients feel discomfort in transactions, bankers say

UNB, Dhaka

Bank clients feel discomfort in making transactions as National Board of Revenue (NBR) asks commercial banks for providing information on dubious accounts as part of the ongoing anti-corruption drive.

Private commercial banks (PCBs) yesterday reported to the Bangladesh Bank of their clients' discomfort, seeking the central bank's interference in not forcing

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# Biman set to become public limited company

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government has decided to turn Biman Bangladesh Airlines into a public limited company under a re-structuring plan to turn the huge loss incurring national airlines into a profitable organisation.

The government's restructuring plan is likely to cut Biman's existing 6,838-strong manpower to half.

"The government is thinking about making the national airlines profitable by turning it into a public

limited company. But the government will own hundred per cent share," said Communications and Civil Aviation Adviser MA Matin after a meeting yesterday.

A high-powered committee headed by the secretary of the civil aviation ministry, already recommended transforming the corporation into a public limited commercial company. The report of the committee was placed before a consultation meeting of the adviser with civil society members at the civil aviation ministry.

After the meeting Matin told the reporters that he would place the committee's recommendations at the advisory council meeting for final approval. "I shall recommend making Biman a limited company by June."

Admitting that the restructuring plan would cut the existing manpower into half, Matin said the government would formulate a guideline for releasing corrupt and additional manpower through golden handshake.

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