

Jalil, Babar, Hashem

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to the organisations.

Intelligence agencies hinted that a few more political bigwigs might be detained in the course of the third phase of the ongoing drive since the caretaker government had assumed the state power on February 12.

The sources also said the law enforces already started checking the files of the detainees in a move to find details about their possible involvements in graft.

The BNP expressed no formal reaction to the joint forces' yesterday's action till filing of this report at 10:30 last night. Contacted by The Daily Star some senior leaders of the party declined to make any comment saying that they are not understanding the prevailing situation.

Mercantile Bank officials said two members of the joint forces arrived at the bank and entered the office saying that they needed to meet Jalil. The AL general secretary, who is also the chairman of the bank, sitting in his office over the last a few days had been talking about a felt necessity for bringing reforms not only to political parties but also to the government and parliament.

Security chief of the bank, Ali Akbar, told reporters that two army officers arrived there around 3:45pm and asked Jalil to go with them.

After a little while Jalil left the office with them, Akbar added.

Jalil being picked up is one of the latest in a long line of high-profile arrests in an anti-corruption drive being carried out by the caretaker government, sources said.

Moniruzzaman Monir, a chauffeur of Babar, said members of the joint forces went to Babar's house around 4:00pm in three or four vehicles and cordoned the house off. The joint forces also asked all inside the house to stay put and to keep all mobile phones switched off.

"At that time some of the troops entered the house and in a little while left the house with him [Babar]," Moniruzzaman said.

Babar's family said the joint forces also seized some files and a vehicle from his house.

Babar has been reportedly involved in a 'covert move' to form a new political platform comprising prospective defectors from the AL and the BNP.

Security staff at the Partex Group office in Gulshan said two plainclothesmen of the joint forces went to the office around 3:00pm and wanted to know whether Partex Group Chairman MA Hashem was inside.

"As we confirmed that he [Hashem] was in the office, more members of the joint forces came and entered the office a few min-

Hasina

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not stop what she said was the political harassment.

Things are always good for people when democracy and good governance are in place, said Hasina, adding that countrymen were better-off during her regime as they did not have to face power crisis and price hike of essentials.

She said the government has detained the AL general secretary despite his wanting to help them over the reform issue.

The AL chief continued, "They might arrest me or even kill me as I'm talking [to the press]. But they don't see any violation of law in meeting at a restaurant to form a new political party."

"We campaigned against rampant crime and corruption, and the plot to rig election by the four-party alliance and the present government is the product of our movement. But they now seem out to act against us."

She said, "The Election Commission and the government must answer what they have done in the last four and a half months. They could not even upgrade the vote list yet when the Supreme Court has ordered [the EC] to do so."

Hasina said she wants to know where the country stands and where it is heading for.

"They have arrested the general secretary of the party like Awami League. Is it a crime that he has written to the embassies?" she questioned.

She said she wonders why the government does not look for those who had made a huge fortune and became owners of TV channels in the last five years.

She added that they too were in power but none of their leaders or relations had been involved in such kind of activities.

Urging the military-backed government to arrest those who are real corrupts and corrupt she said, "The administration has no control over the prices of essentials and how come one says the law and order has improved when an army colonel's son gets killed in the broad daylight."

Among others, AL Presidium Member Motia Chowdhury, former lawmaker Rahmat Ullah, Col (retired) Farukh Khan, Major General (retired) Subid Ali Bhuiyan were present.

utes later," said a security staff seeking anonymity. After a little while the forces left the office with Hashem, the security staff of Partex Group said.

Hashem was reportedly involved in a syndicate of traders who manipulated prices of essentials during the regime of the immediate past government led by BNP. Hashem however recently announced that he will never get involved in the politics of BNP or AL.

Earlier in a midnight raid on March 7, the crack forces arrested former premier Khaleda Zia's elder son Tarique Rahman. During many other raids on that night the crack forces also arrested Chittagong Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, former health minister Dr Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain, former lawmaker from Jamaat Abdullah Mohammad Tahir, and Editor of the daily Janakantha Atikullah Khan Masud.

The first round of such high-profile arrests was carried out on February 4 when the joint forces arrested seven former ministers and several other top political bigwigs of BNP and AL.

