

## BNP men in dilemma

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case filed against Khaleda Zia's younger son Arafat Rahman Koko appears to be adding to the tension and fear among many BNP leaders. The case led up to Khaleda cancelling the Singapore trip that she had planned for treatment.

The leaders who met her several times in the last couple of weeks did not even try to contact the former premier after she cancelled the visit Wednesday night.

"I could not contact her in the last two days but I will try," Selima Rahman, a former state minister known to be very close to Khaleda, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Sources said many former ministers, lawmakers, leaders of central committee and Dhaka city unit BNP think that Khaleda should clarify what she is thinking about Tarique's future in the party politics.

Leaders of the mid-level and grassroots however still believe that it would be hard for them to survive without her leadership.

"The mass of party activists won't accept any change or reform sidelining Khaleda. Everyone will be happy though if she declares that both her sons will remain out of politics," said a BNP leader speaking about the reform issue.

Another leader said, "Tarique tried to do politics but his attitude towards the seniors was objectionable and unacceptable." He also questioned the contribution of the other family members of Khaleda including her brother Saed Iskandar for the BNP.

Leaders from all levels are annoyed with Tarique and his aides who, they allege, used the party and state power to cater to their personal interests. His arrogance was so blatant that he went on to insult on numerous occasions senior leaders who were colleagues of his father late President Ziaur Rahman, said party sources.

He failed to stamp a positive imprint on public mind, rather his involvement in corruption is now clear to all, they added.

## 5 more patients

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Murad ended the press conference refusing to answer the journalists' questions.

The government formed a high-powered committee to investigate the incidents of RMCH that led to the death of four patients in absence of treatment on Thursday.

The three-member committee headed by Mohammad Abdullah, deputy secretary of the health ministry, is likely to visit Rajshahi today.

RMCH authorities formed a three-member probe committee headed by Prof Dr ABM Abdul Hannan of surgery department and the committee already started working, official sources said.

Police also began investigating the incidents of death of Sima, one of the four patients who died due to lack of treatment on Thursday, and beating of her attendants on Wednesday afternoon.

Sima, wife of Chapainawabganj jail guard Shahabul Islam, was buried at his village home. Her mother Noor Jahan Begum filed a case for the death due to negligence in treatment and for beating up her son-in-law.

Assistant Commissioner Joydev Chowdhury of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police said they visited ward no 16, the place of occurrence, and heard the witnesses.

RMCH Director Brig Gen Bazle Quader called a press conference at his office yesterday afternoon but local journalists refused to attend it saying that the RMCH director had barred the newsmen's entrance to the hospital premises since March.

Later the RMCH director's spokesman and local bureau chief

of daily Jai Jai Din Dr Bulbul Hossain in an e-mail told reporters that the RMCH director rejected the newspaper reports on the incidents of Wednesday and Thursday.

### Tarique

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lawyer Ahmed Aazam Khan told The Daily Star.

Aazam accompanied Zubaida and her mother, but could not meet the senior joint secretary general of BNP as he had no permission.

Asked if the three talked about Khaleda's going abroad or the extortion case against Arafat Rahman Koko, the family sources replied in the negative.

They said Tarique mainly enquired about the health of his mother and his younger brother Koko. He also wanted to know from his wife if their daughter Zaima Rahman was attending school regularly.

Zubaida and her mother wanted to know about his health as he appeared to have grown thin. The former prime minister's eldest son still feels pain around the waist, they added.

Meanwhile, the jail authorities said Tarique has been kept alone in one of the 12 cells at Champakoli Building.

"For security reasons, we have kept the two cells next to his vacant," Deputy Inspector General (prisons) Major Shamsul Haider Siddique told The Daily Star.

Tarique was arrested on March 9 at his mother's cantonment residence.

### National debate

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In his speech as the chief guest, Prof Haider said the present generation would lead Bangladesh one day. So, all must make sure that a good environment prevails where children could build themselves up to the aspirations of the country.

