

June 27, 2007

Hasina wonders how some parties doing politics amid restriction

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday sought explanation as to how some political parties are being allowed to do politics amid restriction under the state of emergency.

"It needs an explanation as to how some parties are doing politics under restriction while some not getting the opportunity," she told reporters.

Hasina came up with the questions in the wake of BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan's announcement of his party reform proposals, and JP Chairman Ershad and Roushan Ershad's media conferences on party reforms.

The AL chief sought withdrawal of the ban on political activities.

Meanwhile, senior Awami League leaders, including Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta and Motia Chowdhury, yesterday told reporters that their party would

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Rawshan revolts to oust Ershad

Announces herself as acting JP chief; reveals 13-pt reform proposal; Ershad threatens to expel her

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rawshan Ershad, senior presidium member of Jatiya Party (JP), in a dramatic development yesterday proclaimed herself as the acting chief and unveiled plans for intra-party reforms apparently seeking to cast out former president HM Ershad.

The same day in a press conference to pre-empt her wife's move, JP Chairman Ershad described Rawshan's activities as anti-organisational and said she might get the axe for those.

Later, Rawshan announced 13 proposals for radical changes in the party at a press conference at her Gulshan residence. There she also introduced Presidium Member Golam Mosi as "the new secretary general" to replace the incumbent,

Ruhul Amin Hawlader. Her proposals came just a day after the pro-reform leaders of the BNP rolled out theirs that too seem



Rawshan Ershad

designed to boot out the current head of the party.

Meanwhile, pro-reform faction within Awami League plans to place their proposals to the AL central working committee as soon as the ban on indoor politics is lifted. The proposals would seek to set up a collective leadership.

In presence of three presidium members and a few mid-level leaders Rawshan proposed that anyone charged with corruption or other crimes would not qualify for the posts of chairman, secretary-general, presidium members or members of the secretariat council.

Besides, no one would be allowed to hold chairmanship for two terms or more than six years.

Once the proposals are included in the JP constitution, Ershad will

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Govt may allow parties to hold councils despite ban on politics

2 advisers say

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government may consider allowing political parties to hold their council sessions despite the ban on politics.

"If the political parties want to hold their councils, they can seek government permission, and then the government will consider if the ban on indoor politics can be lifted," said Communications Adviser Maj Gen (retired) M.A. Matin yesterday.

Law Adviser Mainul Hosein also emphasised that the government will consider the matter. He, however, said he thinks that the political parties will not seek the government's permission soon.

The two advisers were talking to reporters regarding the caretaker government's standpoint about the ongoing reform initiatives in major political parties.

Hailing the BNP's reform proposals, Mainul said, "They have initiated reforms under pressure of the current situation, not for our pressure."

Over 100 BNP ex-ministers, MPs support Bhuiyan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Many BNP leaders including more than a hundred former ministers, former lawmakers, and current district level leaders yesterday expressed their support for the reform proposal prepared by the party secretary general in an effort to put an end to dynastic leadership and to put democracy at the centre of the party.

According to reformists, more than fifty former lawmakers of the party yesterday met Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in his Gulshan residence to express their support for the reform proposal while many others gave their consent over the phone.

"Leaders from different areas have come here today to extend their support and to thank the party secretary general for his proposal," Ashraf Hossain, joint secretary general of the party, told a news briefing after a meeting between the former BNP lawmakers and Bhuiyan.

Ashraf however did not make clear whether they will seek permission from the government to hold a party council amid the state of emergency to implement their proposed reforms, as an adviser to the government yesterday said it will duly consider any political party's wish to hold a council to bring reforms to the party despite the ban on indoor politics.

Bhuiyan also exchanged views in a separate meeting yesterday morning with former lawmakers of the party elected from the constituencies of Barisal division, and he is scheduled to continue such meetings with district and thana level leaders.

Meanwhile, some persons close to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia started contacting the party's district level presidents and general secretaries urging them not to support Bhuiyan's reform proposal short of a party council.

Leaders from the Barisal division including former minister and the party's Vice-president Hafiz Uddin

Ahmed, former state ministers Mosharraf Hossain Shahjahan and Shah Abdul Hossain, former lawmakers Elen Bhutto, Rustom Ali Farazi, Zahiruddin Swapan, and Nazim Uddin Alam exchanged their views with Bhuiyan in his residence yesterday morning.

Emerging out of the meeting Hafiz Uddin Ahmed told reporters, "We cannot just sit idle for another 14 years as the party council did not take place in the last 14 years, we cannot even wait for the lifting of the state of emergency."

"We prepared the reform proposal to put an end to dynastic leadership and to run the party in a democratic manner," he said adding that reforms should be brought to the party constitution because the party does not need the chairperson to have absolute power.

During the BNP secretary general's meeting with former lawmakers of the party he explained the proposal and the situation of

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Dhaka, Delhi to share security info

Secretary-level talks end

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and India will share security information regarding cross-border crimes and look to accelerate resolutions on border and water-resources sharing.

The two-day foreign secretary-level talks between the two neighbours concluded here yesterday with the resolutions.

Both sides took advantage of improved political relations to discuss long-standing irritants such as demarcating 6.5km borderland, combating cross-border terrorism, greater access for Bangladeshi goods in India and improved road-rail connectivity.

Wrapping up the first foreign secretary-level talks in two years, Bangladesh Acting Foreign Secretary Touhid Hossain and Indian Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon issued a joint statement at a press conference at state guesthouse Padma.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Dhaka expects increased co-op from Delhi on key issues

CA tells Indian FS

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed has said Bangladesh expects increased cooperation from India on key issues, particularly in water sharing, which is a common concern for both the countries.

The CA said this when visiting Indian Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon made a courtesy call on him at his office yesterday.

