

## 2 ex-MPs sued

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from local BNP office and chanted slogans against the convention organised to protest filing of two false cases against four Kushtia journalists by former BNP lawmaker Sahidul Islam and one of his close associates.

About a hundred journalists from Dhaka and other districts were attending the convention.

The cadres threw brickbats at the journalists and beat them up mercilessly on orders from Sahidul and another former BNP lawmaker Syed Mehedi Ahmed Rumi leaving at least 25 newsmen including journalists injured.

They also vandalised furniture, a motorcycle and two microbuses, alleged the plaintiff adding the police remained inactive during the attack.

The complainant also alleged

that journalists went to police station to file a case against the attackers right after the incident, but police did not take the case due to political pressure of the then BNP-led four party alliance government.

The other accused of the case are BNP leader Sazedur Rahman Babul, joint secretary of district BNP, Sahidullah Sahid, president of district Juba Dal, Mohsin Ali, general secretary of district Juba Dal, and BNP activists Nurul Islam Chad, Mizanur Rahman Diuk, Al-Amin Kanay, Golam Hafiz Pipul, Atiar, Mirazul Islam Rintu and Abdur Razzaq Bachchu.

When contacted, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station, said police will take action after investigating the incident.

## Unscientific restoration

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the conservation project without any proper and authentic documentation, which is a prerequisite to conservation of a heritage site.

An office assistant at the site office of DoA, Md Anisur Rahman, told this correspondent, "We are carrying out the restoration work hiring masons on a daily basis. The masons know how to do the job."

According to conservation architects, friezes and other ornamental features of the old buildings are all being replaced with dissimilar and odd-looking features.

The original lintels of these buildings were made of bricks and semi-arch shape.

Details of the ornamental works, their sizes and proportions are lost in the present intervention. The decorated pilasters in the original buildings had molded curves on the capitals.

The masons who had built the buildings left a lasting imprint of their craftsmanship creating aesthetic beauty in the decorative moldings on the walls, which are strikingly missing in the restored buildings, making them flat and dull, the experts said.

Original cornices were styled with moldings on the surface but the repaired ones are now flat with plain surfaces.

Shockingly, for example, the original features of one of the two frontal columns of Poddar Bari have been totally spoilt with a thick plaster coating creating a stark dissimilarity between the original and the restored.

Another building called Gate House of Sonargaon, built towards 1650, also has fallen prey to distortions under the same project.

Proportions and scales of many interior arches have been altered. Distortion has marred the shapes and patterns of the arches.

The government agency is actually destroying the fundamental heritage features of the site in the name of restoration, engaging mere masons and construction contractors in the job," said Ahmed, who is also a member of the advisory committee on the project.

The DoA is not going by the recommendations of the advisory committee, instead they have bypassed the committee, he said adding, "What they are doing is just a waste of public money."

The advisory expert committee held only three meetings including the latest one on December 30, 2004, Sayeed Ahmed said adding that the archaeology department did not maintain any correspondence with the committee.

Documentation is a comprehensive work – compiling historical, architectural and archaeological information is a must before launching any intervention on heritage edifices, he said. Conservation work of such a historical site must involve conservation architects, general

historians, geographers, archaeologists and historians of art and heritage.

The DoA undertook a Tk 5 crore restoration and conservation project in the first phase of 2005-2006 fiscal. Allocation for the ongoing phase has to be spent within June 2007. The DoA has intervened in 16 out of 51 buildings of Panamnagar.

A group of Hindu merchants chose Panamnagar as their residence in the nineteenth century and set up this urban settlement of cluster buildings bearing the influence of architecture of the colonial era.

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reconstruction 'but not conservation in any way'.

They are reconstructing a simple brick-built flat roof with reinforced concrete and iron rods, he said adding that maintaining the original technique is important there.

"The conservation will have no authenticity, as the materials and techniques are different in the restoration."

"An irreparable damage has been done to the heritage of the site," he said.

The masons are removing the entire old plaster destroying the exquisite and stylish workmanship, Imon said adding that they are instead putting new plaster of different material compromising the artistry of the original workmanship.

President of the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB) Mubashar Hussain said, "The architecture of the buildings manifests an aesthetic pride of the affluent Hindu merchants but no effort is in sight to conserve the aesthetic manifestation of the edifices."

