

BNP men in dilemma

FROM PAGE 1

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.

5 more patients

FROM PAGE 1

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 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 Choudhury of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police said they visited ward no 16, the place of occurrence, and heard the witness.

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

US legislators strike

FROM PAGE 1

Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic speaker of the House of Representatives, echoed Reid's sentiments.

"While the bipartisan Senate agreement starts the process, I have serious concerns about some elements of this proposal -- the bill must be improved in the Senate," she said.

Democratic presidential candidate Senator Hillary Clinton said she would scrutinize the pact to see if it honoured America's "proud immigrant heritage."

Republican and Democratic aides said the compromise was aimed at moving US immigration rules to a merit-based system, rather than prioritising claims for extended immigrant families.

"It is intended to reflect the labour needs of the United States in the 21st century, rather than the 19th century," a senior Republican staffer said on condition of anonymity.

If approved, the bill would fund building 321km of barriers and 595km of fencing, and the construction of 70 ground-based radar and camera towers on the Mexican border.

Enforcement measures would have to be in place before the new temporary worker programme and arrangements for those living in the United States illegally can begin.

Those illegally in the country before January 1, 2007 must pay a 5,000 dollar fine to get a non-immigrant 'Z' visa which will allow them eventually to become eligible for a green card or permanent residency.

The new rules would give more credit for earning a green card to those applicants with English proficiency, advanced education, science, technology and mathematics skills, and other special expertise. In the past priority has gone to people with family members already in the United States legally.

The deal will also raise the number of H-1B visas, used by US universities and companies to find skilled workers like scientists, medical experts and computer programmers.

Former Massachusetts governor Romney, who is seeking the

presidency in 2008, was quick to criticize the deal.

"It is the wrong approach," he said in a statement. "Any legislation that allows illegal immigrants to stay in the country indefinitely... is a form of amnesty."

Immigration is a red-hot political issue among core Republican Party supporters, who overwhelmingly favour the strictest controls possible.

Musharraf

FROM PAGE 1

efforts to retain power.

Benazir Bhutto's party missed Musharraf's outburst as nothing but the "dying kicks of a vanishing dictator."

"General Musharraf himself is about to go, his days as the usurper president are over and it is just a matter of time before he has to quit," PPP spokesman Farhatullah Babar told AFP.

He vowed Benazir Bhutto, 54, one of the most colourful and controversial figures in Pakistani life, will return to Pakistan to participate in the elections.

Sharif, who heads his own faction of Pakistan Muslim League, said in an interview this week in Britain's Times newspaper that he also had "every intention" of returning home.

His party leader, Raja Zafarul Haq, said Musharraf had once again shown that he had little respect for fundamental rights.

"Mr Sharif will return to Pakistan this year because he is a citizen of Pakistan," Haq told AFP.

"There is no provision in the constitution which gives power to one man to bar a fellow citizen from entering the country."

Musharraf has said Sharif, 46, could not return for ten years under an agreement brokered by Saudi royal family.

Under the deal, Musharraf ended Sharif's life sentence on tax evasion and treason charges, according to government.

The return of Pakistan of either Benazir Bhutto or Sharif would bring huge crowds of supporters onto the streets and likely provide a focal point for widespread anti-Musharraf sentiment.

National debate

FROM PAGE 16

"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 Saeed 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 numerous occasions senior leaders who were colleagues of his father late President Ziaur Rahman, 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

FROM PAGE 1

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 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 Choudhury of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police said they visited ward no 16, the place of occurrence, and heard the witness.

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

From page 1
lawyer Ahmed Aazam Khan told The Daily Star.

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 Zainam 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.

Foreign student

From page 1
and an investigation by law enforcement agencies found the

allegations to be false.

According to the final session of the debate competition will be held today. Editor of Bangladesh Observer Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury 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.

The final session of the debate competition will be held today. Editor of Bangladesh Observer Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury 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.

Costliest RPCL

From page 16
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.

An official of SBMC on condition of anonymity said they continually 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.

Another 1275 fowls

From page 16
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 Mamun Hasan went to the affected village of the upazila also reported the death of a number of fowls in last couple of days. They said the Upazila Livestock Office was informed of the incidents.

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.

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

Under the deal, Musharraf ended Sharif's life sentence on tax evasion and treason charges, according to government.

The return of Pakistan of either Benazir Bhutto or Sharif would bring huge crowds of supporters onto the streets and likely provide a focal point for widespread anti-Musharraf sentiment.

National debate

From page 16

In his speech as the chief guest, Prof Haider said the present generation would lead Bangladesh one day. So, all must make sure 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 Saeed 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 numerous occasions senior leaders who were colleagues of his father late President Ziaur Rahman, party sources.

They also also seem 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.

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.

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.

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.

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 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 final session of the debate competition, 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 opportunity 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 plane load 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.

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

Salman brothers

From page 1<br