He mentioned that the last Saarc Summit in New Delhi undertook four priority issues—water (including flood control), food, energy and environment—to deal with, as they are vital for sustainability of the peoples of the countries in this region.

The CA thanked the government and the people of India for providing \$10million assistance for

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed talks with the visiting Indian Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon in Dhaka yesterday.

Manju jailed for 5yrs for possessing liquor

COURT CORRESPONDENT

ADhaka court yesterday sentenced Jatiya Party (Manju) Chairman Anwar Hossain Manju to five years' simple imprisonment and fined Tk 10,000 for possessing 21 bottles of contraband liquor at his Dhanmondi residence.

Judge Sayed Jahed Mansur of the Metropolitan Special Tribunal-9 handed down the sentence in Manju's absence at 11.45am at a packed courtroom.

This is the first time a former lawmaker, also an ex-communications minister, was convicted for possessing unlicensed liquors and wine at his residence.

The judge also fined Manju Tk 10,000 and if he failed to pay the fine he will have to serve six-month more simple imprisonment in jail.

The punishment will be effective from the day of his arrest or surrender, the judge said.

Before delivery of the verdict, Manju's lawyers submitted a peti-

tion seeking adjournment of the judgement and recall of seven prosecution witnesses, as they could not cross them in Manju's absence.

Moreover, Manju is now abroad for his treatment. The prosecution opposed it and prayed for delivery of the verdict.

After hearing both the sides, the judge rejected the petition, as there

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



Anwar Hossain Manju

The wilting children

INAM AHMED

Small palm prints. Black, red, yellow and green. All splintered across a large poster paper, nicely laminated. Some prints are as small as a ping-pong ball, some the size of a tennis ball, a few almost as large as an adult's palm. The colours are smudged at the fingers too much of colour spoiling the fineness of the fingers, the finger tips are disfigured as colour drops down. Fingers and palms bluntly looking out from the paper.

Rakib appears in his vest and shorts. His large eyes burning with an unknown intensity. He comes running with a toy gun in his hand. "Bang! Bang! Bang!" And he giggles. And then he turns to the large poster. "Let me," he says and puts out his tiny hands of a four-year-old. He puts them on a black imprint, a size or two bigger than his. Rakib smiles with a proud look and then the

imprints start looking sinistly evil.

Sumon, 12, Noakhali. He is dead. Akash, 14 months, Faridpur. He is gone too. Hasan, 8, Narisingdi. Is he dead too? Not sure. Oh yes, he is. Asad, 7. When did he die? Only last week. Imprints and names, imprints and names. All dead.

Then Rakib giggles again and bolts into the next room. He does not look like a child in a terminal cancer stage. His forehead feels a little hot from fever. But he surely does not look like somebody whose final words have been spoken by the doctors. His blood cancer has relapsed after two years of treatment, two years of excruciating pain of chemotherapy and two

years of spending the last drops from the parents' savings. A relapse case has no chance at all.

A quaint tin-shed at Bhutergoli looks surprisingly pleasant inside. A large lounge offers the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Forest plunderers start to tell of their wealth

STAR REPORT

Detained forest officials being quizzed by investigators have confessed amassing huge wealth through corruption and also provided information about their patronisers and modes of corrupt practices, sources said.

Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of Sylhet Lasker Maksudur Rahman accumulated wealth worth about Tk 6 crore and Conservator of Forest (CF), Dhaka Division, Ali Kabir Haider around Tk 50 lakh and CF of Khulna Division Mizanur Rahman

owns huge landed property in Dhaka and has bank accounts in some foreign countries, they were quoted to have said during confessions while on remand.

In Khulna, Mizanur Rahman admitted that he was trying to flee the country fearing crackdown on corrupt forest officials following the arrest of Chief Conservator of Forest Osman Gani. He fell unconscious during interrogation on Monday night, sources said.

Meanwhile, most officials in forest department and their relatives are reportedly panicked that corrupt-

ation allegations against mid-level and lower level forest officials may also come to the surface during the ongoing quizzing of the remanded divisional chiefs. The law enforcers may come up with another list of corrupt suspect forest officials, they apprehend.

ALI KABIR HAIDER

Sources in the Joint Force said Ali Kabir Haider might have much more ill-gotten money and wealth than he confessed.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Dr Kamal calls for concerted efforts towards healthy politics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain has stressed the need for a unified national effort involving people of all strata of life to bring about meaningful changes and regenerate healthy politics in the country.

"We cannot but emphasise the need for an effective consultative process for interaction between the caretaker government and all sections of people as we are aiming to move from the centralised mode of authoritarian governance in the past to a healthy mode of decentralised democratic good governance," the eminent jurist said at a press conference yesterday.

Support of the people is necessary for success of any reform programmes and participation of all concerned is a must to have a meaningful democratic government, he noted.

Gono Forum leader Zahirul

against the Tigers.

Captain Mahela Jayawardene recovered from injury to smash his seventeenth Test hundred, Michael Vandort scored his third ton while wicket keeper Prasanna Jayawardene and late-order veteran Chaminda Vaas hit their maiden centuries as Sri Lanka amassed their highest total against Bangladesh after declaring the first innings at 577-6 in 135.5 overs.

It is all but confirmed that

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Tigers drown in runs

BISHWAJIT ROY from Colombo

Sri Lanka enjoyed the second day of the first Test with both team and individual achievements as they piled on the runs against Bangladesh at the Sinhalese Sports Club (SSC) ground yesterday.

After spin wizard Muttiah Muralidaran's five-wicket haul on the first day, the Sri Lankan batsmen assaulted Mohammad Ashraful's men in a way that put them on

course for another easy victory.



Cancer victims at the ASHIC centre spend their time playing (above); palm prints of victims on the wall, many of them are now dead.