

# Hasina not allowed

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steps over Hasina's leaving country in consultation with the immigration authorities.

Earlier on Wednesday, Hasina was also prevented from visiting Chittagong, "for security reasons", where she meant to meet families affected by last week's rain and landslides, killing around 120 persons.

In April, the caretaker government imposed a ban on Hasina's return from an earlier visit to the US and the AL chief was stranded in London for about two weeks before local and international pressure forced the government to lift the restriction. Then the British Airways was also asked not to allow her to board the aircraft despite a valid confirmed ticket.

Earlier in the morning, Sheikh Hasina categorically accused the military backed caretaker government of trying to push her out of politics by having false cases filed against her.

"The government does not want me to compete in the elections. That's why it is having cases filed against me," the former premier told newsmen at her Sudha Sadan residence in the capital.

Denying all allegations brought against her, Hasina vowed to prove her innocence. She said, "We've the right to serve the people and the people have the right to get that service, but conspiracies are being hatched to keep me out of the elections. This is nothing but a crooked design."

"Police are investigating the cases filed against me. If I am found guilty, punish me but why should I not be allowed to go abroad?" she questioned.

Hasina alleged that a virtual section 144 has been imposed on her residence by disallowing entry of more than four people at a time.

The AL chief said she heard that some 30 extortions cases will be filed against her by forcibly making different businessmen file those. "Let them file 100 cases, let them be investigated. If I am proven guilty let them punish me. I know I didn't do anything wrong, but still they may punish me by filing false cases anyway," she said.

Hasina repeatedly tried to clarify that incidents of taking donations are being treated as incidents of extortions. "If someone voluntarily donates money, that is not extortion. Donations are an imperative to run a political party as the government does not provide funds for political parties in

## 7 accomplices of dirty bomb plotter jailed for 136 yrs in UK

AFP, London

Seven members of a British-based cell led by convicted al-Qaeda "dirty" bomb plotter Dhiren Barot were sentenced to jail terms ranging from 15 to 26 years yesterday.

Qaisar Shaffi, Mohammed Naveed Bhatti, Junade Feroze, Zia Ul Haq, Abdul Aziz Jilal, Omar Abdur Rehman and Nadeem Tarmohamed were sentenced at Woolwich Crown Court, south-east London.

Shaffi was convicted of conspiracy to murder after a month-long trial, which ended earlier this week. The other six pleaded guilty in April to conspiracy to cause explosions likely to endanger life.

The court was told the seven were vital to plans by Barot, jailed for 30 years after his conviction last year, to carry out attacks in Britain and the United States using explosive-packed limousines and a "dirty" radiation bomb.

Sentencing the seven men, judge Sir Alexander Butterfield said: "Barot was the instigator of this terrorist planning, he was by some considerable distance the principal participant in the conspiracy."

"Each one of you was recruited by Barot and assisted him at his request."

"Anyone who chooses to participate in such a plan ... will receive little sympathy from the courts."

# No textbooks

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to correct the books," he added.

NCTB delivery department officials said the printing process of the English version books began late and additional time is required as lots of spelling mistakes and other errors have to be corrected before go for final print.

Students of Biam Model School and College, one of the government-approved English medium schools in the capital, said there are no English versions of some books, especially on Hindu and Christian religions and a few chapters of certain books in Bengali were missing in their English translations.

For example, English version general science book of class nine has 25 chapters although the Bengali version has 26 chapters. English version general science book of class seven has 23 chapters while the Bengali version has 25 chapters.

Students of the English medium branch of Vigarunisa Noon School said they face problems with the photocopies of old books, as the copies are obscure while several chapters are missing.

Guardians have to pay exorbitant prices to buy photocopies of the books. "Students bought photocopies of Islam Shikha of class six for Tk 120 to Tk 150 but the price of the book was only Tk 25," said Sayan Banu, principal of Biam Model School and College.

Besides, students are learning backdated and wrong information by

## EU backs govt move for reforms

UNB, Dhaka

The European Union (EU) has expressed its support to the efforts to institute political and electoral reforms in Bangladesh.

In a statement on Tuesday, the EU welcomed efforts by the caretaker government and the Election Commission to "create appropriate conditions for holding free and fair elections in 2008 and for ensuring sustainable democracy."

The statement said a EU Troika visited Bangladesh from June 6-9 for intensive and constructive discussions with the representatives from government, key institutions and civil society. This was the second EU Troika visit to Bangladesh, following the one in January last year.

As the largest trading and development partner of Bangladesh, the EU said, it attaches immense importance to its relationship with the country. The EU took around 52 percent of Bangladesh's exports, amounting to over \$ billion euro in 2006.

## 7 soldiers killed in Thai ambush

AFP, Yala

Islamic insurgents in Thailand ambushed and shot dead seven soldiers yesterday in one of the deadliest attacks this year on security forces in the country's Muslim heartland, police said.