"What the DoA is doing is destruction of a heritage site by government officials with public money," he said.

Director of DoA Dr Md Shafiqul Alam claimed they have documentation of the site in forms of drawings and photographs.

"In fact, whatever we have done so far is a temporary work," he said adding, "Following the death of a mason, we had to do temporary work. We will, if needed, remove the temporary repairs to bring the original features back."

He said it was not possible to restore the detailed, fine and intricate ornamental works of the edifices, as they could not avail a suitable mason.

Responding to whether reconstruction of cornices, walls and other aesthetic features of these historic buildings with dissimilar and deformed motifs and roofs with reinforced concrete (RCC) are acceptable, he said, "Not at all."

"I have to go to the spot and see for myself actually what has happened and how," said Alam.

World Monuments Watch rated Sonargaon-Panam City as one of the most endangered heritage sites in 2006.

UNESCO refused to declare Lalbagh Fort as a world heritage site because of wrong restoration, said Sayeed M Ahmed adding that Panamnagar too is running the risk of facing a similar fate.

Rangpur BTTB accounts officer Nurul Islam filed the cases on behalf of BTTB.

## ACC yet to

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exortion case filed against the Awami League chief.

Relying to a question, Habibur Rahman said the commission in its meeting today will approve the submission of three charge sheets against AL leader and former state minister Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, BNP leader and former state minister Mir Nasir and his son Barrister Helaluddin, and BNP leader and former state minister

Amanullah Aman and his wife Sabera Aman.

Earlier on March 6, the ACC filed first information reports (FIRs) against them for concealment of information on their wealth statements sought by the commission.

About submitting the charge sheets, ACC Chairman Lt Gen (retd) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury told reporters that the commission is trying to do the job perfectly.

## US for quick

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Khaleda Zia's reported confinement.

The spokesman said the US is watching Bangladesh situation quite closely.

He viewed that if the government doesn't take right decisions regarding handling the current situation, there is a real possibility that it can threaten Bangladeshi democracy.

When asked if the US government is in touch with ex-premier Hasina in London, McCormack said, "I know our embassy has been in close contact with them and Nick Burns talked to them several months ago."

## 17 ex-MPs

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Shaheeda Sarker Reba, Poritosh Chakkaborti, Hafizur Rahman, Amjad Hosein Talukder, Moklechur Rahman, Joynal Abedin, Shahjahan Sarder, Ahsan Ahmed, NK Alam Chowdhury, Bharoti Nandi, Noor Mohammad Mondol and Hafiz Uddin.

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## Wilted boro

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Earlier in 1997, similar problems arose due to high temperature, Bari sources mentioned.

Abdul Karim, a farmer in Savar area, spoke of sterility problem. When this correspondent visited his field, he said he had planted Boro seedlings earlier than the normal time. He however could not easily say when he planted those.

Asked about the reasons of less rainfall last year, a weather expert said, "Behaviour of weather varies month to month and year to year."

He went on, "Weather fluctuation is a natural phenomenon. It might be caused by global climate change but that is still to be ascertained."

According to DAE statistics, sterility has affected Boro production this season in 33,686 hectares out of 7,12,185 hectares in Mymensingh region, 14,805 hectares out of 3,32,782 in Comilla, 2,457 hectares out of 4,33,327 in Dhaka, 1025 hectares out of 33,72,562 in Barisal, 755 hectares out of 2,26,000 in Sylhet, 315 hectares out of 4,86,870 in Jessor and 42 hectares out of 8,22,433 in Rajshahi regions.

## TV channels

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television channel will operate without approval of the government. The permission from the information ministry will be required to operate any new channel in the country, it added.

## Bank clients

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the banks to provide NBR the "secret information" of accounts.

A six-member delegation of Bangladesh Association of Banks, led by Bank Asia Chairman M Sayeeduzzaman, met Bangladesh Bank Governor Salehuddin Ahmed at his office and informed him of the problem.

The delegation told the governor that the businessmen are scared of making transactions with the banks and sought his cooperation in this regard, meeting sources said.

"The governor has assured us of examining the problem and doing the needful where it is possible," Pubali Bank Chairman Hafiz Majumder, a member of the delegation, told reporters after the meeting.

He said the delegation of the private bank owners also requested the governor to extend the tenure of private bank directors from three years to six years to facilitate efficient management of the banks.