Some of the top catches during the February 4 crackdown were former communications minister Nazmul Huda, former BNP lawmaker Saaluddin Quader Chowdhury, former home minister from AL Mohammad Nasim, Adviser to AL and Beximco Vice-chairman Salman F Rahman, AL leader and former state minister for planning Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, BNP leaders and former state ministers Mr Nasir Uddin, Iqbal Hasan Mahmud, and Amanullah Aman.

Besides, former BNP lawmakers Mosaddak Ali Fala, Abdul Wadood Bhuiyan, Naser Rahman, Manjurul Ahsan Munshi, and former AL lawmaker Lotus Kamal were also arrested during the raids.

Dhaka asks G-8

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The letters also asked the G-8 leaders to allow temporary free movement of labour under mode-4 of the General Agreement on the Trade in Services (GATS) of World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Chowdhury yesterday handed over the letter, written by Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, to the ambassadors of G-8 countries at his office ahead of the 33rd G-8 summit to be held on June 6-8 in Heiligendamm, Germany.

In the letter, Fakhruddin asked the international community, especially the G-8 countries, to increase "necessary assistance" according to a philosophy of "partners reward performance".

In the letters he explained that Bangladesh has improved on its socio-economic indicators in the face of the pressures of globalisation.

The G-8 is a group of the eight most powerful countries in the world—United States, United Kingdom, Japan, France, Germany, Russia, Italy and Canada. Together, these countries represent 65 percent of the global economy.

Speaking to the media, the foreign adviser said that Fakhruddin has asked the G-8 leaders to consider the least-developed countries' concerns, such as duty-free access to exports such as ready-made garments.

In the letter, Fakhruddin explained that although the developed nations have agreed to give duty-free access to 97 percent of LDC goods, they have barred the most important LDC export goods from entering the developed countries, which constitute the other three percent.

Fakhruddin demanded that issues like "special and differential treatment" get proper legalisation during the WTO negotiations.

He asked the G-8 leaders to allow temporary free movement of labour under mode-4 of the GATS. This would include unskilled labour that would be of special benefit to large labour exporters like Bangladesh.

German Ambassador Frank Meyke said the G-8 countries welcome this Bangladesh initiative to directly and effectively voice its opinion.

Bangladesh is the biggest LDC country in terms of population.

He said the G-8 countries would take up this initiative in a positive way, especially issues of special interest to Bangladesh, such as foreign trade, trade and services liberalisation and development cooperation.

UNB add: The German ambassador expressed the hope that elections in Bangladesh will be held as soon as political party reforms and electoral preparations are complete within the timeframe set by the caretaker government.

"We think as soon as political party reforms and electoral preparations that are necessary for a democratic election are complete, the elections will be held within the timeframe set by the caretaker government," he told reporters.

He said the caretaker government is trying to bring about reforms of political parties for free and fair elections.

Bush pays tribute to fallen US troops

AP, Arlington, Us

President Bush paid tribute yesterday to America's fighting men and women -- "a new generation of fallen leaders" -- in a solemn Memorial Day visit to the national burial ground for war heroes.

Speaking under overcast skies after laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns and meeting privately at the White House with the families of some fallen servicemen and women, Bush called the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan a part of the nation's destiny. He said they follow a rich tradition of similar American sacrifices throughout this country's history.

As people across the country marked the day of remembrance, violence continued in Iraq where a suicide car bomber struck a busy commercial district in central Baghdad, killing at least 21 people and damaging a shrine revered by Sunnis and Shiites alike.

Speaking of the more than 368,000 buried through history at Arlington National Cemetery, Bush said, "Nothing said today will ease your pain. But each of you needs to know our country thanks you and we embrace you and we will never forget the terrible loss you have suffered."

"The greatest memorial to our fallen troops cannot be found in the words we say or the places we gather," he added. "The more lasting tribute is all around us."

Bush said the freedoms that people enjoy in this country today "came at a great cost and they will survive only so long as there are those who are willing to protect them."

The president said that even after four years, many young men and women still volunteer for the U.S. armed forces.

"We've heard of 174 Marines recently, almost a quarter of battalion, who asked to have their enlistments extended," Bush said. "They want to serve their nation."

21 graft suspects

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that everything was ready to serve the notices on the corrupt suspects asking them to submit their wealth statements.

Interestingly, ACC Chairman Lt Gen (retd) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury yesterday held bureaucratic tangle in his office responsible for not completing the process.

He said, "It will take one or two more days to complete the process to issue the notices, as you know the problems in the bureaucracy."

