

Hasina won't avenge

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The UK chapter of AL organised the rally, members of which told The Daily Star last night that leaders, activists and supporters of the party from across Europe came there to hear Sheikh Hasina speak.

Hasina, the elder daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, said she knows that some people in Bangladesh 'are playing games', but she firmly believes that 'the law will take its own course'.

Over Law Adviser Mainul Hossain's comment that some AL and BNP leaders had encouraged the interim government to keep her out of the country, Hasina said she does not believe that could be true. "I don't believe anyone in Awami League was opposed to me during this crisis or that they collaborated with the caretaker government to keep me out of the country," she said.

Hasina said the party elected her as its president while she was in exile. "I never said I wanted to be its president. They picked me, the party leaders -- all 2,800 councillors -- voluntarily elected me. So then why would they try and keep me out?" asked the AL chief.

She said, "There are some people who have no support and who are ambitious to come to power. Perhaps they instigated these rumours."

She went on, "I was born in a political family. I grew up in a political family. We learnt to support our distressed people. We learnt to make sacrifices for them."

"My father had a dream of building a Golden Bangladesh. I plan to fulfil that dream," she said.

Replying to another query, the AL chief dismissed outright any suggestion that the crisis might have helped unite the two major parties' chiefs against a common foe.

Talking to The Daily Star last night Abdus Sobhan Golap, an assistant secretary to the AL subcommittee on international affairs who was accompanying Hasina in London, said the AL chief yesterday met Dr Charles Tannock, a member of the European Union (EU) parliament and sought support from the

Mainul

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Asked if a draft has been made, he answered in the negative.

He said the government believes there should not be party-affiliated student and labour bodies in public or private institutions.

"We are not talking about a complete ban on student politics, but we must keep the students out of party politics," Mainul said adding that the political organisations should not have wings in schools, colleges and universities.

The students and teachers would do politics but not be associated with any political party. The students would join politics only on completion of education, he said.

The EC has been requested to cancel registration of those parties that would have student bodies and trade unions, Mainul told the journalists.

The government plans to have laws prohibiting operation of trade unions as they tend to spoil the working environment, he observed.

The law adviser, however, did not elaborate on the other issues included in the proposals.

Referring to reform of the political parties, he maintained that the demand came from within the parties.

Some wanted reforms with their present party chiefs in place while others wanted the changes to be made in their absence, he said.

Asked for the names of those leaders, he said, "We don't need to mention the names, everybody knows them. It's a great success of the present government that the calls came from within the parties."

About the possible mode of reforms, he said if the Representation of the Public Order (RPO) does not cover the changes, the job could be done through amending the now defunct laws regarding the political parties or even a new law could be formulated if people want.

Everything depends on public opinion and support, he added.

Queried if the number of advisers would increase soon, he said, "You'd know if any such decision is taken."

Khaleda

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leader's Banani house where many party leaders, workers and supporters gathered to meet the chairperson.

Asked why the BNP chairperson did not attend the programme, Iskandar said, "I have the answer but I cannot tell you."

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, former chief justice Mostafa Kamal, BNP leaders Tanveer Ahmed Siddique, Dr RA Gani, Major General (retired) ZA Khan, Brigadier (retired) Hannan Shah, Goyeshwar Chandra Roy, Moazzem Hossain Alal, Jatiya Party leader Shah Moazzem and Jamaat-e-Islami leader Ali Ahsan Mujahid, among others, attended the programme.

"The BNP leaders and workers urged her [Khaleda] to take decision about leaving the country after observing what happens regarding the return of the president of a political party who is in abroad now," Hannan Shah told reporters, apparently referring to Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina.

He categorically said Khaleda will take action against the corrupt and inactive leaders of the party who have failed to perform their duties in recent days.

Mushfiqur Rahman, adviser to the BNP chairperson, yesterday told a TV channel that Khaleda will implement reforms in the party soon after the restriction on indoor politics is withdrawn.

"But what kind of reforms she will implement will depend on the Election Commission's initiatives in this regard," he said.

Mamun

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illegal firearms and ammunition.

Mamun was arrested from his Banani DOHS residence on March 26. Police seized a .22 bore Spanish pistol and eight bullets at his house.

Later, an arms case was filed against him and he was placed on a four-day remand for interrogation.

MAMUN'S GRAFT CASE

The same court will frame charges against Mamun, a close friend of BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, in connection with the graft case filed by the ACC.

On April 5, the commission's Assistant Director SMM Akhter Hamid Bhuiyan lodged the case against Mamun for not submitting his wealth statements to the commission within the stipulated time.

Following the case, the sessions judge's court issued arrest warrant against him and directed the authorities concerned to send a copy of the arrest warrant to the police stations concerned.