Prof Haider stressed the need for making a brilliant and genius generation for the nation. He said refined knowledge could be gained through debates.

The National Debate Federation (NDF) gave Prof Haider a crest acknowledging his outstanding lifetime contribution to the practice and movement of debate in the country.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Kushtia Nurul Islam, Chairman of Biswas Group Mainuddin Biswas Babu, Managing Director of Ambition Pass Consultant Enamul Haq and Headmaster of Kushtia Zila School Nibha Rani Pathak also attended the inaugural ceremony.

Three debates took place on the first day. They were on: "Only the next generation can build a prosperous Bangladesh", "There is nobody but you everywhere" and "Teachers are more romantic than the students."

A number of other programmes were also included in the festival-free rendezvous, workshop, stage debate (in two different models), a cultural programme and film exhibition.

A total of 24 schools, 29 colleges, 26 public and private universities, eight organisations and 11 public and private medical colleges are taking part in the festival.

The final session of the debate competition will be held today. Editor of Bangladesh Observer Iqbal Sobhan Choudhury is expected to attend the second day's programme as chief guest while Pro-vice-chancellor of Rajshahi University Prof Mamunul Keramat is expected to be the special guest.

### Foreign student

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and an investigation by law enforcement agencies found the allegations to be false.

Dr Aziz Rahim, principal of the college, and Dr Habibur Rahman, hostel superintendent of SBMC, said Sanjib, a SBMC student and a friend of Jalal, informed them about Jalal's departure from the campus Thursday noon. It was learnt later on that Jalal left Barisal bag and baggage for Dhaka by road Thursday morning.

The college authorities informed law enforcement agencies and higher authorities concerned about his departure from Barisal and leaving the campus without notice and permission.

Earlier, the probe committee, after primary interrogations and medical check-up, found Jalal physically sound but mentally disturbed and dissatisfied with life and education there.

As he did not know any language other than Arabic and was not habituated with the life in a small divisional city, he always wanted to go to the capital where the pace of life is much faster, sources said.

An official of SBMC on condition of anonymity said they continuously face problems of behaviour and culture, drug abuse, alcohol addiction, unsocial and unruly activities and blackmailing from the foreign students of the college. He said he would be very happy if foreign students were not admitted there at all.

### Costliest RPCL

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December. Siemens was awarded contract for this project on the basis of unsolicited negotiations in 2005, and it was supposed to be completed within that year.

The RPCL is also entertaining German consultant Lahmayer, which made the RPCL to sign this power deal at an inflated cost. Again, ignoring objections by Asian Development Bank, the RPCL appointed Lahmayer through unsolicited negotiations allegedly under the influence of AZ Rezaul Haq, local agent of that company. In the past, Rezaul Haq had also represented Siemens.

"At this point, we are compelled to take Lahmayer's services because it had been involved with this project from the beginning. Once this is over, we will not need its services," said the top official.

Compared to the \$120 million profile of this 70 MW combined cycle plant, it took US company AES only \$170 million for Meghnaghat 450 MW combined cycle plant. The PDB installed a 70 MW simple cycle plant in Shahjibazar with \$30 million only in 2001.

The RPCL signed contract with Siemens in March 2005 in which it committed to open a letter of credit for the German company by June 1, 2005 so that the contractor can import plant equipment. But the RPCL was denied a major German grant in fiscal 2004-05 on ground of corruption, and it landed in a financial crisis. Since then, implementation of the project slowed down unusually.

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## FBCCI election

FROM PAGE 1

Ahead of the election these "fake" associations and chambers reportedly take money from the intending candidates for the FBCCI office or the offices of president or vice-president of the FBCCI board.

They are also seen negotiating the price of each vote from their associations and chambers, FBCCI insiders said, adding that all this money goes to individual member voters and sometimes part of it goes to their agents for a better bargain.

According to the FBCCI constitution, each A Class chamber has six voters and B Class chamber has four voters while each A Class association has five voters and B Class association three voters.