The ACC on Sunday finalised a list of 21 graft suspects. The list contains a number of former ministers, lawmakers from BNP and Awami League, businessmen and public servants.

This time the ACC will give seven days' time for submission of wealth statement. When the ACC published its first list of 50 top corruption suspects on February 18, it had given 72 hours deadline to submit wealth statements.

Although in February the ACC made a provision for those who were not in jail to submit wealth statement in person, this time there will be no such obligation.

DCC building

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engineering, yesterday collected concrete samples again from the building, which sank into the ground Friday night.

The members of Buet (Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology) laboratory said that they could not work on the samples they collected on Sunday.

"Generally we cut the concrete piece and make a cube out of it for putting in the machine for testing. But our previous samples turned into dust while making cube as the concrete structure was too weak," Golam Rabbani, Buet lab technician, said.

The work of knocking down the collapsed building was found to be going on at a slow pace.

Meanwhile, Atikullah Khoka, the contractor of the subsidised building, claimed that he conducted soil test and did piling before erecting the structure.

"I cannot remember the name of the company from where I did the soil test, but I did it. I don't understand how and why it happened," Khoka told The Daily Star over telephone. "The materials I had bought from the market might have been faulty."

He had drawn more than half of the bills for his work, he said.

Meanwhile, one of the family members of Khoka told The Daily Star that local Ward Commissioner Mokbul Islam Khan Tipu is close to the family when this correspondent visited Atikullah's house at Monir Hossain road yesterday.

"He (Tipu) is like our family member," Mahfuz Akhter, sister of Atikullah, said.

The local people alleged that Atikullah and the local ward commissioners are very close and the commissioners get share of Atikullah's earnings.

When asked about the allegations that he influenced the DCC to get Atikullah the contract for the building, Tipu denied it. "The contractors themselves distribute the work through negotiations, so the ward commissioners have no role in negotiations," he said.

He also observed that profit is minimal from the building work. "Even the contractors don't want to do the building work due to this. So how can we get commission from it," he added.

Passport office

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month and the rest after one month. All those were supposed to be issued within seven days.

For applicants in the urgent and ordinary categories, the situation is even worse.

If police verification system is abolished, very urgent category passports can be issued within four to five days, urgent category within 15 to 16 days and ordinary category within 25 to 26 days, the DPI proposals said.

Since there is no time limit for police verification report, which is in the jurisdiction of police authorities, there is no guarantee that passports of any categories would be issued timely, DPI sources pointed out.

People now have to pay Tk 5,000 for getting passports in 'very urgent' category that are supposed to be issued within seven days, Tk 3,000 for 'urgent' category to be issued within 21 days and Tk 2,000 for ordinary category to be issued within 30 days.

In most of the cases, people express their frustration that they do not get passports timely as DPI does not get police verification report in due time.

In November 2005, the government imposed a restriction that no passport would be issued without police verification report. Sources said this was done due to security reasons.

Earlier, rules provided that in 'very urgent' cases, passport would be issued within three days and then police verification would be completed. If police verification reports were not submitted within one month, passports would be issued without that.

Meanwhile, passport offices are crowded by applicants regularly. "But we, not police, have to face people agitated over not getting their jobs done," a DPI official at Dhaka office said. "Why should we

Jalil's arrest

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Star last night.

Hasanul Haque Inu, President of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, said, "Abdul Jalil is a front line leader and a fair politician of the country. And so, the authorities should make public the reason of his arrest without any delay."

"We are observing the situation," AL Joint Secretary General Syed Ashraful Islam said.

Meanwhile, BNP leaders refrained from making any comments about the arrest of former state minister Lutfozzaman Babar and former lawmaker MA Hashem.

They are also troubled by the arrest of AL leader Abdul Jalil, as they think BNP leaders of the same level might face similar situation, sources said.

They, however, consider the arrest of Babar, who reportedly got involved with the process of forming a new political party and maintained good relations with the foreign diplomats, as an unexpected incident.

Leaders favouring reform in the party think Babar's arrest will weaken their initiative while several other leaders, who still support party Chairperson Khaleda Zia, have apparently been pleased as they think Babar started betraying with the party after declaration of the state of emergency.

All photos within polls

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create any problem in holding the next parliamentary election. The process will continue. The voter list will be updated every year," Huda told reporters in his office.

