

Hasina raps intelligence

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She observed that democracy will not be established if the military backed caretaker government works with a plan to bring someone specific or some specific forces to power. "If the government goes around doing its things with preconceived ideas, the people will not get their rights and there will be no accountability," she said.

She also said currently the public attention is being diverted from real issues in the name of reforms.

Brushing aside AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil's recent statement, Hasina questioned if there is any importance of any statement made under detention. "People might say anything under torture, but those statements carry no value at all," she added.

"What kind of intelligence activities are those when the intelligence forces torture people, administer electric shocks on detained persons, and threaten them with arrests of their wives and children?" Hasina asked.

If anyone commits a crime, that person should be punished after being proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law, she said, adding, but scaring the accused with prospects of arrests of their family members including their wives and children, is no civilisation. "This is a blatant violation of human rights," she said.

The AL president wanted to know the budget of DGFI and the purposes for which that is being spent. She also questioned whether that budget is for breaking up existing political parties and for launching new ones. "Give the answer," Hasina said adding that playing with the fate of the people 'will not be tolerated'.

"I have asked my party leaders and activists to say whatever the intelligence agency forces them to say, say things even against me if necessary to avoid torture," Hasina said.

The former prime minister said the country has a constitution. "So

everyone must abide by the constitution. Defiance of the constitution did not bring good in the past, and it will not bring good in the future either," she said.

The AL chief claimed the January 11 caretaker government is the outcome of the movement carried out by AL-led grand alliance. And the people now want to see the progress made by the Election Commission in the last six months, she added.

"Who will be in power will be decided by the people," she went on adding that if the people's rights are not ensured then accountability will not be established making way for corruption and criminal activities.

Hasina said her party and the grand alliance led by it forged a movement to give the people back their rights to universal franchise, but it seems that another conspiracy for vote rigging is currently afoot. If that is not true, then why the voter list has not been prepared even after six months have gone, she asked.

Production of transparent ballot boxes have not progressed in the last six months even after the army produced a prototype of that, said the AL chief adding that she wants to see progress in the electoral process including implementation of the electoral reform proposal provided by AL-led 14-party coalition.

About the political reform proposals including party reforms placed by senior leaders of her party, Hasina said party reform have been a continuous process in her party since its inception. According to the rules of AL every leader of the party must place his or her reform proposal in the party's central working committee (ALCWC) meeting, she said adding, if the ALCWC accept any proposal, then that will go to the national council for approval.

Party leaders, activists, and members of the central working committee and the national council will take decisions about the party and the people of the country will

decide who will come to power and run the country, Hasina said.

The people want to know what the caretaker government is doing to that end, she said.

She said she never wanted to become the party president. "It was the party leaders who made me the party chief while I was in exile."

Hasina also demanded that the government immediately withdraws the cases filed against 5,000 farmers of Nachole. She also urged the interim government to ensure supply of fertilisers to the farmers. "I want to see that fertilisers are available in all districts for fair prices within seven days."

If the government cannot do that and the farmers embark on a movement, then the government will not be able to control the situation, said the AL chief. Referring to the price spiral of essentials, Hasina also demanded immediate measures for curbing the continuing price hike. She also demanded employment for the unemployed.

She said when she wanted to go to the US to see her daughter, she was not allowed to go and when she wanted to come back from the US, her return was obstructed by the current government.

Saying categorically that she has never been involved in any corruption or extortion in her entire life so far, the AL chief said a number of false cases have been prepared against her for filing. Now the government is persecuting Bangabandhu Memorial Trust too, which donates Tk 4 lakh among 1200 economically disadvantaged students for their education every month, she said.

Moreover the trust is reregistered with the government and gets fund from it too, the accounts of which is audited regularly, Hasina added.

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Some local observers say shortage of domestic food production and higher oil prices in the international market are main reasons for the rise in inflation rate.

But the IMF report disagreed with this explanation and said monetary factors and inflation inertia have also played important roles.

It went on saying that broad money growth, private sector credit growth and exchange rate changes too impact on inflation.

"Domestic food production and international oil price change are not shown to have a significant impact," the report said.

The IMF suggested that if the Bangladeshi Bank adopts a contractionary monetary policy by tightening broad money or private credit to lower inflation.

Information Minister Tariq Azeem dismissed the "laughable" claim and said the death toll from the entire siege was 24.

Ghazi, 43, signalled his defiance on Saturday by saying that he was telephoned by a man who claimed to have shot at Shah Amanat's aircraft on Friday in revenge for the siege.

Security officials said earlier they were probing possible links between the mosque operation and the failed bid to shoot down the president's plane as it took off from Chaklala military airbase at Rawalpindi, near Islamabad.

Students affiliated to the mosque have irritated the government since January with a Taliban-style anti-vice campaign, which has involved the abduction of several people they linked to prostitution, including seven Chinese.

For example, the Biman MD said a trim plate (a small spare part) worth Tk 9,860 was bought at Tk 51,000.

On floating Biman's shares, he said no one would buy them at this moment, as it is a "losing business". He, however, said it would not be right to keep Biman's shares in the government hands. He favoured floating Biman's shares as soon as it becomes profitable.

Civil Aviation Secretary Sheikh Altaf Ali said before buying aircraft we would have to identify which types of aircraft is appropriate for Biman.

Farashuddin said after Biman becomes a PLC, the cabinet secretary would be the chairman of Biman's board of directors replacing the civil aviation minister; this would not bring any meaningful changes.

"It would bring no results if Biman is turned into a PLC while 100 percent of its shares are in the government hands," he added.

Terminating Biman's goldmine, Abu Barkat said it was turned into a place for thieves during the last 20 years. He also identified corruption as the main problem in Biman and recommended punitive actions against corrupt people working in Biman before it becomes a PLC. He wished all sales agents of Biman were shown the door.