The attack came just two weeks after 12 soldiers were killed in a similar attack as the government struggles to keep a lid on separatist violence that has left more than 2,200 people dead in three years.

About the formation of a new party, Hasina said those who have been in the 'dustbin of politics' are being picked up to launch a new party, and a move is on to split the established parties.

About the reported restriction on her scheduled departure for the USA last night, she threw a question asking why she should not be allowed to be with her daughter who is expecting to give birth to a baby in three weeks.

At this point, Hasina broke down in tears urging the mothers of the world to ask why she should not be allowed to be with her expecting daughter.

Bangladesh," said the daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

"I can swear I didn't seek anything personal throughout my political life."

Citing the examples of fundraising by Bandhu Sabha, a reader's forum organised by the daily Prothom Alo, and of the chief adviser's appeal for contributing to the relief fund for the landslide victims in Chittagong, Hasina asked whether those should also be called extortion.

She alleged that pressure is being put on lawyers not to provide legal aid to accused people. Terming the move as a double standard, she said on the one hand the government wants to separate the judiciary and on the other it is trying to put pressure on lawyers.

Regarding the current talk about a 21-point reform proposal prepared by her party leaders which includes a proposed provision for barring the party president from becoming the prime minister of the country, Hasina said if such a reform is to be brought to her party then not only the party president, but its presidium members, general secretary, joint secretaries, and other office bearers should also be barred from becoming ministers of a government. But to bring those reforms, politics must be allowed first, said the AL president.

"We know that outdoor political activities and indoor politics are banned, but some people are carrying out political activities nonetheless. If they can do that then let me also convene meetings of my party's central committee and discuss the matters. Let politics be open," she said.

Hasina alleged that a virtual section 144 has been imposed on her residence by disallowing entry of more than four people at a time.

The AL chief said she heard that some 30 extortions cases will be filed against her by forcibly making different businessmen file those. "Let them file 100 cases, let them be investigated. If I am proven guilty let them punish me. I know I didn't do anything wrong, but still they may punish me by filing false cases anyway," she said.

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## Foreign ministry

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secretary. Incidentally the current acting foreign secretary never served as an ambassador.

Earlier, Touhid served as the deputy high commissioner at the Deputy High Commission in Kolkata.

The post of a full-fledged foreign secretary has been vacant since Hemayetuddin joined the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) in December last year. Later, the caretaker government headed by Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed appointed Bangladesh Ambassador to Germany Minzur Rahim as the foreign secretary, but the appointment was cancelled.

Among the names being considered were Humayun Kabir, and Bangladesh High Commissioner to New Delhi Liaquat Ali Chowdhury. However, after Humayun Kabir was given the important position of an ambassador in Washington DC, Liaquat Ali Chowdhury, a veteran and a skilled negotiator and diplomat is now being considered for the post of the foreign secretary.

Chowdhury, served twice in India as a diplomat – first as a counsellor and later as a deputy high commissioner. He also served as the ambassador to The Netherlands.

Shahdat Hossain, now serving as the high commissioner to Sri Lanka, who also served at the UN and as the deputy high commissioner in New Delhi earlier, is being considered for the post of the new high commissioner to India.

Meanwhile, Ismat Jahan, who had been appointed as the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, already taken over the charge. Sources said she was recommended very strongly by the foreign affairs adviser himself for the important position he relinquished after joining the caretaker government as an adviser, following a long and successful stint in that post.

"Seven soldiers were killed and one injured. They were the security team for local teachers," said local police commander Colonel Anirudh Im-imb.

The victims had to be airlifted to hospital because the rebels had blocked the road with trees and spikes, police said.

Soldiers have been pressed into duty to try to protect students and teachers, regular targets of the insurgents – who see them as trying to impose Buddhist Thai values on the Muslim and ethnic Malay region.

But they have ended up targeted themselves, while the violence against students and teachers has continued. Five teachers were shot dead in the region this week, while at least 14 schools were torched.

Meanwhile more than 260 schools in the region closed down this week due to security fears. Two of the teachers shot this week were women gunned down inside an elementary school library in front of their horrified students.

"Militants see teachers as important figures in the south because they can influence the minds of children. Militants are not happy with teachers," said Srawut Aree of the Muslim Studies Centre at Chulalongkorn University.

"Teachers are easy, soft targets for militants," he said.

Human Rights Watch denounced the attacks on schools and urged the government to do more to ensure the security of children.

"Insurgents are attempting to close down all government schools," Brad Adams, Asia director at the US-based rights group, said in a statement.

"Their campaign of terror strikes a serious blow to public education in the southern border provinces, which already retain the lowest test scores in Thailand," he said.