"If one's photograph is not immediately available, that can be added later even after the upcoming election," he asserted.

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawath Hossain however said particulars of those prospective voters, who will not visit the voter registration centres to have their photographs taken, will also be put in the database. "We will decide later whether they will be registered as voters or not," he said.

When his attention was drawn to the CEC's comment on Sunday that the names of eligible citizens will be on the voter list even if their photographs are not available, Sakhawath said, "He [CEC] meant the database."

Contacted by a group of journalists yesterday, the CEC however reiterated that eligible citizens will be registered as voters even if their photographs are not available.

"We don't know how many photographs of eligible citizens we will have for the list. We even don't know what percentage of the eligible people will refrain from submitting their photographs. Everything will start becoming clearer after the field level work begins," the CEC said explaining his position on the issue of voters' photographs on the electoral roll.

Asked whether the circumstances will be more discernible after implementing the pilot project scheduled to start on June 10, the CEC said the pilot project will only give a mere indication. "The system we are trying to develop is evolving now. We will have the actual picture when the field level work will begin in different parts of

be accountable for jobs which are not in our hands?" he asked angrily.

Aminul Islam of Gazipur said he was supposed to get his passport by April 15 but he got it on May 9.

In reply to a question, a high official of DPI said, "I if the headmaster of a local school falsely attests important papers, then why would it be unusual for police?"

When contacted, Special Branch (SB) of Police, which deals with police verification report, said each passport document from the DPI contains a seal regarding its category and police treat it accordingly.

A senior SB official said police verify present and permanent addresses of an applicant for passport and issue report after their regular duties of law enforcement and ensuring security.

He denied allegations of dilly-dallying on submitting police verification report.

He however admitted there might be delay in some cases since it is difficult for police to verify addresses in many remote areas due to communication problems.

"We have now introduced computerised system in our Dhaka office. Some one coming to our office can see at what stage his/her (police verification) report is."

Police officials rather blamed DPI for delay in passport issuance, saying it is suffering from manpower shortage.

Director General of DPI Abdur Rob Hawlader, when contacted, said they are striving to make the whole process easier for people. "At the same time, we have to ensure that no black-listed or suspicious people can get passport," he added.

150 BNP men

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allowed to hold any discussion or memorial meeting.

"BNP leaders told me that they will not violate the emergency rules or deliver any speech or statement," Law Adviser Mainul Hossain told the reporters yesterday.

"They [BNP leaders] assured me and I assured my colleagues. And so, they took the decision," he said.

Earlier on Sunday, a BNP delegation led by its Vice President and former minister MK Anwar met law adviser Mainul Hossain at his residence and requested him to allow them to hold a discussion meeting to mark the death anniversary of the founder of their party.

They also urged the government to allow about 200 leaders and activists to accompany the party chief at the grave of Ziaur Rahman and arrange milad mahfil and feast for the poor.

The government decided to allow 150 persons to accompany the party chief at the graveyard and arrange milad mahfil there and at the districts across the country.

But the government did not agree to allow holding discussion and suggested the BNP leaders to sent food to the orphanage instead of organising feast for the poor.

Previously the government decided to allow only 10 to 15 leaders to accompany Khaleda Zia at the graveyard.

President Prof Iajuddin Ahmed, Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed and chiefs of three services will pay tribute to the late president on his death anniversary.

the country," he said.

The CEC said the EC will launch a massive campaign to motivate eligible citizens to visit the voter registration centres and to have their photographs taken. "We are planning to engage a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private mobile phone service operators to motivate the people across the country," the CEC added.

Asked whether allowing eligible people to have their names registered as voters without submitting their photographs will end up encouraging them not to have their photographs taken, the CEC said it will.

"But to have national identity cards to avail 22 types of government services, one will have to submit his or her photograph," he said.

The CEC also said they dropped the idea of voter ID cards, as it will require at least five years to prepare those.

About 303 controversial upazila election officers he said nine officers were appointed from Gabtoli upazila of Bogra alone. "There were some anomalies in the recruitment," he added. Bogra happened to be a stronghold of the immediate past ruling party BNP when the appointments were made.

Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawath Hossain said political parties and electoral candidates will not be allowed to have copies of the voter list with photographs, they will be provided with a voter list which will not contain the photographs.