The FBCCI chief said restructuring Biman is urgently needed but if Biman board is not empowered with autonomy, it would bring no benefits to Biman. "If Biman board is controlled like before the situation would remain the same," he said.

Following the petition, the magistrate allowed the ACC to interrogate Salahuddin on the jail premises.

Pak mosque raid

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by telephone on Sunday to weigh up the government's options after so far delaying a raid on the mosque.

"They have discussed how to bring the crisis to a swift end, including possible assault on the compound," a top official familiar with the issue told AFP.

Musharraf, who on Saturday told the militants to surrender or be killed, earlier attended the funeral of Colonel Haroon Islam, the elite commando killed in the clashes overnight.

Security officials and a source inside the mosque said militants from the banned Pakistani group Harkatul-Jihad-e-Islami, which was involved in the Pearl murder. Based on intelligence we suspect that two commanders from the group are in there," one senior official told AFP.

The organisation sheltered al-Qaeda militants who fled Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban. Its former chief, Amjad Farooqi, played a key role in Pearl's 2002 beheading and a 2003 attempt to assassinate Musharraf.

A mosque source identified the leader of the Harkatul-Jihad-e-Islami in the mosque as Abu Zar, a former accomplice of Farooqi.

There was "lot of tension among the various groups inside the compound on how to conduct the fight," the source added on condition of anonymity for fear of his own safety.

Twelve female students are on a hunger strike and have Volcanic fumes kill 6 teens in Indonesia

AP, Jakarta

demanded to leave the besieged complex, while several others died in clashes on Sunday, the source said. Militants also shot at the legs of three girls who escaped.

Ghazi remained defiant.

He and his followers have written wills saying that they will die rather than surrender, and that "martyrdom" will spark an Islamic revolution in extremism-hit Pakistan, a source at the mosque said.

"Our blood will not go to waste," the will said.

Ghazi told local television that 335 people inside the mosque were killed in Sunday's latest fighting.

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ACC to quiz ex-minister Salahuddin at jail gate

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) will interrogate detained former state minister for communications Salahuddin Ahmed at Dhaka Central Jail in connection with a case filed for taking Tk 1 crore in bribe from a businessman.

The bribery case was filed against him with Shahbagh Police Station on May 29.

ACC Assistant Director Ashraful Islam, also the investigation officer of the case, submitted a petition before Metropolitan Magistrate Jagannath Das Khokon to interrogate detained Salahuddin at the jail gate.

In his forwarding report, the IO said Salahuddin was directly involved in taking bribe from the businessman and he [Salahuddin] needs to be quizzed at the jail gate to gather details on the act of bribery.

Following the petition, the magistrate allowed the ACC to interrogate Salahuddin on the jail premises.

The victims, between 14 and 16 years old, were among about 50 students spending the weekend on the mountain, media reports said. Their bodies were evacuated from the 7,152 feet peak on Sunday.

Wildfires force hundreds to flee

AP, Reno, Nevada

An 8,000-acre wildfire forced hundreds of people in the town of Winnemucca to leave their homes, one of more than a dozen blazes that charred a combined 55 square miles in northern Nevada.

The blaze was among a series that dotted the West on Saturday as a heat wave made parched terrain even drier, forcing authorities to evacuate homes and close highways and wilderness areas.

A 100-mile stretch of Interstate 15 in central Utah was closed when a 160-acre wildfire jumped the highway, and other fires burned in California, South Dakota, Colorado, Arizona, Idaho, Oregon and Washington.

The fire near Winnemucca, about 170 miles east of Reno, threatened up to eight blocks of homes and an electrical substation, said U.S. Bureau of Land Management spokesman Jamie Thompson.

"It's right up to the south edge of town," he said. "The fire definitely poses a danger to parts of the town. It's certainly got everyone's attention."

The largest of the Nevada fires burned 36 square miles, or 23,000 acres, along the Idaho border, said Mike Brown, a spokesman for the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. It was 10 percent contained Saturday, officials said. A firefighter was treated at and released from a hospital in Twin Falls, Idaho, with burns.

Another fire blackened 11 square miles, or 7,000 acres, about five miles southwest of Carlin. It burned two

mobile homes and several smaller structures, and shut down a section of Interstate 80 for six hours overnight, fire information officer Tracie Winfrey said. On Saturday morning, the fire was 40 percent contained.

Yet another Nevada fire that was started by lightning Saturday threatened structures and led to the evacuation of campers about 30 miles south of Elko, officials said.

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The same aircraft skidded around 200 metres off the tarmac after one of its engines caught fire at Shah Amanat Airport earlier on July 1, 2005.

Mohammad Yasin, 35, who hails from Raozan upazila and works at a shop in Dubai, said it was quite a tense situation.

"I was looking out the window. As I saw Kafko (Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company Ltd) and a few more buildings on the bank of river Karnaphuli, the flight crew announced the warning. They told us to fasten our seat belts," he said, describing the nervous minutes on board.

The announcement caused panic among the passengers, he said adding, "But thank God it's all over now."

ATLIA

The pilot of GMG flight No.031 found out about faults in the propeller of McDonnell Douglas MD-82 moments after it took off at 1:30pm, civil aviation sources said.

As the passengers came to know of it, panic swept through them.

The aircraft circled the airport for around 10 minutes before it landed successfully at 1:40pm, added the sources.

The airliner finally flew for Bangkok at 4:30pm, said an official of the private airline.

Biman

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said there are areas where efficiency could be improved. He claimed Biman was systematically destroyed for furthering the interest of vested quarters in the past.

For example, the Biman MD said a trim plate (a small spare part) worth Tk 9,860 was bought at Tk 51,000.

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