FBCCI sources said out of 209 associations and 66 chambers of commerce, at least 150 associations are either "pocket" associations or associations having no real business or members. They hardly maintain any permanent office or record of their activities as per trade organisation ordinance and rules.

More than 75 percent associations have never submitted reports of their annual general meetings and financial statements and other relevant documents to the commerce ministry. The ministry however neither penalised these associations nor cancelled their trade licences or memberships.

Besides, 90 percent associations do not have any activity or branch or membership whatsoever outside the capital although they are supposed to be a countrywide association, said FBCCI sources.

According to the concerned quarters, there are a few "influential" members who directly or indirectly own dozens of associations and maintain a vote bank to sell to the candidates at an opportune moment.

Some of these people, who do not have any business at all, bank on a few trade licences and selling votes during the election.

There are some who regularly attend the FBCCI office from morning to evening almost throughout the year and try to utilise any available opportunity in the federation, including exporting manpower in the name of trade delegation, the sources said.

In the late 1980s, the FBCCI took a planload of "trade delegation" to Japan and left behind some 150 of them for a payment of Tk 1 lakh or more per head. Following this incident, Japan Chamber of Commerce and its authorities concerned blacklisted the FBCCI.

FBCCI insiders said the commerce ministry is quite interested to give licences to any association without verifying their existence or the necessity of such association or organisation.

According to the Trade Organisation Ordinance, there can be only one trade body either in the manufacturing sector or in trade services. For a product, there cannot be more than one association in a particular sector of trade or industry. In reality, however, there are dozens of associations in the same trade and industry and some of them are not even permitted as per the Trade Organisation Ordinance 1960.

Several chambers are also reportedly involved in the illegal vote business during the election.

A few district chambers of commerce do not even have executive bodies, permanent offices and staff. They often have had one person as the president till date since their formation although it goes against the trade organisation rules. These chamber "presidents" are in most cases based in Dhaka, sources said.

## Another 1275 fowls

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Institute (BLRI) at Savar in Dhaka for testing on Tuesday.

The BLRI report that identified the disease as bird flu reached Nilphamari on Thursday and a team led by Jaldhaka Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mohammad Salehuddin and First Class Magistrate Mamunul Hasan went to the affected village the same night, District Livestock Officer Dr Sekendar Ali said.

The team comprising officers and employees of district and upazila livestock offices, army, BDR and police started killing and burying the domestic fowls at 11:00pm and it continued till yesterday noon. The upazila administration told the poultry farmers that they would be compensated.

Some 400 to 500 chickens, ducks and pigeons died in Berubon village from an unknown disease in last two weeks, locals said.

Panic is prevailing among the people of the village and surrounding areas as there are several hundred small and big poultry farms in the district.

The upazila administration arranged announcement through loudspeakers of mosques of Berubon village to make people aware of bird flu disease.

Poultry farmers in the village have been instructed not to rear chicken, ducks and pigeons for the next three months, UNO Salehuddin said.

Visiting different parts of the

But the commerce ministry has never taken any action to change this situation although it has full authority to ask every organisation to comply with the trade organisation rules and cancel their licences if they fail.

Top business leaders said the ministry should take immediate steps against these "fake" associations and chambers.

They also asked the authorities concerned not to allow loan defaulters to contest the FBCCI election, saying their presence in the board will not only discourage honest business but also encourage others to default on loans.

In the last week of April, the name of FBCCI Vice-President Mohammad Ali came to spotlight when the state-owned Sonali Bank waived Tk 129 crore interest on loans taken by him.

According to sources, Ali has Tk 165 crore outstanding loans with Sonali Bank taken against Dhaka Vegetable Oil Industries Ltd, of which he is both the chairman and managing director.

He took the loans showing edible oil stock at Dhaka Vegetable Oil Industries plant but Sonali Bank officials later found that the containers were filled with water. The bank has been treating the loans as bad loans since 1995.

