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Budget to be placed before civil society on June 7

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Adviser AB Mirza Azizul Islam might place the budget for the coming fiscal before a gathering of fellow advisers, civil society members and journalists now that the parliament stands dissolved.

The function might be held on June 7, said sources in the finance ministry.

The government is considering the auditorium of National

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Sylhet mayor, 17 others charged with graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Charges were framed yesterday against the mayor of Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) and 17 others in Divisional Special Judge's Court of Sylhet, in the much talked about kitchen market graft case.

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Harris jailed for 3 years in fast-track graft court

Another case on cards as ACC detects his huge ill-gained wealth

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

An anti-graft tribunal yesterday sentenced Harris Chowdhury, political secretary to former prime minister Khaleda Zia, to three years' imprisonment for not submitting wealth statement to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

This is the first judgment by any of the special courts set up at the MP Hostel in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar for quick disposal of the corruption cases.

The Fifth Special Court of Judge Ashraf Hossain in its decision said, "The sentence shall take effect from the date of his arrest or surrender before the court."

Harris, also joint secretary general of the BNP, has been on the run since the present caretaker government took over on January 12. He did not even employ a lawyer to defend him.

The ACC filed the case against

him on April 5 with a Dhaka court that issued a warrant for his arrest the same day. It framed the charge against him on April 30 and transferred the case to the special court on May 6.

The anti-graft body is preparing to file another graft case against the BNP leader in flight. Investigation to that end is almost complete and



the case could be filed within the next 15 days, said sources at the ACC and the task force formed to combat crime and corruption.

The investigators have detected huge wealth of Harris in different names at home and abroad, they added.

On February 18, the ACC published a list of 50 graft suspects and asked them to submit wealth statement within 72 hours.

But seven of them including Harris did not comply with the order. Of them, former Awami League (AL) lawmakers Joyal Hazari and Shamim Osman have already been tried in absentia by Feni and Narayanganj courts for not turning in wealth statements.

In the case against Harris, five witnesses testified for the prosecution. They include the complainant, ACC Deputy Director Abu Sayeed, ACC field official Khandker Akhteruzzaman, defendant's cousin Fakhruddin Chowdhury,

the guard of Harris' neighbour, and a relation Alfaz Uddin.

Three of them gave depositions on May 6 while the other two—Fakhruddin and Alfaz—on May 16.

The prosecution made their submissions Sunday as the court fixed yesterday as the date for the judgment.

Judge Ashraf Hossain read out the judgment for more than half an hour. He said the prosecution arguments and evidence were enough for him to find Harris guilty.

At 11.15am, he passed the order saying, "Absconding accused Md Harris Chowdhury be convicted under section 26(2) Ka of the ACC Act 2004 read with rule 15 (gha) (5) of the Jaruri Khamata Bidhimala 2007, and he be sentenced to suffer simple imprisonment for three years..."

The court also issued a warrant for his arrest.

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Tarique, top BNP leaders may lose party posts

SHAKHAWAT LITON

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman and some other top leaders will lose their party posts and be disqualified for contesting parliamentary elections ever on party nomination if they are convicted of extortion and corruption by the highest court, according to the party constitution.

The following persons will be considered disqualified for the membership of the national council, national executive council, national standing committee or any executive committee at any level or as party candidate in the national parliamentary election: persons convicted under criminal

code, persons convicted under President's Order No. 8 of 1972, bankrupt persons, persons proven to be mentally unstable and persons known in society as corrupt or ill-reputed," says the BNP constitution.

Besides Tarique, other top BNP leaders now in detention and facing extortion, corruption charges include Standing Committee members Dr Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain, Moudud Ahmed, vice-presidents Nazmul Huda and Tariqul Islam, immediate past prime minister Khaledia Zia's adviser Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, BNP chairperson's adviser ASM Hannan Shah, Joint Secretary General Mirza

Abbas and Amanullah Aman. Former state ministers Mir Nasir, Iqbal Hassan Mahmood, Salahuddin Ahmed, Ruhul Quddus Talukder Dulu and AKM Mosharraf Hossain, and former lawmakers Mosaddek Ali Fala, Naser Rahman, Ali Asgar Lobi, MAH Salim, Salahuddin Ahmed, Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, Manjurul Ahsan Munshi and Abdul Gafur Bhuiyan have also been detained on charges of corruption and extortion.

Meanwhile, a special court yesterday sentenced Harris Chowdhury, joint secretary general of BNP and political secretary to the former prime minister, to three years in jail in a corruption case.

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Give people desired service in short time CA asks top bureaucrats

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday asked top civil bureaucrats to introduce an effective system so people could easily complain against harassment by officials and employees of service-providing organisations and know follow-up actions.

For infusing dynamism in an apparently sluggish official function, the CA stressed the need for scrapping the outmoded acts and rules and regulations of the ministries to simplify the modus operandi.

It, he said, is imperative to make

sure that people get their desired service in short time and scope of rent-seeking behaviour and corruption is reduced.