Three local Muslim government leaders were also killed overnight in an attack on their car. One suspected militant died when he accidentally detonated a five-kilo (11-pound) bomb that he was planting on a roadside, police said.

He said indoor politics is not everything. It is important to implement the roadmap for salvaging democracy.

The adviser said the government is creating an environment for bringing about reforms, which is a prerequisite for lifting the ban on indoor politics.

"We are moving a bit slow, as pro-reform politicians need some time. As we move slow, it will be easier for them to complete the reforms."

Earlier on Sunday he appreciated the political leaders who are speaking for reforms in the two major parties excluding Khaleda and Hasina.

"Several leaders of Awami League and BNP are now talking about their parties' reform and for changing their top leadership. That is good. We have created this awareness among the leaders," he said.

The law adviser also said those who are involved in corruption and destroyed democracy couldn't lead the nation.

Senior leaders of both the AL and BNP are now holding meetings and consultations among themselves for radical reforms in the parties, excluding Hasina and Khaleda.

"They have identified the two top leaders as the main obstacle to reforms in their parties," said a source close to both the sides.

"Interestingly, leaders of the two arch rival political parties are now maintaining close contact among

reading the old books or photocopies, she said.

Shabnam Khan, a senior teacher of the English medium section of Vigarunisa Noon School, said non-availability of the textbooks is also causing problems for the teachers in imparting education.

Around 50 thousand students from classes one to ten are now studying in government-approved English medium schools in the capital, said there are no English versions of some books, especially on Hindu and Christian religions and a few chapters of certain books in Bengali were missing in their English translations.

For example, English version general science book of class nine has 25 chapters although the Bengali version has 26 chapters. English version general science book of class seven has 23 chapters while the Bengali version has 25 chapters.

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## Govt to jeopardise

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although she supports the government reforms, "There is a limit to what one can do in a limited period of time."

The government would jeopardise its legitimacy and legacy if it denies the people the right to elect its leaders at the earliest, she added.

Reiterating US support for the caretaker government, Butenis said, "I think they are going in the right direction. We are going to continue to speak out, mostly privately and sometimes publicly, where we think it's going wrong."

Stressing the need for a level playing field for all political parties, she said, "People are telling us that they are being pressured to leave their party and join this third party."

Butenis said she also brought up a worst-case scenario of a military takeover with the political leadership in order to make them understand the possible fallout from their deadlock, but she said the BNP did not expect the party to intervene while the Awami League felt it would be in its favour for the military to prepare the voter list.

"My response was, 'Why would the army come in and clean up the mess the parties made and hand it back?'" she said.

"So, if the political parties could not even predict that we would be here, much more so can I," she said, but added that the US and other countries' support for the return to a "fully elected government" may guide the government.

She also said since political parties are a key element of any democracy, "You can't reform politics without getting buy-in from political parties." Citing popular support of the two major parties, she added, "Whatever changes they should make, they have to be engaged on some level."

"I really do think that even the Election Commission is ready to talk to the parties," she said, but "The parties are afraid of discussing things, because they fear they might be violating the ban."

"We have a kind of a paralysis right now. I don't think anything imposed is going to work, frankly," she said.

On political future here, Butenis said, "Part of me wants to say 'who knows', because it is so hard to predict where we are going."

Recalling her experience during the intense political negotiations preceding the declaration of state of emergency, Butenis said, "All I ever did, and I did it constantly, was to beg people, to beg them, 'Can't you compromise? Can't you come up with a solution that would be acceptable to the opposition so they would participate in elections to ensure there is some sense, it's fair?'"

Butenis said she pleaded with the then-liaquat-led government, "Why do you want to go ahead with one-sided elections which people will find impossible to believe as credible?" She, however, denied having a formula for a political compromise: "That's not my job. My job was to say, 'Please, can't you sit down and work this out?'"

Butenis expressed disappointment at the breakdown of the Mannan Bhuiyan-Abdul Jalil talks in September. "Nobody was willing to do it. We tried. I was the promoter and trying to facilitate dialogue early in September," she said, adding, "I had no idea whether the political parties were serious. They agreed to talk. I had no idea if they were genuine. I chose to accept that they were trying

themselves to achieve their goals of reform, and they have made the two top leaders isolated within their parties," the source said seeking anonymity.

Talking to The Daily Star, a standing committee member of the BNP said, "Political future of party Chairperson Khaleda Zia has almost been settled, and she will have to quit the post. Most members of the (party) standing committee want her retirement from the party as they want an end to dynastic politics in BNP and the era of corruption."

A significant number of BNP leaders and former lawmakers led by party Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan are working for radical changes in the party.

Of them, Standing Committee Member Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman told The Daily Star that Khaleda should quit politics considering the prevailing situation.

On the other hand, a number of senior AL leaders led by presidium members Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Ami Hossain Amu and Suranjit Sengupta are working for reforms in the AL, excluding Hasina. Sur