Ali also took Tk 56 crore loan from Sonali Bank against Deshna Shoe Industries, which is also a defaulter. Banking sources said Ali has also defaulted loans of Tk 52 crore with Oriental Bank and Tk 33 crore with the IFIC bank.

Major (ret'd) Jasimuddin, president of Bangladesh Cold Storage Association, in a written statement recently urged the commerce adviser to prevent loan defaulters from contesting the FBCCI election.

He also asked the government to remove the loan defaulters from the existing executive body of the FBCCI.

The competence of the federation president should be of the highest order so that no question can be raised about his or her integrity, said Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) President Hossain Khaled. The DCCI does not allow any loan defaulter to be part of its executive body, even to be a member of the chamber.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association President Anwar-ul Alam Chowdhury Parvez also said it should be the prime criterion for an FBCCI leader that there would be no negative discussion against the leadership.

### Indian envoy

FROM PAGE 16

Giving assurance of all possible cooperation from his government for the development and establishment of the temple, the Indian envoy said Bangladesh government could expand it as a potential tourism centre.

Chief of Dhaka Ramkrishna Mission Swami Aksharananda Maharaj and Secretary of Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha Oikya Parishad Prof Nimchandra Bhoumik, among others, were present at the function presided over by Suvash Chandra Lala, president of Sitakunda Shrine Committee.

US Ambassador Patricia Butenis, who was also scheduled to attend the function, sent a letter to the Shrine Committee wishing overall success of their activities.

In the letter she regretted that she was unable to attend the programme due to her busy schedule in Dhaka.

### Controversial

FROM PAGE 1

Dhaka University amid tight security under the supervision of the EC Secretariat. Earlier, the Public Service Commission (PSC) headed by its erstwhile chairman Prof ZN Tahmid Begum gave a 'controversial' examination allegedly to clear the way for making former Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leaders UEOs.

Every UEO, who joined their current post on September 7 in 2005, had been checked with metal detectors by security officials at the IBA building before the exam began.

The examination, however, created panic among the UEOs as they fear that they might lose their job that, many of them said, they attained through using political identities and giving handsome amount of money to the then senior BNP leaders and officials at Hawa Bhaban.

Talking to The Daily Star after their examination, many of the UEOs reacted sharply over government's initiative of taking the examination and questioned about the politically appointed District Election Officers, Assistant Secretaries in the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat as well as those who were appointed in the administration on political grounds.

They demanded that all political appointments made by the previous coalition government should have to be re-examined properly like them, if the government really want to cleanse the administrations from politicisations.

The Daily Star investigation in 2005 revealed that 300 leaders and activists of the then ruling BNP's student wing Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), and relatives of BNP lawmakers were recruited as UEO through the Public Service Commission (PSC). Out of 328 UEO posts, at least 150 were filled with the candidates from a list prepared by JCD top brass.

Some of the UEOs, who were leaders of the JCD at different hall units of Dhaka University yesterday told this correspondent that at least eight JCD leaders who were appointed as senior assistant secretaries (AD) in the EC secretariat in 2004 have still enjoying their jobs.

They are Nababul Islam, Ruhul Amin, Rafiqul Islam Rafiq, Akbar Ali, Mahabubul Alam Raton, Faisal Kader, Kaniz Fatema, and Delwar Hossain. Most of the current ADs were JCD leaders of DU and its different dormitories, one of Eden College unit and one of Bogra district unit.

They also said some 16 JCD leaders were made district election officers through the PSC in 2003 and they were picked from a list that the JCD high-ups had sent to the PSC. JCD leaders Abul Kalam Azad, Rashedul Hasan, Belayet Hossain, Nazmul, Korshed Alam, Hasanuzzam, Mohammad Alauddin, Dulal, Kabir, Farid, Gaffer, Yonus, Momen and others are currently working as election officers in different districts. Of them, most came from DU, Rajshahi University (RU), Chittagong University (CU), and Bogra district JCD units.