He asked the bureaucrats to frequently go for interaction with the media, adopting a proactive strategy to disseminate government's activities, policies and actual position to the people, as now there is no parliament in existence.

The CA also asked for hanging client-chatter at every government office to help people get services promptly and "without any harassment".

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CHITTAGONG TEST Bowlers bat for Bangladesh

BISHWAJIT ROY from Chittagong

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza combined with Shahadat Hossain to stage an outstanding fightback as Bangladesh recovered from a precarious position on the fourth day to bring the dead first Test against India alive at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

All the permutations pointed towards a dull and drab finish after rain spoiled nearly two days of play. But the fourth afternoon produced some genuine excitement, courtesy the brilliant sunshine and equally special batting efforts from Tigers' new ball partners.

Having one eye on manoeuvring a result, India, who missed

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No let-up in price hike

PINAKI ROY and SHEIKH SABIHA ALAM

Prices of daily essentials continue to rise despite the government's scramble to curb the spiral.

Within the last couple of weeks prices of vegetables and rice increased by Tk 3 to Tk 4 per kilogram (kg).

Aubergine, potato, bitter gourd, onion, and green papaya were being sold in different city retail markets including in Karwanbazar, Hatirpool, and Kathalbagh for Tk 20 to Tk 22 yesterday. But the prices of those vegetables had been Tk 14 to Tk 16 just about a week or two ago.

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) personnel, who are involved in the government initiative for selling essential commodities through the border security forces operated fair price markets, said the government lost control over the wholesale markets and the distribution system. To alleviate the crisis, they suggested setting up government run wholesale markets on the outskirts of the capital where farmers could directly sell their product, eliminating the cost of middlemen.

In Karwanbazar the wholesale price of Potato was Tk 18 a kilogram yesterday but in the BDR run kitchen market at Farmgate potatoes of the same quality were Tk 13.50 per kilogram. When asked, the BDR authorities said they had bought the potatoes much earlier. Within the last one month the price of potatoes increased by Tk 5 to Tk

7. Prices of edible oils are going to go up for the second time within a month, grocery shop owners of Karwanbazar said yesterday. "Edible oil suppliers said prices are going to go up by Tk 2 per litre next week," said a grocery shop owner.

A long queue was found even during a drizzle yesterday noon at the BDR managed fair price sales centre at Farmgate in the capital.

Md Mokammel Mridha, a retired person, was also in the queue. "Price hikes are making people feel helpless, prompting them to cut down expenses just to

maintain their families," he said.

Prices of rice rose by Tk 2 to Tk 3 in a month. Most of the coarse rice are being sold for Tk 20 or more. Within the last one year the prices of rice increased by 25 percent on an average, and the prices of edible oils, wheat and potato rose by 50

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A vegetable seller at Karwan Bazar in the capital snoozes with no customer at his shop. Prices of essentials continue to go up despite government efforts to curb them.

CG now considers appointment of consultants, not advisers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government (CG) is now considering appointment of some consultants instead of expanding the advisory council to avoid constitutional complications,

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AL REFORM WITHOUT HASINA Action against rebel leaders mulled

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

The Awami League (AL) high-ups are planning organisational action against several of its central leaders for their alleged move to keep incumbent President Sheikh Hasina in exile in a bid to bring reforms in the party without her.

Two presidium members, two organising secretaries, and several secretaries and assistant secretaries of the central committee might be issued show cause notice asking them to give satisfactory reasons for having made such a move as soon as the ban on indoor politics goes, highly placed sources in the AL said.

If the leaders concerned fail to give satisfactory answers they

might face temporary expulsion from the party, sources said, adding that a few AL leaders may be sidelined in the party politics for their 'non-cooperation' during the crisis moment when Sheikh Hasina was out of the country.

A list of the party leaders, who initiated the move to remove Hasina from the AL top brass, has already been prepared, sources said.

Those persons include even a few 'close aides' and relatives of Hasina and she is closely monitoring their activities, said a source close to the AL chief.

Immediately after resumption of indoor politics, a party meeting will be called to effect internal

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EU encourages polls before timeframe

Delegation chief meets Election Commission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The European Union (EU) will be happy if the election is held earlier than the time frame announced by the authorities, the European Commission delegation to Bangladesh said yesterday.

"The authorities [government] have informed us about the time frame for holding the parliamentary polls. We will be happy if the election takes place earlier than that," said Stefan Frowein, head of the delegation, referring to the plan to hold the election within 2008.

Speaking to journalists after a meeting with the Election Commission (EC), he said, "We'd

encourage efforts to hold the election as soon as possible."

A three-member team discussed mainly the electoral issues with Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda and election commissioners Sahul Hossain and Brigadier General (retired) M Sakawat Hossain.

Replying to a query, Frowein said they support the move to prepare a voter roll with photographs.

"The European Commission is looking into the possibility of financing the voter-listing project," he added.

The recommendations by an EU

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