The ACC on February 18 directed Mamun to submit his wealth statements within 72 hours, but neither he nor any representatives on his behalf submitted the statements. The anti-graft body at a meeting on March 29 gave approval for filing of the case, sources said.

Finance adviser

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Minister Manouchehr Mottaki was present at the conference in the Egyptian Red Sea resort after a flurry of diplomatic activity aimed at persuading Tehran to take part.

Mottaki's participation raises the possibility he could hold rare bilateral contacts with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice although Tehran has refused to discuss this issue until its participation was confirmed.

US President George W. Bush has said that Rice, who is also set to attend the conference, "could" hold talks with Mottaki at the Red Sea resort should Iran decide to participate.

Tehran had shown a reluctance to sign up for the May 3-4 conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, citing unhappiness with the decision to include world powers such as the United States alongside Iraq's neighbours.

Irqi officials have been seeking to persuade Tehran to take part, and Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari held talks last week in Tehran with Mottaki.

Tehran's attendance also appeared to be complicated by the continued detention by Washington in Iraq of five Iranian officials arrested in January on accusations of seeking to stir trouble there.

Iran's top national security official Ali Larjani arrived in Baghdad on Sunday afternoon for a three-day visit to discuss the conference and other issues on a previously unannounced mission, state television said.

"The visit of Mr Larjani is in the framework of bilateral relations. He will probably talk about security questions and the international conference," foreign ministry spokesman Mohammad Ali Hosseini told reporters.

A visit by Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh to Tehran later on Sunday was cancelled after Larjani decided to go to Iraq himself, state media reported.

Zebari's visit failed to win a clear pledge from Iran to attend the conference, but there had been mounting calls from influential voices inside Iran for Tehran to participate.

Former foreign minister Kamal Kharazi, who is now a member of the strategic foreign policy council that advises the Islamic republic's supreme leader, said on Friday that Iran should attend the conference for the sake of Iraq.

Hasina's writ

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Speaking to the reporters, they said some flaws were there in the way the power of attorney has been given to the AL chief's Protocol Officer Manzila Faruque.

Shafique said they would move again after rectifying the errors.

Meanwhile, the government has yet to respond to an HC rule on BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's alleged confinement.

The HC on April 22 issued the rule asking the interim administration to explain within five days why the court will not direct that the former prime minister be produced before it to prove that she is not confined to her residence.

The rule followed frenzied speculations that Khaleda was under pressure to go into exile.

Additional Attorney General Salauddin Ahmed who stood for the state told The Daily Star that the reply is ready but as the matter was not on the cause list yesterday, they could not submit it.

He said they will submit the answer as soon as the matter is on the cause list.

BB sends finds

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branches of these banks, sources said. Some of the officials of the banks concerned were also involved in the scam, they added.

Of the amount, Nurunnabi withdrew Tk 310 crore as loan from First Security Bank (Agrabad branch), Tk 75 crore from Bangladesh Commerce Bank Limited (Agrabad), Tk 100 crore from Mutual Trust Bank (Khulna), Tk 58 crore from Jamuna Bank Limited (Agrabad), Tk 4 crore from Social Investment Bank Limited (Agrabad), Tk 31 crore from IFIC Bank (Shah Amanat Market Branch), Tk 7 crore from National Credit and Commerce Bank Limited, Tk 34 crore from Premier Bank (Agrabad), Tk 9 crore from Dhaka Bank (Agrabad) and Tk 16 lakh from Sonali Bank (Mithaili).

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Voter List, National ID

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Election Commissioner Sahul Hossain said the consultants will have the project proposal ready within the next two months and the EC will complete other preparatory works, like procurement of materials, within the next four months. Then implementation of the project will begin, which will take 12 months to be completed, the election commission added.

Meanwhile, Prof SM Lutful Kabir, director of the Institute of Information and Communication Technology of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), and AR Azimul Hoque Raihan, chief executive officer of NEWAGE InfoTech Services Ltd, joined the EC Secretariat yesterday.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday Prof Kabir said the EC will hold a meeting with them very soon. "We will understand their [EC's] requirements once the meeting is held," he said.

"It's our responsibility to prepare a project proposal for the voter list, national identity cards, and for the introduction of e-governance. I think it will require two to three months to complete the task," Prof Kabir said.

"Our task is to prepare guidelines for voter registration," another consultant Azimul said.

They also said two foreign consultants, an Australian and a Swedish, were supposed to arrive in Dhaka yesterday.

Another consultant, who will deal with procurement, will join later.

EC SECRETARIAT

Election Commissioners Sahul Hossain and Sakhawat said the EC in principle decided to seek opinion from constitution experts on whether it is possible to free the EC Secretariat from the control of the Prime Minister's Office without amending the constitution.

"We have found that it is not possible to separate the secretariat from the Prime Minister's Office without amending the constitution. But some legal experts are saying that an amendment to the constitution is not required for it," Sahul Hossain said.

"Now, we will examine whether there is a way to separate the secretariat without amending the constitution," he added.

The EC wants to have an independent secretariat like the one exists in Jatiya Sangsad, the election commissioners said.

"We don't want to free the EC Secretariat just on papers... We want independence in everything including budget preparation and recruitment... It should be like the Parliament Secretariat," Election Commissioner Sakhawat said.

"At the moment our top priority is to prepare the voter list, not the EC Secretariat's independence," he added.

In the charge sheet, the IOs

submitted the charge sheet of the case filed against Arman and his wife Sabera with Kafrel Police Station.

In the charge sheet, the IOs said they acquired properties including house and vehicles valued over Tk 10 crore, even though the FIR (first information report) of the case mentioned Tk 8.28 crore.

It said there is a wide discrepancy between income and expenditure... It should be like the Parliament Secretariat," Election Commissioner Sakhawat said.

Besides, the IOs accused Arman's wife Sabera Aman of giving false information in her statement to the anti-graft body.

The ACC filed the case under sections 26 (2) and 27 of the ACC Act 2004, section 409 of the Bangladesh Penal Code (BPC), section 5 (2) of the Anti-corruption Act 1947 and section 15 (Gha) 5 of the Emergency Ordinance 2007.

The case was filed under sections 26 (1), 26 (2) and 27 of the ACC Act 2004, section 409 and 109 of the BPC, section 5 (2) of the Anti-corruption Act 1947 and section 15 (Kha) of the Emergency Ordinance 2007.

Following the submission of the charge sheets, Metropolitan Magistrate Jagannath Das Khokon yesterday scrutinised it and directed the authorities concerned to place these before the CMM court for taking next steps regarding transfer of the cases.

"Host communities, who are already dealing with large numbers of Palestinian refugees, need to receive more support. Our operational partners are already achieving a lot, but steps also need to be taken at a political level."

"The massive displacement of population resulting from the conflict needs to be addressed urgently," he said.

"Anbar province in western Iraq is a hotbed of Sunni insurgents. With two days left, April is the seventh deadliest month for coalition forces since a US-led invasion force overthrew dictator Saddam Hussein in March 2003, only to come under attack from a violent insurgency."

The scale of the carnage, more than 10 weeks after the start of a major US and Iraqi security plan, will serve as another blow to the authority of Iraq's Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and US President George W. Bush.

Bush has seen domestic support for his war strategy collapse, and this week he is expected to veto a bill passed by Congress to tie further military funding to a plan to begin withdrawing US troops in October.

The rage in Karbala after Saturday's attack -- in which protesters were quicker to blame the failure of the Iraqi security forces than the bomber -- underlined Maliki's fragile authority.

The blast followed a pattern suggesting an attempt by Sunni extremists to foment sectarian violence. The suicide bomber detonated his payload near a gate to Ibn Abbas mosque, a revered Shia shrine.

"There are two dangers threatening Iraq, namely al-Qaeda and the Saddamists," Maliki said in a statement.

But while the Shia-led government blames all of Iraq's problems on "Saddamists and takfiris" or Sunni extremists, the enraged crowd that thronged the mosque pointed to corruption and incompetence.

The adviser stressed the need for increasing efficiency of the services and attracting more people towards train journey to make Bangladesh Railway a profitable organisation.

The government is unlikely to increase the railway fare although fuel price went up several times since the rail fare was fixed in 1992, sources said.

Sources said receipt of foreign aid was less in the current fiscal year

20 to die

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two others, including the principal accused, were dropped as they died in jail during the long-drawn trial. They were Mohammad Hasan Ali and Noor Ahmed.

The convicts in jail are Rafique Ahmed, M Abdulla, Mohsen Ahmed, Syed Ahmed, Rashid Ahmed, Siddik Ahmed, M Ismail, Dela Miah, Shafiqur Rahman, Siraj Ahmed, Siddik Ahmed, Noor Sultan, Shabuddin and Ramji Ahmed.

The fugitives are Ali Ahmed, M Ibrahim, Hafez Ahmed, Mostak Ahmed, Syed Ahmed and Kala Miah.

There had reportedly been a long dispute between two landlords -- Hasan Ahmed and Mohammad Hasan Ali -- in the coastal upazila over land that led to the gruesome murder of the former.

Ershad

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his wife though all broadcasting facilities were available in his secretariat.

The same court also adjourned the proceedings of another graft case against the former president until May 30 following a time petition by the prosecution lawyers.

According to the case, filed with the same police station, it was alleged that Ershad, defying the authorities' decision, directed to accept donation from France instead of Finland for setting up 'microwave telephone lines' in 49 upazilas.

Due to Ershad's unilateral decision, the government had to pay Tk 28 crore to France in interest, as the plan was