The delegation urged the governor to use his good office to convey the government the need for adjusting the corporate income tax of the commercial banks and non-bank financial institution, he said.

It urged the governor to recommend withdrawal of 3 percent tax on transactions through credit cards.

## Govt issues press notes

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is not pressuring Khaleda Zia regarding overseas trips or for leaving the country," the press note stated.

"The government also did not impose any restriction on her movement," read the press note.

This was the first public statement by the government on Khaleda's future after advisers had kept mum over the past week on whether the former prime minister would remain or leave the country.

Law Adviser Mainul Hosein told reporters last night, "It does not really matter to this government whether they [Khaleda and Hasina] are in the country or not."

"If there are allegations of corruption against them, they will be prosecuted," he added.

Yesterday, the Bangladesh Bank asked all commercial banks to provide all banking information of Khaleda and Hasina.

On April 22, British Airways refused to allow Hasina a board flight to Dhaka from London citing the April 18 government press note directing the immigration and aviation authorities, and airliners not to allow Hasina to return home.

The press note stated that the government feared Hasina could threaten the country's economy, security and public order as, in its own words, reflected by her recent comments.

On Tuesday, Hasina's lawyers moved to file a writ petition with the High Court to challenge the legality of the government press note imposing restrictions on her return home.

"I am happy with the decision and waiting for the time when I will be able to return home," said an elated Hasina adding that she had many things to say about the restrictions. "But as the restriction has been withdrawn, I will not say anything, because now I may return to my people who are enthusiastically waiting for me."

Hasina, the elder daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman also expressed her gratitude to the national and international news media, the people of the country, British parliament members, US senators and congressmen, and the members of the European Parliament, among others who, in her words, protested the caretaker government's restrictions on her homecoming.

## Iraqi govt held

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release them, omitting what many had viewed as a rare, reliable indicator of suffering in Iraq.

The Iraqi government announced in a statement its deep reservations about the report that is "inaccurate in presenting information" and that "lacks credibility in many of its points. Also, it lacks balance in presenting the situation of the human rights situation in Iraq."

"The publication of this unbalanced report... puts the credibility of the UN office in Iraq at stake and it aggravates the humanitarian crisis in Iraq instead of solving it," the statement said.

UN human rights officer Ivana Vuco said the government did not officially given a reason for refusing to release the numbers but it apparently "was becoming increasingly concerned about the figures being used to portray the situation as very grim."

"Unofficially, however, in a number of follow up meetings to their decision we were told that there were concerns that the people would construe the figures to portray the situation negatively and that would further undermine their efforts to establish some kind of security and stability in the country," she said at a news conference at the mission's heavily fortified compound in Baghdad.

"We found the decision to be rather unfortunate because the figures were helping us... to understand the scope of the problem," she said. "In our view it is the government's responsibility and they are probably the only one with the real capacity to gather the figures in a systematic manner."

Mission spokesman Said Arifat said the reason appeared to be that after the publication of its last human rights report on Jan. 16, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's office told UNAMI its mortality figures were exaggerated, "but our figures were taken credibly they are probably among the most carefully screened figures."

He urged the government to reconsider its decision, saying the figures it could provide could "actually show what is going on in Iraq. Otherwise there will be a great deal of speculation."

Numbers for Iraqi civilians killed since the U.S.-led invasion began in March 2003 vary widely and are believed to be vastly underreported, in part because of political pressure.

The last UN report was issued in January found that 34,452 civilians were killed last year, including 6,376 in November and December, based on information from the Iraqi Health Ministry, hospitals across the country and the Medico-Legal Institute in Baghdad. Iraqi officials have complained that the numbers were too high.

The current report cited many examples of deadly attacks by insurgents and militias across Iraq during Jan. 1-March 31, but it often relied on media accounts of such killings and does not provide overall numbers for the period.

On February 14, U.S. troops began stepping up their presence in

challenging the reported confinement of Khaleda Zia to her house and seeking a directive from the court for not sending her abroad.

On the same day, a Dhaka court had issued an arrest warrant against Hasina in connection with the Paltan killing case, but dramatically suspended the warrant the next day saying there was insufficient evidence.

Later on the same day, the High Court issued a rule on the government to explain within five days why the court should not direct the government to produce Khaleda and Hasina before the court to prove that she is