As we have to sit for the examination to show our merit and competence, the government should take examinations of all other electoral officials who were appointed like us from 2003 to 2005," said an UEO preferring not to be named.

"We do not know what is waiting in our fate after taking the examination," said another UEO in a depressing voice. "If the job is gone, what will we do as the age for government job has already gone," he posed a question.

### Salman brothers

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concern of Beximco Group.

The complainant said the case was filed as the accused illegally occupied a government Khas land and placed obstacles to people's movement.

### Tapan Chy

FROM PAGE 1

existing generation through maintenance and overhauling of some old power generation units.

Such candid comments from the energy adviser came at a time when the country is experiencing the worst power shortage. In recent weeks, power shortage reached 1,500 MW against a demand for 4,500 to 5,000 MW.

Experts in power sector fear the situation may aggravate further in the coming days when temperature will go up during the peak summer.

Tapan Chowdhury said the country will get another 200 MW in September 2008 when a number of rental power plants will be installed.

The adviser said his ministry is preparing an energy policy where a coal policy will be incorporated. The donor agency, UNDP, recently submitted a draft energy policy to the government for its consideration.

Replying to a question, he admitted that those who are involved in preparing the coal policy are not truly experts on the issue.

He said the government is yet to decide on which methodology of coal extraction--open pit or underground--will be adopted in the proposed coal policy.

"This is a matter of debate... we have had a bad experience in developing the Barapukuria coal mine," he said. "We have already invested \$260 million in the project and we have to face a lot of difficulties."

About the proposed import of electricity from Myanmar, he said a power ministry team will visit the neighbouring country to assess the import potential.

## EC's stand raises

FROM PAGE 1

ambassador on Thursday.

On Wednesday, much to our delight, a group of army experts briefed the media on the EC premises itself that they had all the expertise and preparations for producing the all important voter list with photographs and the national ID cards within four to five months or at the latest, five to six months. Fantastic we thought. This fitted in very well with Army Chief Lt Gen Moeen U Ahmed's statement in the early days of emergency that the army armed forces could prepare the voter roll in nine to ten months. If we take four months for the preparatory work (timeframe given by the CEC) and five to six months for the field work, then the army chief's statement perfectly tallies with what the army experts told the press. So far we can see a consistency in the events and statements as they unfolded.

Now comes the mystery or should we say mischief! On Thursday, within a day of the army experts' statement to the press, Secretary to the EC Mr Humayun Kabir, hurriedly, perfunctorily and surprisingly rejected the army's timeframe and repeated that there is no way that the task of preparing the voter list can be completed in less than 18 months time.

Here an incident at the army experts' press briefing needs to be recounted. As a part of briefing the press, the army also demonstrated how various forms were to be filled by asking the journalists themselves to fill them. At that stage, the electronic media cameramen, as there were many, were told that they would be given a chance later to film the demonstration, which however was hurriedly cancelled on a reported instruction from an EC commissioner.

Going back to the EC Secretary's rejection, we want to ask why? Especially, when the proposal had been demonstrated, more than once! Four months ago, on February 18 to be precise, army experts gave a special demonstration to the chief adviser, in presence of the CEC, on how and by when the army can prepare the voter list with photographs. In mid-March an army team visited the EC and gave a special demonstration of the method and system by which they can prepare it in the shortest possible time. More recently on May 10 they gave a special demonstration to the EC again with a more detailed work plan.

It may be mentioned that throughout the above process nothing was said to the press till the aforementioned briefing on May 15.

We have gone to some length in making our case that there appears to be an attempt to try and take more time than necessary in preparing the voter list. The army group has been working on the project from the very beginning, as can be understood by Gen Moeen's own announcement.

ment early on. Subsequent to that the army experts had more time to fine tune their proposal and methods.