"The voter list with photographs will only be used for official purposes. It will not be given out to political parties and electoral candidates due to the concern for the voters' social and other securities," he said.

Inqilab Khulna

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Magistrate Md Atiqul Haque handed down the verdict around 12:30pm yesterday.

The entire court compound was brought under tight security during the delivery of the verdict. Large number of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel and members of Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) were deployed there.

Joint forces arrested Rafique at his office in the act of taking the money from deputy ranger Mahmudullah and tour assistant Yunus Ali on April 10 night.

The prosecution said Rafique attempted to evade arrest during the raid at his office taking advantage of power cut. He was handed over to Sonadanga Police Station the same night after interrogation in a local army camp.

Yunus Ali tour assistant of Sundarbans Forest Division west wing lodged a case with Sonadanga Police Station.

Sub-inspector Obaidul Huq, the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet before the court on April 19. The charge was framed on April 22.

Statements of 15 out of the 16 prosecution witnesses were recorded. The witnesses included three forest officials, four Rab personnel, three KMP men, the IO, a peon of Inqilab bureau office and four others.

Army chief

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Bangabhaban press release.

He thanked the president and expressed gratitude for upgrading the rank of army chief to general from lieutenant general.

The army chief sought support and cooperation from the president and supreme commander of the Armed Forces in discharging his duties, said the release.

The president gave General Moeen a patient hearing and assured him of full cooperation.

Military Secretary to the President Major General Mohd Aminul Karim and Secretary to the President's Office Md Sirajul Islam were present.

Tax evasion

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on suspicion of tax evasion and corruption.

In a letter yesterday, the NBR directed all banks to freeze the accounts of former NBR member ATM Sarwar Hossain and his wife Nazma Sarwar.

Earlier, NBR collected information regarding Sarwar's bank accounts.

The former NBR member's name is already on the government's corruption list.

Polls by end

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caretaker government among the general people of Bangladesh and assured all kinds of cooperation for the people and government of Bangladesh.

Milam was accompanied by Chairman of the US-based America-Bangladesh Advisory Council Shabbir Ahmed Chowdhury.

Mosharraf

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The former minister has been made the main accused in the case filed with the cognisance court no 2 by Firoz Miah of Raghunathpur village in Titapuzla.

The complainant alleged that the armed supporters of Khandaker Mosharraf swooped on an Awami League rally at Dashedkandi Primary School ground in Titapuzla on June 2, 2006.

They injured the AL activists with sharp weapons and foiled the meeting by exploding bombs.

Magistrate Shaheena Akhter asked the officer-in-charge (OC) of Titapuzla Police Station to investigate the incident and take legal action.

Earlier, Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain was sued in a number of cases.

EX-MP FARUK REMANDED
A Noakhali court yesterday placed former BNP lawmaker Joyanal Abedin Faruk on a five-day remand in an extortion case.

Magistrate M Golamur Rahman of the Special Tribunal granted the remand in the case filed by Faruq Chowdhury of Shenbagh Union.

Police arrested the former lawmaker in the capital's Khilkhet area on Friday.

CHT Peace Accord

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government departments have been removed after the present CG took over, these chairmen and members of the hill districts councils are still in office.

The CHT Development Board chairman is also likely to be replaced, sources said adding that many civil society leaders and retired army officials are lobbying for those lucrative posts.

Contacted, member of the advisory committee Maulana Mohammed Shahjahan welcomed the steps taken by the present caretaker government. "I hope decisions will be taken at the meeting considering the interests of the CHT people," he added.

Meanwhile, Santu Larma, also the President of Parbatya Chatagram Jana Sanghati Samity (CJTSS), declined to make any comments in this regard.

Cracks in Dhanmondi

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started the rectifying work five months after the flat owners on January complained about cracks developing in the ceilings and walls. They sent a written complaint on February 13.

The flat owners filed a general diary on May 20 with Dhammondi Police Station fearing the building might collapse. One of the flat owners complained that the Amin Mohammad Foundation took the rectifying job into consideration after a very long delay.

"Every day we were finding new cracks, even while the Shahidullah Associates were conducting their probe, we found new cracks in the walls and ceilings," an owner of a flat said requesting anonymity.

Amin Mohammad Foundation had hired Shahidullah Associates to probe the issues of the building.

Engineer FM Shahidullah, managing director of Shahidullah Associates, after investigation observed that the design of the building was terribly flawed and the