Given their expertise, and not to forget their reputation, which will be greatly sullied if proven wrong, we are not willing to believe that they do not know what they are talking about. In fact if we consider that their coming into the scene in the first place, is based on their public promise to give the nation a truly acceptable election, then it is logical to assume that the army experts must have done their homework very thoroughly before going public with their voter list timetable. To us therefore, the army experts' timetable is far more credible than the out of hand rejection of it by the EC secretary.

Here we would like to bring to the focus of course that the EC's new leadership is honourable and highly respected. The CEC enjoys public confidence and his reputation for personal integrity remains a source of credibility and support for the process he leads. But can we say the same thing for the structure he heads or the functionaries at the various levels that comprises his staff? How can we forget the criminal waste of public funds that occurred under Justice Aziz and his commissioners. Could that have happened without the support of the bureaucrats who formed the team, at that time? How can we overlook the fact that the gap between six months and 18 months in preparing the voters list is not only one of time but also one of resources. The more time we can take, the more money we can spend for the purpose -- increasing the likelihood of waste and misuse. The CEC can overlook this aspect at his own peril.

We conclude by demanding that the confusion raised by the hurried rejection by the EC secretary of the army experts' proposal, needs a public disclosure giving us a detailed and credible explanation as to where the differences lie. Please remember, election is now the main focus of the nation. We want it the soonest. Because of that every action of the EC will not only have to be timely, credible and correct they will also have to be transparent. The rejection so far is not.

### Koko's case

FROM PAGE 1

the general recording officer (GRO) to put the petition into the cases file.

With the acceptance of the petition, no court can grant Koko, youngest son of former prime minister Khaleda Zia, and his two brothers-in-law bail during the investigation and trial of the case.

On May 16, Abu Ahmed Jayed An Rabbi, proprietor of advertising firm Add Media Limited, filed the case against Koko and his two brothers-in-law--Mustaqin Reza and Muktaqin Reza--accusing them of extorting Tk 1.20 crore.

## Wolfowitz bows

FROM PAGE 1

The bank's 24 executive directors also issued a statement that seemed tailored to meet Wolfowitz's reported demand that the bank recognize their flawed advice in the Riza affair.

The announcements drew a delicate face-saving balance, acknowledging that wrongs were done on both sides but that all parties had acted in good faith.

"A number of mistakes were made by a number of individuals in handling the matter under consideration," the statement said.

The directors pointed to successes under Wolfowitz's two-year tenure, such as debt relief, clean energy investment and avian flu projects.

"It is regrettable that these achievements have been overshadowed by recent events," they said.

The bank's country director for China and Mongolia, David Dollar, described the process as "difficult" but said it showed the institution was "serious when we talk about governance."

However, the World Bank Group Staff Association which represents around 13,000 employees took a dimmer view, saying in a statement that Wolfowitz had "demeaned" the Bank, insulted the staff, diminished its clients, and dragged this institution through the mud.

The resignation deal leaves Wolfowitz in office until June 30, but with greatly reduced powers, according to a source close to the negotiations.

Wolfowitz agreed to not make any major decisions on policy or personnel matters and will not attend the Group of Eight finance ministers meeting this weekend in Potsdam, Germany, the source said.

European countries had led the drive for his departure from the bank for more than a month.

The White House said it regretted the decision of the former US deputy defence secretary -- a key architect of the Iraq war -- but that President George W. Bush would soon announce a new candidate.

"We would have preferred that he stay at the bank, but the president reluctantly accepts his decision," the White House said in a statement.

"The president will have a candidate to announce soon, allowing for an orderly transition that will have the World Bank refocused on its mission."

By tradition, the United States nominates the World Bank chief -- typically a US national -- while Europe names the head of its sister institution, the International Monetary Fund.

World Bank senior vice president Francois Bourguignon said the crisis had been resolved and it was time to move forward.

"We need a president and this is urgent," he told reporters in Slovenia.

The list of Wolfowitz's possible successors grew as the scandal deepened. In addition to former US trade representative Robert Zoellick, names often cited were Treasury deputy secretary Robert Kimmitt and former Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker.